

President of Switzerland for 1936

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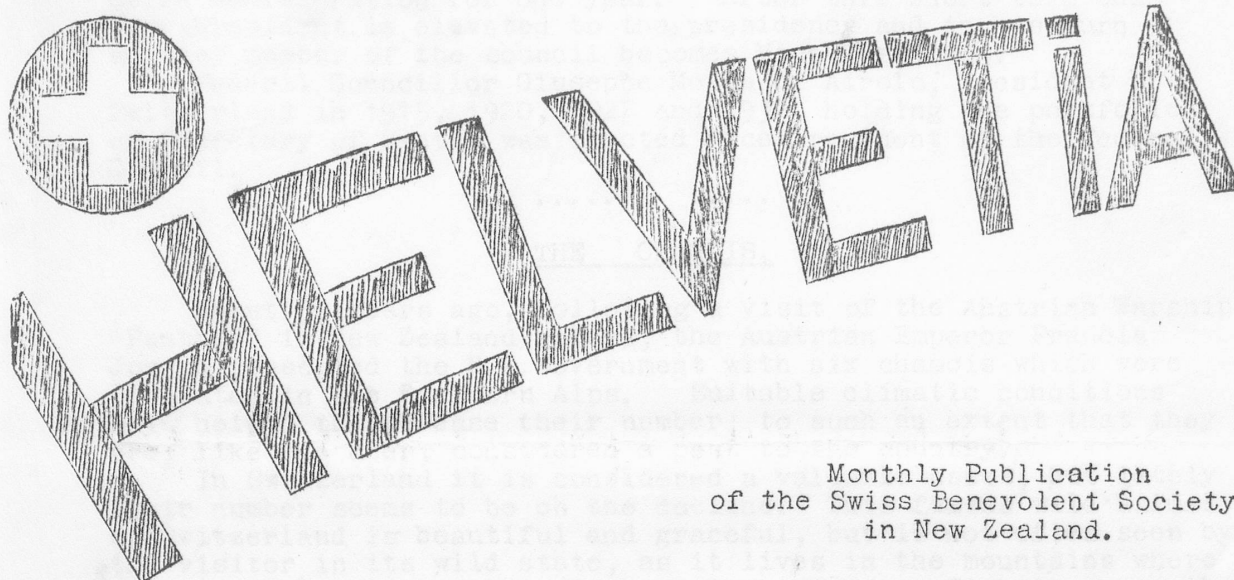
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No. 6

PRESIDENT OF SWITZERLAND FOR 1936.

Without any fuss and heated campaign speeches, Switzerland had her annual presidential election in December, and Mr. Albert Meyer, member of the Federal Council since December, 1929, was chosen as the nation's chief executive for the year 1936. Switzerland picks her leaders from many walks of life. Mr. Minger, the popular President for the year 1935, has the distinction of having attained his high office without any college back-ground, but with a life-long experience in agriculture, and various successful activities in public life. Mr. Meyer, on the other hand, is a veteran newspaper man and economist, and his election will undoubtedly have a stimulating effect on many an ambitious journalist.

The President-elect was born on March 13, 1870, at Zurich, and he is a citizen of this largest Swiss city, as well as of the nearby village of Fällanden. Mr. Meyer got his university degrees in Law in Zurich, Leipzig and Berlin, and then started his career as Secretary of Finance in his native city. However, in 1897 he gratified his urge for journalism and joined the editorial staff of the "Neue Zürcher Zeitung", becoming general manager of this prominent Swiss daily in 1915. Mr. Meyer took his first steps into politics when he became a member of the Municipal Council of Zurich in 1907. In September, 1915, he was elected into the National Council, and from 1923 to 1929 he was president of the Swiss liberal democratic party.

When Mr. Meyer became a member of the Swiss Federal Council, succeeding Mr. R. Haab, who retired, he took charge of the Department of the Interior. On May 1, 1934, after the retirement of Federal Councillor Musy, he took over the portfolio of Secretary of the Treasury.

Through his long and brilliant journalistic career, Mr. Meyer is well known and much admired throughout Switzerland. He is regarded as an authority in economic and financial questions, but it is said that he is of such extreme modesty that he accepted his election into the Federal Council merely as a patriotic duty. Like every good and able-bodied citizen, the President-elect has done his full quota of military service in the Swiss Army, his rank being Lieutenant-Colonel in the Infantry.

It may be recalled that the Federal Council is the executive power in Switzerland. It consists of seven members elected for a term of three years by the Federal Assembly. Their re-election follows automatically, as death or resignation on account of ill-health are practically the only factors that may lead to an occasional change. Two members of this Council of Seven hold respectively the office of President and Vice-President of the

Swiss Confederation for one year. After this short term the Vice-President is elevated to the presidency and in his turn another member of the council becomes Vice-President.

Federal Councillor Giuseppe Motta of Airolo, President of Switzerland in 1915, 1920, 1927 and 1932, holding the portfolio of Secretary of State, was elected Vice-President of the Federal Council.

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THE CHAMOIS.

About 30 years ago, following a visit of the Austrian Warship "Panther" in New Zealand waters, the Austrian Emperor Francis Joseph presented the N.Z. Government with six chamois which were liberated in the Southern Alps. Suitable climatic conditions have helped to increase their number to such an extent that they are, like the deer, considered a pest to the country.

In Switzerland it is considered a valuable asset, but lately their number seems to be on the decline. This famous wild animal of Switzerland is beautiful and graceful, but is not often seen by the visitor in its wild state, as it lives in the mountains where vegetation borders on snowfields and glaciers. It belongs to the Antelope class and its weight varies between 50 - 70 lbs., although sometimes a big male may be about 100 lbs.

In summer-time the chamois feed on grass and moss which grow upon the rocks projecting through the snow and ice. In winter, cold and lack of food drives them to the forests and in some places it is not uncommon to meet them in a village.

In Switzerland these animals have taken to these lofty regions because for hundreds of years they have been eagerly hunted. In Tyrol, where they are preserved and guarded by keepers on great sporting estates, the chamois lose much of their shyness and come down to the lower slopes to enjoy a more plentiful food supply, but in Switzerland he who would hunt the chamois must have a good head and a sure foot. Like the chamois themselves, he must be at home amid rocks and precipices, and must be a first-class climber; he must know how to sit perfectly still for hours at a time, watching and waiting for these shy and wary creatures. You will find no finer climber than a first-rate chamois hunter. Perhaps behind a rock, or perhaps on a tiny ledge which has barely room for him, he may sit for hours awaiting coming events, while below him falls sheer away a precipice, at the foot of which trees look like tiny shrubs. Or he may work his way ahead, inch by inch. His patience and perseverance is rewarded, however, when he comes within sight of a band of chamois. There may be five - there may be twenty-five. The next thing is for him to outwit the sentinel which usually stands guard on the nearest summit and continually sniffs the air. The animals sight and sense of smell are marvellously keen, and the hunter needs all his experience and cunning to guard against this. While the sentinel is on guard, the rest of the herd graze quietly, and the little kids romp round merrily and indulge in a thousand antics.

Often, in spite of all the hunter's wariness, the old scout at times discovers his presence. Then - a loud piercing whistle gives a warning, the merry little kids run to their respective mothers for protection, and the older animals leap on boulders and rocks eagerly searching for the coming danger. A few moments of watchful hesitation pass and then perhaps a whiff of tainted air will give them the direction of the coming danger. Then follows a wonderful scene, the hasty retreat of a herd of frightened chamois. The speed and agility is marvellous. Up the precipice they skim where there is no path, no ridge, no ledge; but here and there little knobs of rock jut out from the face of the cliff and offer them some hold. From projection to projection they spring lightly with incredible skill, their four feet sometimes bunched together on a patch of rock not much larger than a man's fist. With lightning rapidity they disappear, and with them vanishes the high hopes of the hunter.

Better luck generally favours a group of hunters, who would surround a herd and so bag a few animals.

The flavour of the meat is a bit strong, but when one has acquired the taste, one would ask for nothing better than -
GEMSPFEFFER.

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