

Home news

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HOME NEWS

Contrary to anticipations in well-informed circles, the new Liquor Control Bill, *i.e.*, a revision of Article 32bis of our Constitution, was rejected last Sunday by a three to two majority. The votes recorded in this referendum did not display the same intense interest as shown in the many Federal proposals recently submitted, barely 60% of the electors registering their votes on this occasion. We reproduce below the official figures so far published: the names printed in *italics* denote the cantons which have vetoed the Bill:—

	Yes	No
Zurich	51976	43571
Berne	32606	72022
Lucerne	5693	27574
Uri	1227	2345
Schwyz	2085	8164
Obwalden	808	2574
Nidwalden	542	2017
Glarus	3448	3447
Zug	1228	4082
Fribourg	8187	17178
Solothurn	5055	19427
Basel-Stadt	12556	6126
Basel-Land	4143	12138
Schaffhausen	5380	4542
Appenzell A.-Rh.	4981	5273
Appenzell L.-Rh.	1145	1037
St. Gall	24219	30018
Graubünden	10357	5750
Aargau	16325	35044
Thurgau	13664	11239
Ticino	6525	3097
Vaud	18549	22926
Valais	5424	5012
Neuchâtel	10926	5476
Geneva	9837	6117
Total	246836	356106

It will be noticed that practically all the Catholic cantons have rejected the Bill, headed by Lucerne, which exhibits five to one against: Fribourg, the home of Federal Councillor Misy, himself a Catholic, has shown very little sympathy for the untiring efforts of its distinguished citizen, who has worked so hard to bring about this most necessary reform. In all the cantons the farmers and peasants seem to have made a definite stand against the control and reduction of individual liquor distilling.

The result of the voting is considered as forming a red-letter day in the social and economic development of Switzerland; it will considerably retard, and for the present nullify, the initiation of certain social measures (old-age pensions, invalidity insurance, etc.) for which it was hoped the revenue under this liquor bill would supply the much-needed funds. In Government circles it is recognised that the verdict of the people is also meant to be a protest against the creation of new monopolies, increase in State officials and generally against centralisation in Berne of State affairs tending to curtail cantonal and municipal privileges and self-government.

Professor Georg Lasius, the doyen of the Zurich Polytechnicum, is relinquishing his post at the close of the summer term; he is 88 and has, since the year 1867, been lecturing on architecture.

Following a collision between a heavy military lorry and a local steam engine, the latter became detached from its goods train and was precipitated into the river Maggia, near Cevio; the four railway men who happened to be travelling on the locomotive were drowned.

Since the beginning of this month new post-cards have been issued in Switzerland; in the left corner are printed vignettes representing village scenes and other picturesque spots of our country.

The Corpus Christi festivities in Fribourg were marred by a serious mishap; part of the ceremony was accompanied by firing from an old cannon, and whilst gunner Joseph Folli was standing in front of it, the charge went off and blew him to pieces.

The Castle Restaurant in the Eaux-Vives park in Geneva was partly destroyed by fire, which broke out early last Sunday morning.

The Grisons Grosse Rat has expressed itself in favour of admitting the traffic of motor-cars on some of the cantonal roads; the Julier route will probably be thrown open at an early date.

In Zurich the official proposal of the Grosse Rat, gradually reducing the salaries of the municipal employees, such reduction not to exceed Frs. 1,700, was endorsed by a considerable majority of the voters; the annual saving thereby effected will amount to about 2½ million francs.

In the canton of Solothurn the electorate rejected a proposal to regulate apprenticeship; whilst the town pronounced itself in favour of the suggested construction of a crematorium.

NOTES AND GLEANINGS.

By "KYBURG."

Scotland and Switzerland.

Many of my readers who have visited Scotland will, no doubt, have noticed a number of things which gave them a "homely" feeling. Not only are there a great many words and expressions in the language which are almost pure "Schwyzerdütsch," but, in the villages off the beaten track, the tourist comes across many customs which have a familiar Swiss note about them. Many reasons can, of course, be given for this similarity of language and customs. Scotland is a hilly country like our Jura. The soil is poor, and people work hard to wrest their living from Mother Earth, just as in Switzerland. As to the language, a lot of expressions have been exchanged between the two nations at the time when Scottish and Swiss soldiers served under the French kings. Have we not, dating probably from that time, some of the Scottish songs among our "Männerchorlieder"?

I was, therefore, greatly interested to come across a splendid article, entitled "The Delight and Charm of Switzerland"—another Scotland more richly endowed by Nature—which appeared in the *Evening Telegraph and Post*, Dundee, 23rd May. The writer of the article, Mr. Garnet D. Wilson, deals chiefly with "lovely Lucerne," and I will quote what he writes about "The Spirit of Switzerland":—

The spirit of Switzerland, like that of Scotland, has always been fiercely national. The history of the 22 cantons and their gradual, and final, complete confederation reveals a single-minded, self-determinative bent. Switzerland for the Swiss, a state of unchallengeable neutrality. Woe to the invader penned in these lone valleys and mountain fastnesses.

Like the Scot, the Swiss has risen, after centuries of travail, to an exact estimation of his own national worth. He works hard and determinedly to snatch profit out of life and shape his ventures to his own satisfaction. It is thus he propels his little world towards material progress.

And "The Spirit of Sycophants."

I should be shirking my duty towards my readers were I to withhold the following, which appears in the *Saturday Review*, May 26th:—

As an Englishman living in Geneva, I feel it to be in the general interest to bring the following facts to your notice.

The Geneva tennis club organizes every year an international tennis tournament, all the events of which, with the exception of one or two reserved exclusively for Swiss players, are open to all comers. This year the tournament began on May 14th.

Despite the fact that this tournament is advertised as international, by a ruling of the committee of the club, no person of Austrian, German or Hungarian nationality can take part in it, and this although Switzerland was not only a neutral country throughout the war, but has always based her whole foreign policy, and, indeed, the whole conception of her existence as a State, on her strict neutrality.

Doubtless the Swiss hotel-keepers and the host of other persons whose sole means of existence in this town is the fleecing of the unsuspecting foreigner, have concluded that the present rates of exchange will prevent the nationals of any country which fought against the Allies during the war from paying a visit to Geneva. Should they still, however, have the temerity to do so, they will discover that the neutrality of Switzerland, when no question of fighting is involved, is not extended to their nation.

It is happenings like this which "drive the hot blood of shame into our cheeks"—at least, I hope so. It may be that the Geneva Tennis Club is composed of Foreigners. Let us hope so. If not, I should like to know whether any of its members belong to any other Societies, and to which? Geneva readers, please explain.

Alpine Sport.

Morning Post (24th May):—

A course of instruction in mountaineering, both for beginners and advanced climbers, will be given in English from July 25th to August 4th at Klosters, Switzerland, under the direction of the Swiss Alpine Club. The course, the first of its kind, will be followed by eight days of actual climbing.



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War Effects on Switzerland.

If it is true very often that the looker-on sees most of the game, it is also true, although in a lesser degree, I think, that as the *Journal of Commerce*, of Liverpool (May 28th) puts it, "Speculators feel most":—

When the history of these times comes to be written, the feature which will inevitably stand out most prominently will be the extent to which those countries which were not concerned in the late war are nevertheless considerable sufferers by it. Our own troubles are bad enough in all conscience, but those of Switzerland are out of all proportion greater than ours. Resembling England in that she is anything but self-supporting, Switzerland has the added disadvantage that she must import practically all the raw materials which her workpeople convert into manufactured articles of many and varied designs. For these, of course, she must pay heavily, and, on the other hand, as her former customers have a depreciated currency, and Switzerland has a more or less normal one, she has to look elsewhere for remunerative markets. To what extent the Swiss have succeeded in this direction may be approximately judged by the number of Swiss-made watches in use in England and the United States of America, and in the increased consumption here of Swiss chocolate and condensed milk. Switzerland has had her troubles, but early in the struggle she realised, if, indeed, it had not already become apparent, that the panacea for such ills is hard work.

New Dutch-Swiss Route.

The Times (29th May):—

The normal line of communication between Holland and Switzerland, which was formerly for the most part through Germany, has been interrupted since the occupation of the Ruhr, and travellers have made the journey through France and Belgium. In order to recover their share of international traffic from Holland to the south-east, which is of considerable importance, the German authorities have now organized a new express train service from Holland to Basle, via Osnabrück, Münster, Hagen and Frankfurt. Fast through trains are to be run on the new route, which can easily compete with the French route. The service will start on June 1st.

Germany and Swiss Mortgagees.

The Financial News (30th May):—

The Berlin correspondent of the Exchange Telegraph Co. writes:—

Switzerland has concluded a new agreement with Germany, protecting the interests of Swiss holders of gold mortgages.

The agreement of December, 1920, broke down, owing to the inability of the German mortgagors to meet the reduced liabilities then contracted for.

The mortgages dealt with have a total value of 125,000,000 gold marks.

Dr. A. Keller, of Zurich, in America.

Christian World (May 24th):—

To seek the aid and co-operation of the American Churches in sustaining the Protestant Churches of Continental Europe—some of whom are in peril of collapse as a result of the war—Dr. Adolph Keller, of Zurich, is visiting the United States. He is secretary of the Central Bureau for the relief of the Protestant Churches. His itinerary will take him to the Pacific Coast, and will include a brief visit to some of the Church leaders in Canada. Already it looks as if this idea of a central agency for European Protestantism had caught the imagination of people over in America.

I wish this Mission success. Not because I am a Protestant, but because I welcome any and every endeavour which has for its object the forming of yet one more link in the chain of international brotherhood.