

The first of march

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THE FIRST OF MARCH.

By a Correspondent.

The First of March is still celebrated as the festival of the Republic in the Canton of Neuchâtel. Early in the morning salvos of artillery are fired; flags are hoisted everywhere; children march in procession to some meeting place; banquets are held in the evening by the different political groups. For on that day in 1848, therefore 74 years ago, a revolution broke out, overthrew the monarchical government, and proclaimed a Republic and a Canton of Switzerland.

Until then Neuchâtel was an independent Principality allied to Switzerland since 1815; its prince and ruler was the King of Prussia. It is interesting to note that, although Neuchâtel is wholly French, it was ruled by a German king. This came about towards the middle of the 17th century. The Duchess of Nemours, of the Bourbon family, who was Princess of Neuchâtel, died without leaving any issue. There were several collateral claimants in the French dynasty, but they were all Roman Catholics. Frederic of Prussia put in a claim because his mother was descended from the Nemours, although not in direct line and of remote ancestry. The Council of State of Neuchâtel met in secret and decided to elect Frederic, because he was a Protestant, and almost the whole of the inhabitants of the Principality being Protestants, he was more suitable than the French claimants.

In 1808 Napoleon I. gave the Principality to one of his Marshals, Marshal Berthier. At the fall of Napoleon, the Congress of Vienna gave it back to the King of Prussia and accepted its alliance with Switzerland. In 1848, as aforesaid, it proclaimed a Republic, but in 1856 the monarchists planned a revolution and succeeded in overthrowing the Republican government. As Switzerland had accepted Neuchâtel in its orbit as the 22nd Canton, it sent troops to put down the insurrection; the King of Prussia protested and was massing troops to invade Switzerland, when Napoleon III. interfered. The King of Prussia was obliged to sign an act of renunciation of the Principality of Neuchâtel, but keep the title of Prince of Neuchâtel as an honorary title. From that day Neuchâtel became thoroughly Swiss, although some of the nobles and gentry of the Canton, until a few years ago, still hoped for a return to the monarchy.

SWISS GYMNASIC AND ATHLETIC SOCIETY
"HELVETIA."

In doubtful weather no more enjoyable afternoon could be spent than witnessing gymnastic displays under the best of indoor conditions, and the advantages offered at the Club premises of 1, Gerrard Place, W., are such as to attract athletes from the strongest circles of this great metropolis.

At the Grand Gymnastic Display held last Sunday, February 26th, nothing appealed more than the team drill and horizontal and parallel bar exercises which, giving evidence of strict discipline, testified to the eagerness with which this our principal pastime is developed by a good many Swiss over here; the opening march and fall-in presented a patriotic tableau the impressiveness of which was enhanced by a back-ground of charming ladies attired in the Federal colours with Helvetia in the centre. Wrestling, fencing and boxing were exhibited by some of the best exponents in these particular sports. An original sketch, entitled "Self-defence Act," illustrated in realistic and unmistakable colours, characters of "apache" life, and afforded Mr. A. Maeder and some of his troupe an opportunity to display their physical strength and power of resistance. The lighter side of the programme contained varied entertainments, such as comic songs, acrobatic feats, handcuff manipulators; etc. During the evening an illuminated address was presented to Mr. A. Boog, now the president, in recognition of his active interest in, and valuable services rendered to, the Society since 1907.

LE SERVICE DES AUTOS-POSTAUX.*

Les déficits considérables qu'a enregistrés ces dernières années, l'administration de nos Postes fédérales a valu à celle-ci une assez fâcheuse réputation. Certains journaux l'accusent volontiers d'être arriérée, bureaucratique et routinière, si ce n'est pis encore. Ce n'est point ici le lieu de rechercher si ces critiques sont fondées ou non; ce qui semble avoir diminué, non seulement dans nos grandes administrations (Postes, Chemins de fer, etc.) mais dans les fabriques, usines, un peu partout enfin, c'est la conscience professionnelle. C'est là un état d'esprit général contre lequel on ne saurait trop lutter! Cet état d'esprit est-il dû à la guerre ou à d'autres circonstances? Je l'ignore; il serait peut-être intéressant de le rechercher, mais ce n'est pas pour cela que j'ai pris aujourd'hui la plume.

Or, cette administration des Postes, que d'aucuns trouvent si rétrograde, vient de prouver qu'elle sait aussi, quand il le faut, prendre des initiatives hardies et heureuses. Preuve en soit l'augmentation régulière et considérable des courses postales par véhicules automobiles. Les premiers essais furent timides; ayant donné d'excellents résultats, ils furent repris en grand.

En 1921, une trentaine de tronçons de route étaient parcourus par nos autos fédérales. Le succès en fut considérable, surtout sur les routes de montagnes. Au "bon vieux temps des diligences" a succédé le règne de la traction mécanique. Et ce fut d'emblée la vogue! Les amateurs de pittoresque s'en plaindront peut-être; il est certain que nos belles pataches jaunes à plusieurs étages, traînées par cinq vigoureux percherons, avaient parfois fort belle allure, surtout à la descente. Pour la montée, c'était un peu moins

* (Extract from the "Comptoir Suisse," February, 1922.)

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