Notes & gleanings

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suffered during their youthful years from those terrible burdens and became affected with different diseases. After many years of work Indemini has now finally got this road connecting it with the mother country and enabling its inhabitants to use mules for the transport of food. There are only some 300 people in that village. Some business men may therefore think those 1,170,000 francs spent on that road thrown away and wasted. Happily our councillors had for once consulted their hearts instead of their pockets. If you listen to the heart, then the inhabitants of Indemini are as good Swiss as the inhabitants of a big city of the North or the West of Switzerland. There was no reason why they should live till Doomsday separated from their fellow-countrymen.

Deeds of that kind are the real cement uniting together French and German and Italian-speaking cantons. The value of such deeds is not to be estimated in mere terms of cash, while the different races are alike worthy of every consideration irrespective of their numerical strength. No doubt the *Tessin people* are now prouder than ever to belong to Switzerland. They have shown this clearly, even to those few sceptics who were not yet quite sure of it, by the unanimous outburst of indignation with which they answered the insolent action of Signor Carmine and the poet of Fiume. There is certainly no canton of Switzerland more beloved nowadays by all the others than the Tessin. We welcome also the opportunity Tessin students will soon enjoy of being able to study Swiss jurisprudence in their own language. This is due to the recent creation of a *chair for Swiss Civil Law* at the university of Pavia. At last the sons of the Tessin will have a chance to become conscious of their own particular civilisation by prosecuting their studies at a university of their own tongue—a possibility Tessin law students were denied hitherto. There is no canton in Switzerland where we have less reason to fear the intimate contact of its people with their friends of the same tongue than the Tessin. The attitude of the Tessin people during the war and since has proved this beyond any doubt. Speaking of a Tessin Irredenta is mere stupidity or bad faith. We can but welcome the fact that the third element of our national entity, the Italian, gets at length a full opportunity of developing its abilities in contact with a kindred civilisation. If it will see clearer the similarities it will not fail to remark also the differences.

The longer we think about it the greater is the wonder that the Swiss people have been able to build up a state wherein three nationalities live in peace together. We are bound to be astonished at the fact the more we realise how the exaggerated principle of nationality provokes disastrous results for the peoples of Central and Eastern Europe. It may well be that the principle of the *co-operation of nationalities*—expressed by the Constitution of our country—is, in spite of the present boom of the other, the one principle of the future. At all events, it is comforting to believe it. No people is truly alive if it does not believe that it has something to give the world. Let us think that we *have*!

P. L.

A DISTINGUISHED COMPATRIOT.

Prof. Eugène Borel, advocate and professor at the Geneva University, arrived in London to take up his duties as President of the Mixed Arbitral Tribunals, created under the Treaty of Versailles as between England and Germany and between Japan and Germany.

Of the many appointments which some of our eminent lawyers have been called upon to fill in order, finally, to dispose of the numerous thorny questions originated by the clauses of the Peace Treaty, the task allotted to Prof. Borel is of far-reaching importance and one for the accomplishment of which he is singularly qualified.

Prof. Borel, having held with distinction several offices of State, such as President of the Grand Conseil, in the canton of Neuchatel, opened in 1906 a practice in Geneva, where he also lectured at the University on International Law. He was our delegate at the Second Peace Conference at the Hague and reporter on the convention establishing the rights and duties of neutrals in case of war on land. At the International Conferences in Budapest (1905) and Washington (1910) he again represented Switzerland, and at a conference held in London (1914) by the International Prison Commission he participated in the preliminary works for the International Prison Congress, which was planned to take place in this city in the following year.

During the war Colonel Borel was a member of the General Staff of the Swiss Army.

Prof. Borel has expressed the intention to miss no opportunity of getting into personal contact with our colony and its members; one of his first acts has been to become a subscriber to *The Swiss Observer*. On Tuesday next he will visit the City Swiss Club.

NOTES & GLEANINGS.

All *the Reviews* of this month have at least one important article on the *results of the Geneva Meeting and the future prospects of the League of Nations*. Add up all the good they have to say and deduct the sum of criticism, pessimism and imperialism which are thrown into the opposite scale—and you are left exactly where you stood before. You may go on guessing whether British public opinion is really favourable to the League of Nations or not.

In the *Contemporary Review* (January) we find the first critical article on *Spitteler* in English. Its author is Professor John G. Robertson, of London University, author of "History of the Literature of Germany" and various papers on Schiller, Goethe, Lessing, etc. The learned critic shows himself thoroughly acquainted, not only with Spitteler's work, but with Swiss intellectual life as well:

"If Spitteler is not a recognised notability, it is due to reasons that are far from discreditable to him. In all his long life he has never sought popular favour; with genuine Swiss doggedness he has gone his own way in singleness of purpose, has refused to abate one jot or tittle of his spiritual independence to appease the many-headed monster. He is a lonely poet, perhaps the loneliest poet in Europe; lonely not merely by temperament, but also by virtue of a depth and obscurity which make him inaccessible to those that would read as they run. His books were regarded as enigmas as they appeared; they are enigmas still, but enigmas which, we believe, are well worth the trouble of trying to read."

For the first time also the problem of the "*Free Zones of Savoy*" is explained to English readers by Mr. *Robert Dell* (*Nation*, 22nd January), the Paris correspondent of "The Manchester Guardian." We are glad to see this eminent journalist and the "Nation" fully adopting the Swiss point of view. There is now a movement on foot to bring the question before the Court of Arbitration of

the League of Nations, thus Switzerland will presently have to plead her cause before the whole world:

"The French Government is now trying to make Switzerland agree to the entire suppression of the free zones, on the strength of Article 435 of the Treaty of Versailles—one of the minor injustices of that Treaty. The desire of Switzerland to join the League of Nations and, at the same time, retain her neutrality, gave an opening for blackmailing her in regard to the zones.

". . . The two zones of Haute-Savoie have up to now been neutralised politically. The French Government was bound not to keep troops in them in time of war. This obligation, inherited by France from Sardinia, Switzerland has agreed to cancel, and the concession is a large one, in view of the geographical situation of the territory in question. Switzerland also abandons the zone of 1860, which is much the largest, having an area of about 1,200 square miles (seven-tenths of the Department of Haute-Savoie), and a population of about 160,000. But in its communication of May 5th, 1919, annexed to the Treaty of Versailles, the Swiss Federal Council explicitly refused to agree to the suppression of the economic privileges of Switzerland in the two other zones. The French Government insists on their suppression, and the negotiations have reached a deadlock. Since the other signatories of the Treaty of Versailles have washed their hands of the matter, Switzerland cannot appeal to them.

". . . One argument used in France in support of the suppression of the free zones is the fact that their products have not free entry into Switzerland. But, although, in my opinion, Switzerland should never have levied duties on imports from the zones, she was within her rights in so doing, and many products of the zones have for some years been admitted into Switzerland duty-free, or with reduced duties. Moreover, Switzerland, in the course of the present negotiations, has offered complete reciprocity, so that there is no longer any excuse for raising this question. France has refused the offer of complete Free Trade between the zones and Switzerland.

"The attitude of the French Government is difficult to understand, for the matter is of trivial importance to France.

". . . The Genevese are profoundly hurt by the attitude of France, which they cannot help feeling to be a little ungrateful in view of all that Geneva did for French prisoners during the war, and of the intense attachment of the Genevese people to the French cause. There is some fear in Geneva that, since agreement has been found impossible, France will force matters to a head by simply moving the French custom houses to the political frontier. Should that happen, it would mean a serious quarrel between France and Switzerland, and the Swiss Federal Council would, no doubt, appeal to all the signatories of the Treaties of 1815. In the general interest of Europe such a crisis must be averted somehow."

In *The Irish Independent* (8th January) there is a plea by Mr. Alfred O'Rahilly for a *Federal Constitution for Ireland*. Some of his comparisons with Swiss conditions are strikingly instructive:

"It is a mistake to think that there is merely an Ulster problem; there is also a Connemara problem, a Cork problem; there are about forty problems. Industrially, geographically, socially, linguistically, in temperament, culture and religion we are heterogeneous; and we are to remain true to ourselves, we must have far more of local liberty and religional autonomy than is allowed in the ideal of a Parliament in College Green or of two assemblies in Belfast and Dublin.

"In Switzerland there are 22 sovereign States—25 if we take into account the fact that three of the cantons are divided into half-cantons. And these cantons or States differ from one another in religion, language—Switzerland has three national languages—size, economic position; some are purely agricultural areas, others are industrial cities. And yet Switzerland is but half the size of Ireland, and its population is half a million less than ours. The County of Cork is larger than the largest of the Swiss cantons (Grisons and Berne). It is about fifty times as large as the smallest.

". . . Every county and county borough in Ireland has as much right to autonomy as has Co. Down or Belfast. If Belfast—or for that matter all Carsonia as a unit—were a Swiss canton like Berne, Geneva or Zurich, it would have far more control over its own affairs, economic, social and political, than it is given by the Westminster Partition Act. The real objection to that Act—prescinding from the question of its moral and political validity—is that it does not give Belfast and Ulster enough local liberty and power. In an Irish Confederation they ought to get far more."

The Berne Correspondent of *The Morning Post* (14th January) reviews the *position of the Swiss Federal Railways and the Hotel Industry*. He thinks that in spite of the enormous deficits of these last years:

"the situation is not so bad, because the railway materials and lines are kept in perfect order, so that Switzerland can undertake the transit traffic again as soon as circumstances allow.

". . . During the war the hotels in Berne and Zurich did good business, and some of the hotels and pensions in the tourists' resorts were kept going in the later period of the war by prisoners who were drafted from Germany and France to recover their health, and by relatives and friends who came to visit them. Since these guests went home, however, things have gone from bad to worse.

". . . This winter, however, the hotel industry seems to be recovering somewhat; the control prescriptions have been withdrawn to a great extent, so that there is practically no more trouble in that respect. The Engadine and the Bernese Oberland are now well frequented by English visitors."

The Daily Mail of 25th January announces the opening for traffic purposes of the *second Simplon Tunnel* for this summer and thinks that:

"Traffic between the Channel ports and those of the Mediterranean should then receive a great stimulus.

"The new tunnel was actually pierced simultaneously with the first tunnel to facilitate the aeration of the workings. But its transformation from a mere gallery into an international high road was started only in December, 1912. Colossal difficulties were encountered in making the first tunnel. Great hot springs had to be harnessed and canalised. At a spot about $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles from the Italian opening the rock pressure was so great that eighteen months was spent in advancing the boring fifty yards at a cost of £160,000. Each tunnel is $12\frac{1}{4}$ miles long, of which $5\frac{1}{2}$ miles is on Swiss territory.

"The first tunnel, including the gallery for the second, cost approximately £3,500,000. Both tunnels are 16ft. high.

"Thanks to electric traction, the Simplon is the cleanest tunnel of any length in Europe." A. LATT.

FINANCIAL AND COMMERCIAL NEWS FROM SWITZERLAND.

Switzerland finds herself at the present time in a similar condition to England with regard to the state of her export industries and unemployment. Many hands are compelled to be idle, especially in the embroidery, watchmaking and silk-weaving industries. The high value of the Swiss currency is preventing the extensive export of Switzerland's manifold industrial products, as foreign countries with a comparatively depreciated currency are able to sell at a much cheaper price. Though it will be very difficult to find a solution, it may be expected that the Government will consider the matter closely and do what can be done to give relief to the various industries.

The Government have decreed the withdrawal of the foreign five-franc pieces and the small Belgian silver coins circulating in Switzerland by the 30th April, 1921. It must be remembered that Switzerland is a member of the Latin Mint Union formed, in the year 1865, between herself, Belgium, France, Italy and Greece. The principal provision of the Union was that the Government's financial institutions of any one of the above-mentioned countries were bound to take in payment the silver coins of the others up to the amount to which silver is legal tender in their own country. For the five-franc pieces, however, there was no limit, as they were legal tender to any amount in all the states concerned.

In the course of time, however, this basis has been altered: In the year 1893 the Italian small silver coins circulating in the other countries of the Union were collected and returned to Italy; the same was the case with the Greek coins in 1908, and with the French ones in the year 1920. Thus only the foreign five-franc pieces and the Belgian small coins remained in circulation. According to the Government's decree, however, they are to be collected and returned to the countries of origin, so that practically nothing remains of the Latin Mint Union.

As far as the foreign five-franc pieces are concerned, the step became necessary owing to the great depreciation of the currency of the other contracting countries, especially that of France. From there a very great number of five-franc pieces were smuggled into our country to take advantage of the high value of the Swiss franc. It is most clear that 1000 Frs. in 200 five-franc pieces are not of the same value in France and in Switzerland. When their owner succeeds in transporting them into Switzerland he is able to buy there not only 1000 French francs, but (the rate of exchange being for example 40) 2500! The situation became more serious the more foreign five-franc pieces entered Switzerland and the more the price of silver went down. It must be mentioned that the basis of the liquidation of the Union is the following: All the coins are to be returned to their country of origin. When Switzerland, for example, collects French five-franc pieces to the amount of 120,000,000 Frs. she has a claim against France which will be paid by Swiss five-franc pieces withdrawn from circulation in France (for example, 30 million francs), 60 million francs in gold and 30 million francs in drafts. It is obvious that the lower the price of silver at the time, the higher is the loss on this latter portion. To avoid this risk of losses the Government issued the decree in question.

On the 14th January a conference was held in Berne between representatives of Leu & Co. and the Swiss Bankers' Union and the financial authorities of the City and the Canton of Zurich. The latter, representing City and Canton of Zurich, both of which are shareholders of Leu & Co., had appealed to the President of the Swiss Confederation, who presided over the conference. As the shareholders will lose 50 per cent. of the nominal value of the shares, which are to be reduced to 250 Frs., they demanded that at least a portion of the result of the liquidation of the German mortgages should be credited directly to them. It is not known yet whether the conference had any positive result, but it is of interest to mention that the President of the Confederation expressed his entire approval of the agreement which is securing the further existence of Leu & Co.

The Banque Commerciale de Bale is taking over the business of the Crédit de la Suisse Française (formerly Ormond & Co.) at Geneva. The Crédit de la Suisse Française had a share capital of 5,000,000 Frs.

Another Bank amalgamation is reported from Lausanne, where the Société Suisse de Banque et de Dépôts is being absorbed by the Crédit Suisse. The former institution had an authorised capital of 25 million Frs., of which 12,500,000 Frs. or 250 Frs. per share were paid up. The shares of the Société Suisse de Banque et de Dépôts are being reduced to 10 Frs.—240 Frs. being paid back to the shareholders.

The Swiss Government is at present negotiating a loan of 300,000,000 Frs. in the U.S.A., which amount it is proposed to use for the electrification of the Federal Railways.

The Canton of Berne will shortly be issuing Treasury Bonds at 6 per cent.

The Canton of Grisons is also issuing Treasury Bonds at 6 per cent.; the term is fixed at five years, the price of issue at 100 per cent. The money is destined for the increase of the capital of the canton's banking institutions from 20,000,000 Frs. to 30,000,000 Frs. (vide "Swiss Observer" No. 4). Recent reports state that the loan has been very successful.

The issue of Treasury Bonds of the Canton of Basle City has been very successful, as nearly 20,000,000 Frs. have been subscribed.

The 6 per cent. Treasury Bonds of the Confederation (vide "Swiss Observer" No. 5) are for the conversion of the bonds of the 4½ per cent. Mobilisation Loan 1916. The conversion is to be made at par. The lists are open from the 20th January to the 5th February.

COGNOMI TICINESI.

Uno de' scrittori più fecondi del Ticino è *Giovanni Anastasi*. Chi non conosce la sua "Vita ticinese," il suo "Mangiacomune," le sue "Chiacchiere del villaggio" e tanti altri studi ed abbozzi i quali sono stati pubblicati in terza edizone presso Alfredo Arnold a Lugano? Quelle pagine per l'emigrante sono un dolce ricordo delle patrie vallate, e lo straniero non troverà giuda migliore dell' Anastasi per comprendere e per amare il Ticino ed i suoi abitanti.

L'Anastasi gli conosce tutti con nome e cognome, avendo egli pubblicato prima nel "Corriere del Ticino" (1906) e poi in un fascicolo speciale un saggio sui cognomi ticinesi. Che sono belli lo sappiamo abbastanza, ma quanto sono curiosi e significativi ce lo dirà il chiaro pubblicista. In questa sua faccenda dei nomi di famiglia c'è un po' dell'anima del popolo ticinese, della sua storia, del suo umorismo, del suo carattere, dei suoi costumi. In alcuni remoti paesi della campagna e delle valli si giunse fino alla Rivoluzione francese prima che tutte le famiglie avessero regolarmente un cognome. Mentre che i signori si intitolavano dal castello o dal feudo che possedevano, al vulgo non rimaneva che il nome datogli dal prete. Poco a poco poi s'introdussro anche nella plebe i cognomi dedotti dàl paese dal mestiere, dai difetti o dalle qualità. Anzi, ancora oggi, instanti villaggi svizzeri, le famiglie non sono chiamate dai cognomi con cui figurano nei registri di stato civile, ma dai nomi dei loro vecchi. Ad illustrare questa consuetudine l'Anastasi dà l'elenco di una ventina di famiglie del villagio di Neggio nel Malcantone:

"*Cà d'Pedrota*: famiglia di Giuseppe Notari; la nonna era una Pedrotta di Magliaso;

Cà du Zambul: famiglia fu Barchi Enea: si chiamava cosi perchè era il ritrovo degli amici (far *sciambola*, in