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# The Swiss Observer

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## RANDOM JOTTINGS IN SWITZERLAND.

It is not in England alone that the question of *Unemployment* troubles both politicians and private citizens. Our own country, too, is subject to that disease. According to the official statement there were in Switzerland at the end of November, 10,326 males and 3,188 females unemployed and 23,443 partly employed, but it is generally believed that the actual number of unemployed people is considerably higher than that officially stated. The textile industries seem to be particularly affected. The "Volksrecht" asserts that in this industry one third of the working population is out of work and that the Federation of Textile Workers who distributed in a relatively short time over 150,000 francs for the benefit of the unemployed, can no longer meet the demand on its resources. The "Neue Schweizer Zeitung" argues, therefore, that unemployment must soon develop into a question of vital interest for Switzerland. It advises that every avenue should be explored with a view to making public opinion fully and intelligently aware of the real situation, as the best means of checking indifference or forestalling a sudden outburst of panic.

It is really deplorable that the first item we must deal with in the New Year must be such a plague as Switzerland has never hitherto experienced to such an extent, and it is very disquieting to state that retailers are not better off than manufacturers or workmen. The incipient industrial crisis overshadows Europe as a rather disagreeable legacy of the year 1920, now past and gone. Let us not, however, be too exigent. 1920 with all its faults has given the world one great thing, or rather the beginning of a great thing: the *League of Nations'* Assembly in Geneva. The commentaries of the Swiss Press on those five weeks of debating differed widely. It was striking at any rate that those papers which poured ridicule on the Assembly because it worked too slowly and reluctantly for them and even emphasised their strictures by such headlines as: "The Comedy of Geneva," were practically the same who had but haughty scorn for those stupid idealists who dared to speak of such a thing as a League of Nations before Wilson's appearance. This remark alters in nothing our wish that the Assembly may work with increased efficiency when it meets again next autumn in the fine city of Rousseau. Let us hope that then at least essential steps may be taken not only in the matter of an *International Court*, but also in that terrible and most vital question of *Disarmament*.

Speaking of militarism and disarmament gives me an

ALL COMMUNICATIONS TO BE ADDRESSED TO—

THE EDITOR, *THE SWISS OBSERVER*.

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opportunity to make known to those who may not yet have heard of it, the death of Colonel Commander of Corps *Peter Isler*, until very recently Chief of the Swiss Infantry. Colonel Isler was one of those officers, in certain respects regarded as old-fashioned, who maintained an iron severity in service, but who—and therein lies their glory—exercised this severity not merely towards their subordinates but also towards themselves. Looking at his ascetic face, which expressed in an extraordinary manner that a deep sense of duty was the keynote of his character, one was strongly reminded of the figure of Dufour. Isler was the prototype of the eminently just and equitable instructor, if not beloved, at any rate deeply respected by his subordinates. He died in his 74th year, after having spent his whole life for the benefit of his country.

If all officers had behaved like him during the period of active service, never would the *Initiative for the Abolition of the Military Courts*, launched by the social-democratic party, have been such a success. It obtained as many as 119,000 signatures and was delivered to the Federal Council as far back as August, 1916. But only now, i.e., on January 30th, is it to be submitted to the verdict of the Swiss people. It is probable that many former soldiers, recollecting all that they experienced of bitterness while standing to arms at the frontier, will vote for the Initiative, which demands that a new article of the constitution shall abolish all military courts, soldiers being in the future judged by the criminal courts of the respective cantons where the offences are committed. All the minor postulates of the Initiative (Limit of Arrest, Right of Complaint, etc.) having been since adopted by the committee which dealt with the revised code of Military Law, the question to be decided by the voting is practically this: Is it progress if we sacrifice the unity of the Military Law, merely to expose the soldiers to the 25 different criminal codes actually existing in Switzerland? This one consideration shows the judicial weakness of the Initiative still more clearly: What about the matter should our troops be stationed in a foreign country? Which canton's law should *then* be applied?

Together with this a second Initiative is to be decided: *The Initiative of Foreign Treaties*. It demands that treaties running longer than 15 years should be subject to the facultative referendum. Although there was much noise in its time about that Initiative, launched, if I am right, by people of the French-speaking cantons, the discussion has not yet developed much in the press, and the vote may be taken without any remarkable agitation. One remembers that the disgust provoked by the Gotthard Con-