

# Home news

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# The Swiss Observer

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## HOME NEWS

Increased tobacco duties, especially on cigarettes, estimated to secure another 10 million francs, are contemplated by the Federal Treasury.

A singular case occupied the Geneva Courts last week. A young Swiss who had enlisted in the French Foreign Legion managed to make his escape from Algiers and had for this purpose appropriated from the store room certain articles necessary for his hazardous venture. On his presence in Geneva being discovered the French authorities brought a charge against him for theft. The Court dismissed the case on the ground that the offence committed on French territory was the outcome of a particular contract which was not recognised nor enforceable in Swiss Law.

The canton of Glaris proposes to limit dental practice to those only who possess the Federal diploma; present practitioners, devoid of this qualification but practising since May, 1922, will not be disturbed in their profession.

Dr. Cesar Roux, who recently resigned the Direction of the Surgical Section of the Cantonal Hospital in Lauanne, has been nominated Grand Officer of the Italian Order of the Crown in recognition of his great services to former Italian medical students enjoying his instruction and lectures at the Lausanne University.

Dr. Paul Usteri died on the 1st inst. in Zurich, at the age of 73, after a short illness. He studied law and after taking his degrees started his public career at the age of 25 as a town clerk. He was a great authority on insurance matters, being from 1912 to 1921 President of the then newly-created Schweiz. Unfallversicherungsanstalt. For 23 years he represented Zurich in the Federal States Council, where he was one of the pioneers in the movement for the establishment of the Swiss National Bank, the Presidency of which he resigned only a few weeks ago. He was also President of the Board of the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*. With his death disappears one of the most distinguished public men of modern Switzerland.

## NOTES AND GLEANINGS.

### Alpine Electric Power.

Far-reaching conclusions are contained in a survey under this heading in the *Outlook* of Jan. 29th. Switzerland is thought likely to become, within another decade, the main power-station of Central Europe; up till now barely one quarter of the potential water-power has been developed. The annual production of energy of all the power stations amounts to 3600 million kilowatt-hours, i.e. 920 kilowatt-hours per head of population. From the point of view of production of energy, Switzerland probably ranks first amongst all countries, considering her population. Here are a few figures relating to the utilisation of that force: 50% of it is used for lighting, heating and the production of force; 23% is taken up by the metal and electro-technical industries; 15% is exported abroad; 12% is absorbed by the electric railways. It may be added that 95% of the Swiss towns and villages are supplied with electrical energy. The following extracts show the possibilities in the path of the present transformation:—

In the field of electrical power, the creation of an Alpine power block in Europe must be one of the most significant developments of this century. Switzerland, Northern Italy, Austria, Bavaria and France have been practically welded together as one great zone served by water-power taken from the lakes and rivers of the Alps. Between them they have harnessed more than 7,000,000 h.p., and saved annually more than 20,000,000 tons of coal. To adopt the method of comparison, they have brought to the service of their communities the work of 200 million men, the equivalent, even as in Cincinnati, of nine additional slaves for every man, woman and child in the Alpine power block. More than this, they have, through economy in fuel, added £40,000,000 to the annual potential wealth of their countries and allowed the growth of new industries to exceed even the most optimistic estimates of a decade ago. In other words, the

equalisation of economic powers has resulted in the creation of an industrial zone in Europe, which may, in time, exceed, in value and quality of output, the finest achievements of the great zones already established in the Ruhr, in Northern France, in Upper Silesia and Britain. The objection may be made that, apart from power, which includes, of course, all the heating qualities of fuel, essential raw materials are not to be found in this zone. If, however, we examine the raw materials used in many industries of fundamental importance—textiles, paper-manufacture, chemicals, food-preparation in all its branches, aluminium production and the preparation of special alloys—the disadvantages of situation are not particularly apparent. In iron and steel, heavy engineering and shipbuilding, the new power zone can never be at all effective, but, in a multitude of other industries, in which imported materials are used and a high degree of workmanship obtains—in the aggregate much more valuable than the heavy industries—the Alpine industrial region can and will be directly competitive.

A Commission, appointed by the French Government to study the economic and technical conditions underlying the harnessing of the Rhine for power production, examined the whole problem of scientific utilisation of water-power and recommended the formation of a complete system of interconnected main transmission lines which would permit distribution of power over the whole of Alsace and the Eastern area. Such a system would play the same part in the transport of electrical energy as the main railway systems for the transport of goods. The first stage in the development of such a scheme would lie in the construction of a super-power station at Kembs, legislation regarding which is now under consideration by the French Chamber. The significance of this move is clear. France recognises, as clearly as the German industrialists of the Ruhr, that the formation of one enormous power-zone from Lorraine to the Alps, from the great iron and steel areas to the electro-chemical and electro-metallurgical areas of the south, constitutes perhaps the greatest single possibility of a rapid increase in industrial wealth. With the Ruhr connected to Switzerland and Lorraine to the Upper Rhine, a new economic unit is created, and there is little doubt that co-operation between France, Germany, Switzerland, and ultimately Italy, will result. When this is done, the tariff problem will fade into the background; interconnection across the Rhine and over the Alpine system will create in itself an economic solidarity beyond the control of politics or the recommendations of international conferences. The change effected has in it all the strength of a natural economic process which nothing can stop. The future of industrial Europe lies along the Rhine and in the Alps.

### Lugano to the Engadine.

The project of the new great motor road, which practically links Lugano to St. Moritz, has now become a *fait accompli*. The *Manchester Guardian*, in its issue of Feb. 2nd, gives a description of the route:—

The project of a new motoring route between Lugano and the Engadine, discussed for many years, has at last been accepted by the Grand Council at Bellinzona and will be put into execution towards the end of this year. The road will run through some of the loveliest scenery in Europe, skirting the picturesque village of Castagnola on the slope of Monte Bré, following the shore of the lake at a slightly higher level, until it descends to the famous Rock of Gandria, which will be tunnelled to within a short distance of that typical labyrinth of huddled houses, one of the most popular subjects with artists in all Switzerland.

After Gandria the southernmost frontier of the Swiss Confederation is almost within a stone's throw, but the path ceases abruptly and the precipitous slopes of the Val Solda form a natural barrier. Those who have read Fogazzaro's masterpiece, "Il Piccolo Mondo Antico" (The Little Old-time World), will certainly remember Don Franco's difficulty in escaping the frontier guards at this point as he hurried home to his dead child. Indeed, the whole neighbourhood is associated with Fogazzaro and his works. The Val Solda was his mother's country, and the house where he lived and worked—flanked by its slender cypresses—will be an interesting object on the new road.

It is not doubtful, however, how he would have received the news of this project. He

## ANNIVERSARIES OF SWISS EVENTS.

February 13th, 1876.—Revision of the Constitution in the canton of Wallis.

February 17th, 1827.—J. H. Pestalozzi dies in Brugg.

February 18th, 1218.—Death of Berchtold II., of Zaeringen, the founder of Berne. In 1191 he erected as a bridgehead the castle of Nideck, from which the town gradually developed to the west. The first documentary mention of Berne dates from the year 1208.

February 19th, 1803.—"Act of Mediation," largely influenced by Bonaparte. It established a special Constitution for each of the nineteen cantons; six new ones were created, i.e., St. Gall, Grisons, Aargau, Thurgau, Ticino and Vaud. These nineteen cantons formed a Confederation without any standing central government. Current Federal affairs were placed in the hands of one of six specified cantons (Fribourg, Berne, Solothurn, Basle, Zurich and Lucerne) in annual rotation, each one of these becoming Vorort or "directorial canton." The Mayor or the Burgmaster of the Vorort received the title of "Landammann of Switzerland," and as the Confederation had no income of its own the particular Vorort had to defray the expenses involved in the conduct of current Federal affairs. Though this Act of Mediation had received unanimous approval it only lasted ten years. It is now generally considered to have been a clever piece of Napoleonic statecraft designed to maintain French influence in Switzerland.

February 19th, 1476.—Charles the Bold appears before Grandson. He had left Nancy on Jan. 11 via Besançon southwards, where at Orbe the troops joined his artillery already in readiness to attack the fortified places in the Vaud held by the Swiss.

would certainly have regretted that this hitherto undisturbed corner was shortly to experience the common fate of the world's beauty spots. The dreaming beauty of the lake, blue or jade or pearl, the marvellous glow spreading over the mountains at Sundown and fading to purple shadows, must now be shared with a procession of motor-cars, estimated in Lugano as likely to number two thousand a day.

The route after Gandria passes the two Albugasios, San Mamette, Cima, Porlezza, skirts Monte Galbiga, and follows the old way down to Menaggio. It will greatly shorten the journey to St. Moritz, and it is confidently hoped in Lugano that the stream of visitors intent on winter sports will now be partially diverted through the Tessin.

### Mr. G. Python.

The following short obituary notice appeared in the *Catholic Herald* (Jan. 29th):—

A great force in the Catholic life of the canton, M. Python was elected to the Council of State whilst still a comparatively young man. The great work of his life was the foundation of Friburg University. This project, so dear to his heart, was launched in 1886, and in the following year sufficient capital was obtained to endow the University, which was opened in 1889.

In 1891 M. Python, overcoming great difficulties, succeeded in obtaining for the University the institution of a Faculty of Theology under the direction of Dominican Professors. The year 1895 saw the addition of a Faculty of Science.

M. Python was a member of Parliament for thirty-four years, and he did commendable work for the religious pacification of the country.

Bishop Besson, of Lausanne, officiated at the obsequies.

## DE LA CRITIQUE.

Il est une question qui secoue à l'heure actuelle si vivement l'opinion publique de la Suisse Romande, et dont tous les journaux de notre pays ont parlé, que je me vois obligé de vous en dire un mot à mon tour. Il s'agit de l'existence même de la critique, et de son champ d'activité. Voici les faits.

Vous n'ignorez pas qu'il existe chez nous un orchestre symphonique de très grande valeur, dont le siège est à Genève, et dont l'activité rayonne sur toute la Suisse occidentale: c'est l'Orchestre Romand. Il a graduellement élevé le niveau musical de nos régions, il a donné des auditions d'une valeur et d'une ampleur auparavant irréalisable, et son activité fut, de toute façon, féconde et remarquable. Il est dirigé par un maestro de très