

# Home news

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# The Swiss Observer

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## HOME NEWS

It is semi-officially stated that the Russian Government may be expected to rescind in the near future the general boycott declared against Switzerland at the time of the Worowski murder.

As a consequence of an official warning from the Federal Council to the effect that a continuation of his hostile criticism of the Italian Government in the Ticinese paper "Libera Stampa" would be followed by an order of expulsion, Sig. Angelo Tonello has resigned from the editorial staff of that paper. (Angelo Tonello was formerly an Italian Socialist deputy, and took refuge in Switzerland last May in order to evade persecution by Fascists.)

Plenty of political excitement is in store for the Geneva electors in the near future, as apart from Cantonal and Federal matters they will have to give their opinion on four initiative requests for the submission of which sufficient votes have been collected. They deal with widely different matters of local interest. The first seeks to liberate dental practitioners from the necessity of obtaining a Swiss diploma, which, as the law stands, is a *sine qua non* before this profession can be exercised. A local dentist with an American certificate, whom the authorities fined and debarred from practising, is the promoter of this initiative, which is not likely to find favour with the electors. — The second proposal is in the nature of a sequel to the recent police scandal, when at the end of last November houses of ill-repute were officially closed; this arbitrary action seems to have offended the sense and notion of personal liberty cherished by a number of Genevese. — The third initiative attempts to strengthen the hands of the tax collector by introducing the publication of individual private assessments; the demand was revived by the Socialists when during a recent liquidation it transpired that a local trader had lost Frs. 40,000, whilst he religiously used to declare and pay tax on Frs. 300. — The so-called "centimes additionnels" are the bone of contention in the fourth initiative; up till now this supplementary taxation, which was introduced barely twelve months ago, has been calculated on a percentage basis, whilst the Socialists wish to have it levied "progressively," i.e., in the same manner as the income and property tax is computed.

A spirited discussion, intermingled with some hilarity, preceded a Socialist motion in the Basle Grosse Rat, which besought the Federal Council to demand the recall of the Italian Consul-General in Basle; the motion was defeated by a narrow majority. (See Special Article.)

A new prison is to be erected in the canton of Vaud at a cost of about 2½ million francs. This will be built on the Orbe plain and replace the existing cantonal prison in Lausanne, which is evidently too small for present-day requirements. A cattle and dairy farm, to be run by prisoners, as well as a home for inebriates, will form part of the new institution.

Owing, it is stated, to disagreement with the native commandant of the Ticinese Mountain Infantry Regiment No. 30, National Councillor Col. Dollfus has asked to be relieved of the command of the 15th Brigade. It is also rumoured that Col. Dormann, commander of the 5th Division, contemplates a similar step.

The resident population of the town of Zurich at the end of 1925 is given as 207,418, which shows an increase of 2,200 as compared with the close of 1924.

All the gymnastic societies in the canton of Aargau, without regard to religion or politics, are to receive a State subsidy in the future.

The picturesque electric tramway line from Zug to the Zugerberg was the scene last Friday (Jan. 15th) of a fatal accident. From some yet unexplained cause the brakes of one of the cars refused to act, and the latter rolled down the mountain; at one of the curves the car left the rails and

somersaulted twice, burying the ten passengers under the debris. The driver, a youth and a girl lost their lives on the spot, one boy was extricated in a hopeless condition, three other boys, all pupils of the college on the Zugerberg, were transported to the hospital, and the remainder escaped with bruises and shock.

A curious mishap took place on the outskirts of a farmstead near Sisikon, where a gang of workmen were felling trees. The trunk of a heavy beech-tree got out of control on the icy ground, and, gliding down a short incline, pierced a farmhouse, where it became embedded in such a way that the fore and aft parts of the trunk projected on opposite sides of the building. Apart from the destruction of the chimney, practically no other damage was done, though the occupant was having dinner with his family on the ground floor at the time.

M. Paul Adrian, the director of the Federal Mint, is celebrating the 40th anniversary of his service with this institution, which he entered on January 1st, 1886, as a book-keeper.

An inmate of a Zurich old-age institution, Frau A. B. Kollhop-Brandenberger, has recently celebrated her 103rd birthday.

The late Mr. Louis Reichenbach, the head of the well-known St. Gall embroidery export business of the same name, bequeathed Frs. 100,000 to charitable institutions.

## NOTES AND GLEANINGS.

By "KYBURG."

### Winter Sports.

The very mention of the two words has assumed a fresh and somewhat personal significance for most of us who—*noles, volens*—have had to take part in Winter Sports, even if it were only the very sporting way in which we have had to pick our way to the station every day. A rather heavy crop of accidents has been reported, especially during the last week-end, and, unfortunately, one of the worst affected a very dear friend of "Kyburg," who, luckily, however is promised a full recovery by and by. Once again I have been made to remember the sharp difference in our feelings between reading of accidents which have happened to strangers and similar mishaps which have befallen one dear to oneself. And I have wondered again whether, perhaps, the Millennium will be possible only when we human beings are capable of feeling the same pangs of anguish, the same tingling joys whether bad or good experienced by one of our dearest or by comparative strangers, in other words, when we all really feel like brothers and sisters and the very word "stranger" belongs to the past. I wonder?

Meanwhile, I have come across a rather good article anent—

### Skating.

in the *London Opinion* (16th inst.):—

The skating, as I sit down to write this article, is all over. The moment I heard people were skating, I made a dash for my study, but it was too late. Whilst I was ascending the stairs, the thaw came and the skating was finished.

Never mind, there may be some more skating this winter, so put this issue of 'London Opinion' where you can get at it without a moment's delay. Do not put off reading the article until you are sure the ice bears. Read it when you are told by the postman or the butcher—they always know first about these things—that there is a chance of the ice bearing. Then, should you take the ice, you will be a well-informed skater.

The reason why there is so little skating in England is simply because the English are so leisurely. We got one day of frost, and nobody takes any notice. We get two days, and still the skaters are supine. On the third day we read that the National Skating Committee are about to meet in the Fens. "About to meet," mind you! By the time they have met, and put motions and amendments and carried everything *nem. con.*, the skating is well over for another year.

The National Skating Committee ought to take up their quarters on the Fens from the 1st of October. They should watch the water day and night. The moment the first film of ice appears they should blow bugles, fire guns, spring rattles, and call meetings of the Committee. There would then be a chance of settling the champion-

ship for the year. One hour of skating would do. A really good Fen skater can go all round Lincolnshire in an hour, and even call on his friends in passing.

As for less ambitious skaters, they don't deserve to skate at all. In a country like this, when real ice skating in the open takes place about once in twelve years, it is clearly ridiculous to keep your skates in the loft and let them get rusty. Just as the warriors of old slept in their breast-plates and thigh-shields—I forget the technical term, but you have seen pictures of what I mean—well, just as they slept in those, knowing very well that if they didn't, the enemy would cut them to pieces long before they could get the damned things fixed, so the keen modern skater should sleep in his skates.

When I was younger, and had all the time there was in the holidays for skating, I invariably did that. For one thing, it took about three hours to fix your skates to your boots. You first of all bored a hole in the heel of your boot, and you then screwed the skate round and round until it "bit." Sometimes it bit and sometimes it didn't. When it didn't bite, you had to fill up the hole with matches and bits of stick, and try again.

One thing we all knew, and that was that the skate which had once bitten was twice shy. If you rashly unscrewed it at the end of the day's skating, it would never bite really well a second time into the same pair of heels. So the wise skater left his skates on his boots.

Next came the problem of how to get home from the ice. Your laces were frozen, and your fingers were so cold you could never unravel the knots. So you either walked home in your skates, which did them practically no good at all, or you got some kind person to carry you. Once home, going to bed in your skates was a simple matter.

Skating fatalities were more common then than to-day, but there were no "popular" papers, and so nobody heard of your being drowned—outside your immediate circle. We used to begin skating long before the ice would bear, and we went on skating when it was rapidly thawing. I can remember skating with an inch of water on the ice. I can also remember playing hockey in that water, and falling on my back, and continuing with the game until I was as dry as before. We must have been pretty keen in those days.

There was always a lovely place marked "Danger." That meant the deepest part of the lake, and running water. This was the spot we liked best. In fact, we invented a simple but exciting game to be played on this spot. You took a ball or a small piece of wood, and you slid it almost to the edge of the thin ice. The game was to get it back.

A lot of nice people were drowned at this game. I suppose they were too heavy for it. They should have played something else. Small boys, being light and quick, won all the honours. It was wonderful how much of the ice you could skate on which had been marked off and put out of bounds. Once inside this boundary, balancing yourself on a quarter of an inch of ice, you could insult all the older and heavier people to your heart's content.

It was a heaven-sent chance. If they came after you, in they went to a certainty. If you went in, they would have to fetch you out. Looking back, I think this was about the only strategic position for the small boy with a load of insults which would be considered impregnable.

Modern skating, of course, is quite different. You do not, if you are a serious skater, spend the winter in England. You go to Switzerland, and there you can skate all the time—if there is no snow.

The year I went there *was* snow. They showed me where the rink should be, and told me I could skate on it if I cared to remove the snow. The snow was only about six feet deep, so I took on the job.

I worked at that task for a fortnight. At the end of a fortnight, a few friends and myself had cleared a nice little patch of ice about fifty yards square. "To-morrow," we said gleefully, "we will skate!"

On rising in the morning, we found our patch marked "Reserved for Champions Only." We were not exactly champions—at skating. So we returned to our native land, poorer but full of strange oaths.

### Ski-ing Teams.

The British University Ski-ing Team won a