

La tornade de La Chaux-de-Fonds

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HOME NEWS

In the course of a debate in the National Council, when the recent incidents along the Ticinese frontier were being dealt with, Federal Councillor Motta stated that the diplomatic relations between Switzerland and Italy had never been so good as they were at present.

A hurricane of exceptional violence visited the whole of the Jura region as far east as Appenzell last Saturday afternoon, the centre of precipitations being the district round La Chaux-de-Fonds. The cyclone lasted a few minutes only, but the devastation exceeds the damage reported in any similar Swiss catastrophe within living memory. Apart from the demolition of forests and whole tracts of cultivated land, about 25 farmsteads on the outskirts of La Chaux-de-Fonds have been literally razed to the ground, rendering a large number of people homeless. Though it is feared that many excursionists may have been caught in the woods, the casualties so far notified amount to 16 only and are not of a fatal nature; one boy (F. Gerber), however, who was knocked down by a tree, has since died in hospital. (We refer to the report of our Geneva correspondent in another column.)

The whole of the organising committee of the Zurich carpenters' strike was arrested yesterday week by the cantonal police. Acts of intimidation and coercion are said to be the cause of this measure, as well as a strong suspicion that the present wave of incendiarism is to be traced to some of the strike leaders. The strike, which has lasted for about four months, is expected to collapse.

The anniversary of the murder of the Italian Socialist Matteotti was the occasion of some tumultuous scenes in Geneva. The local Socialists, assisted by foreign Communists and Anarchists, had arranged a meeting, when the Italian Fascists in Geneva promptly called for a counter-demonstration. A free fight with sticks and chairs followed the firing of a revolver by one of the Communists. Ten arrests were made. It is stated that several officials (both Fascist and anti-Fascist) of the League of Nations secretariat are involved. — A similar demonstration in Basle took a more peaceful course, though the Communists left the meeting hall, as they refused to submit to the dictation of the Socialists.

During experimental work an explosion occurred in the Federal munition factory at Altdorf (Schwyz) when two workmen were killed and two others seriously wounded. A few days later two further casualties were reported from a similar cause.

Considerable excitement prevailed on the road from Bieberbrücke to Rothenturm (Schwyz) when the timely intervention of the police saved two Italian motorists from rough handling by the local population. The motorists endeavoured to overtake another car, and as the latter did not make room but accelerated, they coolly fired a few revolver shots which penetrated the petrol tank, bringing the front car to a standstill. In trying to escape and back the car, the latter remained fast on the muddy grass track, when the two impetuous motorists were apprehended.

NOTES AND GLEANINGS.

By "KYBURG."

No Halfway House between Peace and War.

Daily Herald (9th June):—

"Suppress private war, or retain it. Surrender the right to be judge in your own cause, or retain it. There is really no half-way house between these two positions."

That is the theme on which Mr. Arnold-Forster has written his admirable little book, "The Victory of Reason," on the pacific settlement of international disputes. He believes that there is no half-way house between two policies that are radically opposed; he believes that in our day and generation the right of private war is both

dangerous and wrong; he believes that the right to be judge in your own cause is illogical and out of date; and he believes, above all, that, in the modern struggle for the rule of law, instead of force, the British Government should lead the way.

If it were to do so, the British Government would only be continuing the work of the British statesmen who were the pioneers of international arbitration, as Mr. Arnold-Forster shows in his brilliant chapter on the growth of the Arbitral principle. But, alas! instead of leading, Great Britain to-day is far behind most other civilised countries in readiness to give up the right of war and accept compulsory arbitration; behind, for example, France, Belgium, Poland, and Czechoslovakia, whom so often we denounce as militarist disturbers.

Sir Austen Chamberlain, indeed, has brought us to the ludicrous position of urging arbitration on other nations, while we refuse it for ourselves. And, as Mr. Arnold-Forster tells us, we refuse it not only when it is offered to us in a great general treaty like the Geneva Protocol, but even when it is offered in a simple treaty with a single other nation—for example, with the inoffensive Swiss. For what dread quarrel with the Government of Berne are we to keep our hands free of entangling engagement which might oblige us to accept the impartial verdict of the law?

No one who believes that a radical transformation is required in the foreign policy of Britain can afford to be without this book. There may be some small inaccuracies in its pages, inevitable when so great an argument is compressed into so small a space. But they are trifles compared with its great merits. It is full of valuable information.

It produces, for example, an "all-in" arbitration treaty, ratified in 1919, between Great Britain and Uruguay—a precedent, indeed, if only Sir Austen wanted one. It shows how even the U.S.A. have accepted the jurisdiction of the Permanent Court of International Justice in Conventions about liquor-smuggling made with Germany, Italy, and the Scandinavian countries. It shows that no international dispute among the many hundreds that have gone to arbitration has ever ended in the catastrophe of war.

There is nothing better about this book than its restraint. Mr. Arnold-Forster exaggerates in nothing. He gives a moderate and, for that reason, an impressive account of the great feeling there is throughout the world for further progress towards general and compulsory arbitration. And in doing so he emphasises the important point that, as a result of this feeling, the real issue is not merely technical; "an immense moral and psychological problem is involved."

Arbitration is not merely a lawyers' term. "It represents a victory of reason, which we have got to win." If Mr. Arnold-Forster has the readers he deserves, the day of victory will be nearer than it seems.

I earnestly recommend this pamphlet (Hogarth Press, 2s.) to my readers, and would ask them to circulate it among their friends. It will open their eyes in many ways and give them fresh food for thought and a clear orientation for ideas which may awake ideals.

Perhaps it is meet that I should add the following article from the *Manchester Guardian* (June 9), because it is a further example of the desirability of Arbitration:—

Swiss Anxiety on Free Zones.

There is growing impatience on the part of the Swiss nation on the continued dilatory methods of France concerning the ratification of the Free Zones Arbitration Treaty. Last night, immediately after the opening of the summer session of the Swiss Parliament, M. Rochaix, in the name of all Geneva members of Parliament, without distinction of political parties, addressed an interpellation to the Swiss Government inquiring what is now the exact situation. He added that Geneva desired the early ratification of this treaty by France, not only in her own special interests, but also in the interest of League of Nations ideals regarding arbitration, of which France itself was a champion at Geneva.

The Swiss Foreign Minister, M. Motta, in reply said that the French Ambassador at Berne, M. Hennessy, had been twice to Paris with a view of hastening ratification. M. Briand had promised to press for the discussion of the arbi-

tration treaty in the French Chamber this month. Switzerland could take further steps, and must hope that this promise would be fulfilled. As to the construction of French Custom-houses on the Swiss frontier, which had created much uneasiness at Geneva, the Swiss Government had made representations against this premature attitude of France. The French Government gave pledges that French Custom-houses would be removed if the Court of International Justice should decide that the free zones still existed and if no voluntary agreement between France and Switzerland on the abolition of the free zones should afterwards be concluded.

New Swiss Railway.

The Times (3rd June):—

Surveys are now well advanced in connection with the proposed building of a narrow-gauge railway under the San Bernardino Pass, linking the Swiss cantons Grisons and Ticino, or Southern Bavaria, the Vorarlberg, and Eastern Switzerland with the St. Gothard line and Northern Italy. This is to connect Bellinzona (Ticino) with Thuisis (Grisons), but as it already exists between Bellinzona and Mesocco, the scheme only involves the boring of a tunnel three and one-sixth miles long under the San Bernardino Pass and the construction of a 38-mile section from Mesocco to Thuisis.

It is now estimated that the total cost of that construction will be £1,360,000, of which £280,000 will be given by the Cantonal Governments and Communes interested, as well as by the Federal Railways, while the company which would undertake that construction would contribute another £480,000; as for the remainder, it is presumed that it will be contributed by private capital. The receipts of the new line are estimated at £67,200 and the expenses at £39,040 a year, thus leaving a surplus of £28,160, which would be sufficient to pay the interest on the capital invested. The San Bernardino line is not intended to compete with the Italian scheme of the Stelvio, but to accelerate and facilitate the communications between the Grisons and Northern Italy.

The Brig-Furka-Andermatt-Oberalp railway line—which is connecting Cantons Grisons and Valais—will be finished in the course of June. The construction of that most interesting line was begun just before the war, but it was never completed owing to lack of funds, and the Brig-Gletsch section only was open to traffic. The line was last year bought by the Visp-Zermatt Railway, and work was at once started in order to complete the other sections, the ballast of which was in some places ready. The Gletsch-Andermatt section will be opened on June 26th. It passes under the Furka Pass (7,990 ft.) in a tunnel 2,138 yards long, and its total length is 13½ miles. The Andermatt-Oberalp-Disentis line, which is 13½ miles long, will be opened on June 15th, and as from July 1st four trains will run in each direction. This line will be a most convenient and picturesque means for going from Canton Valais to the Grisons and to the Engadine.

LA TORNADE DE LA CHAUX-DE-FONDS.

Ce qui s'est passé samedi soir entre 5 et 6 heures autour de La Chaux-de-Fonds dépasse en horreur le souvenir des ouragans les plus terribles qui de tous temps se sont abattus sur la Suisse. Un ami, propriétaire d'un garage qui arrive de là-bas pour le Salon de l'Automobile—dont je me proposais de vous entretenir—m'a fait le récit suivant:

"Il pleuvait avec rage lorsque soudain le vent s'éleva, augmentant progressivement de vitesse et de puissance, pour tourner bientôt à la tempête. Le ciel avait l'air de vouloir tomber sur la terre tant nous avions l'impression que les nuées s'abattaient sur nos campagnes. La pluie était si serrée qu'on aurait dit des masses d'eaux. Soudain le ciel s'assombrit jusqu'à devenir d'un noir opaque nous privant presque entièrement de lumière. Il grêla. Mais les grêlons moyens étaient de la grosseur d'une noix ou même d'un œuf. Cette colonne massive de matière poussée par le vent en trombe, s'avavançait en tourbillonnant brisant tout sur son passage, saccageant, détruisant. Il faisait un bruit d'enfer. A vingt mètres des cloches qui sonnaient à toutes volées on entendait rien. Nous vécûmes des minutes terribles, jamais de mémoire d'homme, nous n'avions dans nos régions, entendu et vu un phénomène semblable...."

"Lorsqu'un calme relatif fit enfin place à la tourmente, à la terreur succéda le désespoir. Tout autour de nous ce n'était que destruction et anéantissement. Les cheminées et les tuiles des maisons étaient arrachées; toutes les fleurs, toutes les

"plantes étaient non pas enlevées mais rasées comme au couteau; et lorsqu'on élevait le regard au loin, on sentait la campagne aimée, dévastée comme par la pire des guerres..."

"Vous connaissez la catastrophe en elle-même, les journaux en ont parlé. D'après les premiers rapports officiels le désastre est inexprimable, bien plus grave et important qu'on ne se l'était même imaginé au début. 25 maisons ont été entièrement détruites; on ne compte plus le nombre de celles qui l'ont été partiellement. Des kilomètres et des kilomètres de forêts ont été littéralement fauchés; il ne s'agit pas d'une mais de 17 forêts; près de 45 fermes sont entièrement anéanties. Les paysans sont dans le désespoir et l'abattement le plus complet. Ils sont d'autant plus déprimés que les assurances ne couvrent pas les dommages causés par les forces naturelles."

"Toutes les vitres sur 3 kilomètres à la ronde sont brisées. Par une chance inexplicable et extraordinaire le centre même de La Chaux-de-Fonds a été relativement épargné, mais déjà la périphérie est partout atteinte. Les environs le sont davantage encore. Mais ou le mal s'affirme dans toute son horreur c'est lorsque l'on compte plusieurs morts et plus de 50 blessés. D'autre part nombreux sont les amateurs de la nature qui par ce samedi après-midi s'enfoncèrent confiants dans cette forêt qui git à l'heure actuelle pêle-mêle sur le sol. Ont-ils tous pu se sauver en temps utile? Combien sont ensevelis sous ces troncs énormes? On en sait rien encore au moment où je vous parle, il faut laisser aux services le temps d'enquêter et de s'organiser."

"Les pertes en bétail sont aussi considérables. Une grande partie de ce qui n'était pas à l'alpage a péri. On voit par ci par là dans les prés des vaches mortes retirées des décombres. La plupart des routes, tous les chemins, sont barrés par des arbres abattus."

"Enfin la première estimation du sinistre cépasse 2,500,000 francs de dégâts. C'est là un chiffre énorme et qui pourtant ne dépeint pas la misère et la tristesse de ceux qui dans leur vie et leurs biens ont été touchés par cet épouvantable cyclone."

"Dès que l'on est sur la crête qui domine La Chaux-de-Fonds on voit sur une distance de plus de 30 kilomètres un véritable chemin, une trouée affreuse qui saccage tout; près, forêts, fermes, jardins, routes, ruisseaux; c'est la voie que s'est créée la tornade. On dirait les traces laissées par un géant inique et malfaisant sans souci des conséquences de son passage..."

"Il ne fait de doute pour personne que tous les Suisses s'uniront pour venir en aide à ceux que les éléments ont si injustement et si terriblement éprouvés. Et nous savons, n'est-il pas vrai, qu'on ne fait pas un vain appel à notre vieille devise: "Un pour tous, tous pour un..."

Ainsi s'est exprimé mon interlocuteur. J'ai pensé que vous seriez heureux de recueillir ce témoignage d'un assistant à cette terrible soirée. Je voulais vous parler de bien autre chose, de l'inauguration grandiose du Palais des Expositions à Genève et du Salon de l'Automobile, mais j'estime que pour de bons Suisses, il n'y a rien aujourd'hui à ajouter. "UN SUISSE QUELCONQUE."

RE-APPEARANCE OF JULIETTE WIHL.

Our musical friends, particularly those who have previously heard Mme. Juliette Wihl play, will be interested to learn that this accomplished pianist is to give a Chopin Recital next Wednesday evening at Wigmore Hall.

Mme. Wihl is of Belgian nationality, but is well known in Zurich, having lived there for six years, giving many recitals during that time. A successful tour in Switzerland, Belgium and Paris has recently been concluded, and having married, Mme. Wihl now lives in London, so friends and musical admirers may hope for more frequent opportunities of hearing her fine playing.

The programme for Wednesday next is most attractive, and Mme. Wihl being above all an interpreter of Chopin, we anticipate that her highly developed art will be shewn in all its beauty on this occasion. R. D. M.

"MATTINA DI PENTECOSTA."

No, non è il "Motto d'Arbino" che si muove, che sta per cadere, che vuol darsi in pascolo ad uno spettacolo grandioso..."

No, il "nostro Arbino" per intanto, è ancora roccia salda, monte che si erge maestoso, che chiude l'orizzonte a tergo della stazione di Bellinzona, come fida sentinella della pittoresca città dei tre castelli..."

Sono i laghi che si muovono... i laghi che scompaiono... sono i ghiacciai che si sciogliono, i fiumi che straripano, i laghi che ingrossano ed escono dal loro letto..."

D'alcuni giorni, una vera bufera si era scatenata sul nostro Ticino: soffiava un vento freddo, pioveva a torrenti; i fiumi son scesi inferociti, paurosi, torbidi, immensi, ad ingrossare il lago; si udiva da lungi il suono cupo e minaccioso delle acque sconvolte, delle onde che si infrangevano sulla sponda... le acque del lago, già si limpide e calme, erano oscure, misteriose, grigie come il cielo, come la natura tutta.

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Il lago, chiuso fra una cerchia di monti come in una cornice naturale, si agita, si ribella, si muove...

Il Ceresio, il Verbano straripano... le acque escono, marciano alla conquista della città... la passeggiata che costeggia il lago è completamente sommersa; il paese da quella parte, presenta un aspetto pietoso! tutto invaso dalle acque, tutto a pozzanghere; i detriti, accumulati dalle onde, si rovesciano sul lido e sulle piazze, delle quali le acque hanno preso possesso! e questo inondano pure case e giardini, sommergono ubertose campagne...

In pochi giorni che cambiamento di scena! quanta devastazione, quanta tristezza in quella natura agitata e sconvolta! Era così tranquilla, così in pace... così placido, trasparente quel lago, nel quale si rifletteva il cielo azzurro purissimo; le sue acque erano appena increspate da morbide onde, incastonate come gemme, da rigogliosa vegetazione, da ridenti, deliziosi giardini!

Ma tutto passa... e in questo mattino di maggio, in questo mattino mistico di Pentecoste, è tornata a riorifire la primavera smagliante, con un sole luminoso che trionfa sulla natura imbronciata, le acque del lago si ritirano e rientrano frettolosamente nel loro letto, vi si riadagiano come petite, mortificate, ritornano limpide, azzurre, dorate.

Così si mutano vicendevolmente, incessantemente le leggi naturali... si trasformano, come la nostra vita... ieri la tempesta e l'alluvione, oggi il sole... ieri lagrime e sospiri, oggi sorrisi e gioie...

E mattina di Pentecoste! e dall'un capo all'altro della terra, il popolo credente acclama imponente nelle Basiliche che "Gesù regna, Gesù impera!" T. LUNGH-REZZONICO.

QUOTATIONS from the SWISS STOCK EXCHANGES.

Table with columns for BONDS, SHARES, and various stock prices for June 8 and June 15. Includes entries like Confederation 3% 1903, Federal Railways 3 1/2% A-K, Swiss Bank Corporation, etc.

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