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NEWS AT RANDOM

Customs duties for last month amount to 22.4 million francs, an increase of 2.7 million as compared with February last year; the total increase for the first two months of the current year is 5.4 million francs.

* * *

States Councillor Ernest Béguin (Neuchâtel) has been appointed president of the board of the Swiss Federal Railways in place of National Councillor Dr. H. Walther, who retires.

* * *

Colonel Walter Kissling, permanent secretary of the military department, retires at the end of this month; he is 65, and has been in the service of the Confederation for over thirty years.

* * *

The discussion of the budget in the Geneva Grand Conseil has been enlivened by an animated exchange of epithets between the old friends of the extreme left Nicole, Dicker and Rosselet. The latter accused Nicole of his open championship of Russian aggression. The budget proposals were carried with the concurrence of the socialists. Nicole insisted on the disclosure by local banks of deposits and private financial transactions so as to enable a check of the income tax assessments.

* * *

In order to reduce the consumption of alcoholic drinks, the canton of Glarus proposes to introduce certificates of competency to future applicants of "patents." It is stated that the proportion of licensed innkeepers to adult citizens is one in 25.

* * *

The weekly meat consumption throughout Switzerland is slightly over 1½ lbs. per head, or to be exact 43.3 kg. in the full year; 91% is home produced.

* * *

After six months forced interruption Swissair is resuming some of the old services though international traffic north of the Alps remains in abeyance. Three airports are in operation for civil flying: Altenrhein, Geneva-Cointrin and Lugano. Arrangements for new lines are in course of completion such as the one from Locarno to Barcelona, which will cover the distance in about 3½ hours against 30 hours by train. The line

Locarno-Rome (600 km.) was opened last Monday and carried a large consignment of mail to which the main contributors were presumably stamp collectors.

* * *

Passports and certificates of origin are not necessarily proof of nationality. A young vaudoise has been in possession of these documents for over 12 years; they have been taken away from her as it has been discovered that she was French. Her father acquired Swiss nationality in 1917 when she was six years old. According to an old treaty dating as far back as 1879 it is necessary for children to re-affirm their new nationality when they reach the age of 22. The young lady had forgotten to do so in the belief that her status was safely established by her papers which were obviously issued by the cantonal authorities under a misapprehension.

* * *

Labour camps are to be established with the help of the Confederation for the many refugees who have found a temporary sanctuary in our country; they will be employed in the correction and upkeep of roads in the interior for which local labour is not available.

* * *

The proceeds of this year's First of August Celebrations will go the Red Cross and a fund for relieving soldiers' families. A series of four surcharged stamps are issued illustrating some of our historic monuments. The 5cts. stamp shows the Winkelried monument in Stans commemorating our second war of independence in 1386 at Sempach. The 10cts. stamps remind us of the glorious battle of Giornico in 1478. Benedikt Fontana is the subject of the 20cts.; he was the leader of a small troupe of Grisonniers in the battle of the Münstertal in 1499. The guarding of the Jura frontier in 1870/71 and 1914/18 are called to our mind by "Les Rangiers" on the 30cts. stamp (surtax 10cts.).

* * *

As a precautionary measure, some famous art collections have been moved to the interior of the country.

An exhibition of the Holbeins from the Basle museum, and of the priceless collection of all schools belonging to Dr. Reinhart, of Winterthur, has been opened at Berne.

The treasures of the local museum and the private collection of Dr. Hahnenloser, well known for its examples of French nineteenth century paintings, have also been removed from Winterthur to Lucerne.

* * *

We do not know whether the following tit-bit from the "Evening Standard" (12.3.40) reflects the true position at the Special Division of the Swiss Legation:—