

# Home news

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# The Swiss Observer

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## HOME NEWS

The final figures of last week's elections for the National Council are not published yet, but the results will probably show very little change in the aggregate, the gains and losses balancing each other.

The National Council has so far been composed of 189 members, but the increase in population, as shown by the recent Federal Census, imposed an addition of nine seats. These are distributed in the proportion of two for Berne and Zurich respectively, and one each to Lucerne, Zug, Solothurn, Schaffhausen and Geneva.

The strength of the different parties represented in the old Council was:—

Radical-Democrats	59
Conservative-Catholics	41
Socialists	38
Peasants and Burgers	31
Liberal-Democrats	9
Social-Political Group	6
Catholics	3
Unattached	2

It has now been definitely decided that the conference with reference to the settlement of the Near Eastern dispute shall take place at Lausanne on November 13th. At a meeting of hotel interests at Lausanne the hotel proprietors have formally undertaken not to raise their charges. This may also be good news to the Shah of Persia, who is reported to have arrived with his suite at Lausanne.

Thus for the second time in 10 years the town of Lausanne has had the honour to be the venue of international peace conferences. It will be remembered that in the year 1912 the dispute between Italy and Turkey over Tripoli was also discussed and finally settled at Lausanne.

The discussion for the conclusion of a commercial treaty with Italy was initiated on October 25th in the building of the Swiss National Bank at Zurich in the presence of Federal Councillor Schulthess.

The Cantonal Budget for 1923 anticipates a revenue of fr. 8,888,070, as against an expenditure of fr. 10,145,610, thus showing a deficit of fr. 1,257,540. In spite of this foreshadowed deficit the Thurgau Regierungsrat has lowered state taxation (Staatssteuerfuss) for 1923 from 3½ to 2½ per mille.

It is reported by the Federal Police Department that the former Soviet President of the Hungarian Republic, Bela Kun, is residing in Switzerland with a false passport in the name of Albert Adler. Kun's description has been sent to all the Swiss police stations, with the order for his immediate arrest.

A report has been submitted to the Basle section of the Swiss Alpine Club with reference to the disappearance of the Fluchthorn in Austrian Tyrol, of one of its most popular members, Rudolf Ruegg, (aged 38). Mr. Ruegg, who, accompanied by his wife and guides, had previously made several ascents in the Tyrolean Alps, set out alone on August 17th and safely reached the summit of the Fluchthorn (3,034 metres), but disappeared on the way down, though this descent is considered free from danger, even for a less experienced climber, beyond the risk of falling stones. From traces discovered by a Swiss search party, foul play is feared, and it is now believed that Mr. Ruegg was way-laid and murdered, robbery being the motive.

It is stated that the Austrian officials have not investigated thoroughly the circumstances of the tragedy, apparently desirous of avoiding publicity, as this would doubtless react unfavourably on the Austrian Tyrol as a tourist resort. The Swiss Alpine Club have therefore made representations to the political authorities at Berne, who have promised to take up the matter with the Austrian Government.

The conflict in the printing trade, which culminated in the stoppage of one of the Basle papers recently, has been temporarily suspended, pending

the decision of the Conciliation Board (Einigungs-Amt), the workers, however, admitting in principle that a refusal to undertake the work necessary in the publication of a paper constitutes a violation of the liberty of the press.

The dangers of returning home in the small hours of the morning, even in a well-regulated town like Zurich, are vividly illustrated by the extraordinary aggression made on Stadtpresident Naegeli. He was returning home with his wife, at 3 o'clock in the morning, after an evening spent in the intellectual enjoyment of a literary circle, when a young student, who had apparently been offering too copious libations to grape-crowned Bacchus, stepped before them and, addressing some remark to the Stadtpresident, struck him a violent blow in the face. Mr. Naegeli was carried to the nearest chemist's, and it was found that his face was badly hurt. Fortunately, no complication is feared. Fortunately also, his aggressor has been arrested, thanks to the exact description Mrs. Naegeli was able to give the police, and will be given cause to rue his lapse from the paths of sobriety.

## OBITUARY.

We regret to announce the death of the distinguished Veterinary Surgeon, Dr. Benjamin Siegmund (born in 1842), which occurred at Basle on 30th October. He was the father of Mr. H. Siegmund, well known in the Swiss Colony in London as the Joint Managing Director of the European and General Express Company, Ltd. As the result of study in several of the great Continental cities, Dr. Siegmund became a recognized authority in the veterinary world, and was appointed to the directorship of the Basle abattoirs. These were rebuilt according to his plans and equipped with the latest and most humane appliances of the day. Not content with existing methods, Dr. Siegmund invented a firing cap, a device for the painless and instantaneous killing of cattle. In vaccination research Dr. Siegmund achieved also great results, and he was much interested in dog breeding, particularly St. Bernard dogs. Though Dr. Siegmund had latterly lived in retirement, the decease of this eminent Swiss will be deeply regretted by his wide circle of friends.

## NOTES AND GLEANINGS.

The proposed CAPITAL LEVY on which our people are to vote on December 3rd next has naturally aroused a good deal of comment in the English press; this all the more as the Labour party in this country has included a similar demand in their election manifesto. However, there is a material difference between the two proposals: the Swiss Communists display a pronounced class selfishness, as they stipulate that the money so obtained shall be used for the realisation of their own social schemes; whilst the British Labour party, distinctly more patriotic, proposes to apply the proceeds towards the reduction of the national debt. The *Daily Telegraph* (Oct. 30th) in a leader dwells on the havoc which even the threat of confiscation has wrought in Switzerland, and hopes that this will open the eyes of those people who remain unconvinced by the most cogent arguments. Most of the dailies indulge, however, in extravagant statements, as, for instance, the *Daily Express* (Oct. 27th), when it states that "Swiss securities have during the last few weeks fallen 20 to 40 per cent., that 80 to 100 million pounds sterling have been transferred, and that this export of capital is still going on at the rate of 'four million a week.'" More temperate is the following reference in the *Sheffield Daily Telegraph* (Oct. 26th):—

"The Swiss Republic is a democracy that has afforded the world a good many valuable political object-lessons. Generally speaking, Switzerland has shown other nations the way in which they should go; just at present it seems to be showing other nations the way in which they should not go. A proposal is to be submitted to the Swiss people for a levy on capital. The Swiss people are almost certain, with their usual robust common-sense, to turn the proposal down. But the bare possibility of a levy on capital is already having disastrous effects. There has been a terrific slump in Swiss securities; the exchange value of the Swiss franc, which has been extraordinarily steady, has begun to fall rapidly; and large sums of money are being withdrawn from Swiss banks and placed abroad. It is clear that the capital levy, if imposed, would bring the country into a deplorable plight. This makes it all the more likely that the people, in their Referendum, will reject the levy."

If the reports of the respective political meetings recorded in the Swiss press are any indication

at all there would appear to be little likelihood of the initiative being successful. Even in some labour circles the opinion is by no means favourable, and working-men, in the watch industry, amongst others, are holding mass meetings to protest against the proposal.

A long article in the *Morning Post* (Oct. 25th) from a correspondent deals with the GENERAL ELECTION IN SWITZERLAND. The writer examines in a light—not to say derisive—vein some characteristics of our Constitution, as will be gathered from the following extract:—

"The General Election is a luxury which the Swiss enjoy, or an obligation they impose upon themselves, or a ceremony they observe, on the last Sunday of October every three years. It happens every three years, because that is democratic. I hope the fact that it happens on a Sunday will not shock anyone; the descendants of Calvin are eminently devout—a wag has alleged that all of them who are not hotel-keepers are clergymen—and whatever they do is sure to be all right. Why it happens in October I cannot explain. But already the cities and the villages, the lonely valleys, and (for aught I know) the mountain snows, are echoing with the triennial voice of the politicians, each recommending his own particular road to Utopia, and warning the nation against rival guides.

Parties are many in Switzerland, for among the beauties of the Swiss Constitution is to be reckoned the system known as Proportional Representation. Perhaps beauty is not the right word for it. Some crank invented it, for the benefit of his brother-cranks; aiming at perfection, he only managed to achieve confusion. It plays the very devil with the politics of any country that adopts it. True, P.R. has not proved so disastrous here as over the border in Italy—the last I heard of the Italians was that they had thirteen different parties, not counting sub-divisions. However, the Swiss have more than is good for them; they have Socialists and Communists, they have Radicals and Liberals and Peasants and Conservative-Catholics. Not bad for a country which has only three-quarters of a million voters. To describe their various programmes would be a long business. There is no great question before the country; ultimately, there is only the question which is agitating all Europe—that of Society versus the forces of disorder."

The LANCET (Oct. 14th) publishes particulars of the scheme under which necessitous English persons suffering from curable tuberculosis can enjoy the benefits of ALPINE TREATMENT. The scheme is, in a modest way, replacing the Queen Alexandra Sanatorium in Davos, which, owing to lack of funds, was closed and disposed of. Arrangements have been made with the Hotel Frei in Davos Platz, where a limited number of patients is received at the inclusive fee of £2 10s. per week, the difference in the cost being made up from a special fund the annual income of which is estimated to reach about £1,800.

GLASS PAINTING is a rare hobby now, but it was an art for which Switzerland used to be famous; the following from the *Daily Mail* (Oct. 18th) may help to revive the interest of collectors:

"Swiss miniature stained-glass windows are wonderful little things. Nowadays a glass painter thinks a panel four feet high by a foot wide so small as to require special care; but the Swiss artists of the 16th century worked on such a tiny scale that they thought nothing of executing a window the size of half a sheet of foolscap paper.

Their details were marvellously delicate. One of the younger Holbein's designs shows Samson destroying the Philistines—thirteen men and a horse are in the composition—in a space five inches wide by an inch high!

Another Samson panel—the hero was a favourite with these miniature painters—sold in London a few years ago, was only five inches square.

One of the incidents shown was the loosing of the fiery foxes into the cornfields. Samson, his three foxes and the cornfield could all be covered by a six-pence, yet each individual stalk of corn in the foreground had been treated separately.

The craze for these tiny windows lasted in Switzerland for 230 years—from about 1520 to 1750—and there has been nothing like them before or since.

While it lasted the Swiss were as mad about stained-glass windows as the Dutch were about tulips in the 17th century. They were used for all sorts of purposes. Well-to-do married couples would commemorate their wedding by a little window with their portraits in it, very dashingly attired.

These marriage panels are met with most frequently, but there were many other designs in favour. Town councils made presents of panels to each other for hanging in the local 'rathaus.' These generally bore little figures of standard-bearers, with the arms of the town emblazoned on their flags.

Guilds of tradesmen had them painted with appropriate subjects—the shoemakers with figures of their patron saints, Crispin and Crispinian; the butchers with a picture of a farmyard crowded with beasts—surrounded by shields with the arms of members of the guilds.

But about the year 1750 they went out of fashion and for a century were regarded as worthless. Many were smashed to pieces for the sake of the ounce or two of lead which held them together. Napoleon's soldiers stole thousands of them, only to throw them away upon the march when they were tired of carrying them."