

Notes and gleanings

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It cannot, of course, be that all the tolerance, all the courtesy and all the wisdom in the world belong exclusively to the Swiss. There is nothing in their blood which sets them apart from all other peoples, and the secret of their political sobriety can only be the fact that they have had the courage to put into practice some of the social measures our own politicians promise us so glibly and withhold from us so stubbornly.

The Legislature consists of a Council of States and a National Council, the first having two members from each of the twenty-two Cantons of the Confederation, and the second having some two hundred deputies elected in the ordinary way. The Government itself consists of seven Federal Councillors, of whom one acts as President of the Confederation, with the not excessive salary of a little over £1,000 a year.

This principle of sacrificing one's self for the community is to be found in every branch of Swiss life. In all property disputes, for example, the wish of the community is put before the wish of the individual. One-fifth of a person's private property may be disposed of in any way by will; half of the rest goes to the husband or wife, and the other half to the children, who share it equally. Public banks may not pay their shareholders more than six per cent., and the surplus goes in part to the capital of the bank and in part to the State. Although there is a very mild form of compulsory military service, the country must settle its disputes by arbitration and never by war.

The twenty-two Cantons enjoy a very great measure of autonomy, and, indeed, until the war they were responsible for the collection of all taxation. The regulations in these Cantons vary very greatly, but they have all one point in common—the principle of service for the benefit of the community.

In what other country, for example, would one find roads closed to motor traffic on Sundays on account of the number of pedestrians who are on the road on that day? The jumble of architecture in our new Regent-street would, of course, have been impossible in Switzerland, where plans of new houses must be approved by the local authorities.

In Zurich, for example, scaffolding must be put up at least a fortnight before the foundations of the house are laid, in order to show the size of the proposed building, so that any complaints as to the blocking out of light or air can be made in good time. Landlords nearer town may be obliged to sell land if required for building purposes, and speculative building is not allowed. The State insures all property, and railways, trams, busses, etc., are public property, run entirely for the public benefit.

This careful study of the general welfare extends even to the apartment houses, which have strict regulations, some of them a little annoying to the individual, but all of them welcomed by the community. What would we not give, for example, for a prohibition of all musical instruments after ten o'clock at night, except on rare occasions at carnival time?

Switzerland is an oasis of peace and good order in a chaotic desert of national rivalries and intrigues. Few people are prouder than the Swiss of their traditions, but few have so fully realised that patriotism does not consist of taking someone else's territory as soon as you have the opportunity to do so.

Immediately after the war the Austrian province of Vorarlberg wanted to become the twenty-third Canton of Switzerland. It is a province rich in timber and water power, such as would have been coveted by any of the Signatories of the Peace Treaty, but the Swiss, in their quiet wisdom, refused the request.

One does not only learn from the Great Powers, and our legislators would be well advised to study the Swiss Confederation, for here they have democracy in fact, rather than the fictional democracy with which most of us have to be content.

I trust that Communists living in Switzerland, or trying to go there in order to stir up ill-feeling, will have read or will read what the *Daily Herald* says. After all, when everything is said and done, our wonderfully beautiful country does manage things: economical and political rather well, and in many respects merits the praise bestowed upon it not infrequently by qualified observers.

Dr. Adolf Keller.

A very interesting article around Dr. Adolf Keller, whom a number of my readers will remember in connection with the *Wissen und Leben* publications, appears in the *British Weekly* of March 25th, and is, I think, well worth reading.

Unwanted Gold.

Daily Express (30th March):—

The Swiss Government intend shortly to launch a loan of £2,000,000. American bankers who learned of this proposal immediately offered the amount at moderate interest. The Swiss authorities, however, informed Wall-street that the loan would be an internal one.

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franc have caused American financiers to place their surplus gold in large quantities in Swiss industries and commerce. Swiss banks, on the other hand, have just lent £1,800,000 to the Grand Duchy of Baden.

"Le Démocrate" strongly opposes the American offer. "The financial imperialism of Wall-street," it says, "menaces us with a slavery greater than the pointed helmets of the late Kaiser's generals."

The moral of the above is the world-old truth that too much of anything is not good. The accumulation of wealth tokens is as calamitous in the long run as their artificial depreciation, and I think it extremely likely that, in spite of quite different conditions and circumstances, the United States will by and by experience a crisis similar to that which now manifests itself in Germany, where unemployment figures indicate nearly 2,000,000 unemployed, following upon contraction of exports, i.e., following upon the deflation which has set in. In the U.S.A. the same result—only, of course, not in such proportions—is bound to come by the opposite process.

The *Daily Express* of 29th March had the following re—

Dr. Nansen as Mediator.

Dr. Nansen, the famous explorer and former Minister for Norway in London, intends to intervene unofficially in order to straighten out the present diplomatic deadlock between the Swiss and the Soviet, so that the Soviet may attend the preparatory Disarmament Conference to be held in Geneva in May, states the "National-Ztg." of Basle. Dr. Nansen knows Tchitcherin, and might succeed, it is added.

I have not seen this bit of news anywhere else, but hope it is true, and that mediation efforts will finally succeed, as they ought to.

Ex-Kaiser's Residence.

The widely circulated news of the ex-Kaiser's intention to settle on the shores of Lake Lugano are contradicted by the *Daily Telegraph's* following item, which appeared on the 24th March:—

A telegram received in the London office of the Swiss Federal Railways from their headquarters in Switzerland states semi-officially that there is no truth in the rumour that the ex-Kaiser is likely to settle in Switzerland, or that negotiations are proceeding for the purchase on his behalf of an estate near Lugano.

It is now stated that the estate in question, the Villa Roccabella, has been rented by the ex-Crown Prince, who has taken it for his own personal residence and intends to stay there for some months at least.

The Villa Roccabella is situate on a rugged rock at the northern extremity of Lake Maggiore, among surroundings of great beauty. It is about half-a-mile from the station of Gordola, on the line from Bellinzona to Locarno, and abounds in sub-tropical flora. A considerable colony of Germans have already settled in the area.

Not that it would seem to be so very important whether the ex-Kaiser really does settle finally in Switzerland or stays in Holland. He is anyhow finished as a politically potential power, I should think, and I doubt whether modern thought would like to allow a St. Helena again!

Kaiserism, in any shape or form, is possible only where economic principles are trampled under-foot, and to blame the Kaiser, or Tsar, or Mussolini, or tyrant, or whatever his description may be in each separate and individual case, is probably not quite right nor just, seeing that he is only the casual figure-head of a vicious and wrong economical principle which allows of such political excrescence.

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