

News from Switzerland

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NEWS FROM SWITZERLAND

NEW NATIONAL ANTHEM TO BE GIVEN TRIAL

The Federal Council announced that Switzerland would no longer use the tune of "God Save the Queen" for its national anthem. To be given a trial of three years, instead, is the "Cantique Suisse."

The Swiss have been complaining for several years that it is absurd they should share their national anthem with Great Britain. Every time it is played they become embarrassed when Englishmen rise stiffly to attention, wondering what honour has been bestowed upon them.

A study of the origins of "God Save the Queen" turned up the fact that it is not English at all—a fact that the Swiss are quick to point out. It was composed in the 17th century by the Italian musician Jean-Baptiste Lulli for Louis XIV of France, while the "Sun King" was suffering from a serious illness. It was then entitled "Dieu sauve notre roy."

The Federal Council, after consulting each canton and the choral societies throughout the country, chose the "Cantique Suisse," by Zwyssig and Widmer, over several other suggestions.

BACK TO NATURE

"I have closed all books, one only remains open for all eyes to see—the Book of Nature." These words were written more than two centuries ago by the man who was a discoverer and ardent admirer of Swiss scenic beauty and rustic life and may therefore be described as a fore-runner of tourist promotion—the poet, educator and philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau, of Geneva (1712-1778). His famous appeal to return to the bosom of Nature is to be renewed in a modern version in 1962 on the occasion of Rousseau's 250th birthday. Cultural and tourist circles in Switzerland intend to add a 20th century touch to the 18th century cry "Back to Nature" by urging the public also to return to "travel culture." "Don't race, relax!" will be the pass-word. The nation-wide programme of the Rousseau Year 1962 provides for special events in all parts of Switzerland, including the revival of 18th century-style folk-festivals. One of the focal points of folklore and other activities will be, between June and September, St. Peter's Island in the lake of Biene, which is one of the scenic jewels discovered by Rousseau. Several Swiss cities, including Geneva, Neuchatel, Montreux, Berne, Lucerne and Zurich, are preparing special exhibitions, festival performances and concert series in honour of Jean-Jacques Rousseau.

RESTFUL WINTER HOLIDAY OFF THE MOTOR ROADS

Switzerland, according to the Swiss National Tourist Office, has 14 mountain resorts which are located far off the motor roads and therefore may be regarded as absolutely "sound and smell proof" cases isolated from this highly motorised world of ours. It is emphasised that, with one exception, all these places can be reached by modern means of transportation, either by mountain railways or even by car, but where the latter is the case automobiles have to be parked at the outskirts of the village, so that the peace inside will not be disturbed. Not included in the list of the "Quiet Fourteen" are small mountain hamlets with less than three hotels and lone mountain-top hotels. The best known of Canton Valais' six "motor-free" alpine resorts is Zermatt featuring 38 hotels and pensions. It is linked with the Rhone valley by a narrow-gauge railway, whereas its little sister, Saas-Fee, admits cars to a parking lot outside the village where smiling hotel porters will welcome the arriving tourists and escort them (and their luggage) to their holiday headquarters.

Unterbach, basking on a mountain terrace 4000ft above sea level, lets winter storms bury its road of access under a thick blanket of snow and thus becomes one of the fourteen "oases" for the duration of the cold season, only reached by a scenic aerial cableway. He who wishes to retire even deeper into the untouched loneliness of the Alps may try to take refuge at 6000ft high Fafleralp of which the announcement of the Swiss National Tourist Office says: "To be reached from Blatten (Loetschen Valley) on foot in one hour." This, of course, is for summer visitors, and Fafleralp in fact has not yet been officially opened for winter sports, while two similar off-beat holiday spots nearby, Bettmeralp and Riederalp, now attract increasing crowds of skiers thanks to their cable-car links with the Rhone valley.

In the Bernese Oberland, the three resorts unattainable by motorists but conveniently reached by electric trains of one of Europe's most efficiently run network of mountain railways, are Murren, Wengen and Kleine Scheidegg. In Central Switzerland there are four, Rigi, Stoos, Burgenstock and Frutt-Melchsee. In the north-east, "non-motorised" ski fans flock to the sunshine terrace of Braunwald, high above the Linth valley.

THE SUCCESS OF OLMA

This year Olma, the 19th Swiss Agricultural and Dairy Trade Fair held in Saint-Gall each autumn, once again met with great success. While last year over 300,000 visitors were recorded, this year the figure exceeded 325,000. Such a large attendance naturally resulted in an appreciable increase in the business transacted by the 1100 exhibitors.

SOLAR PUMP BUILT IN SWITZERLAND

On our globe there are many desert regions where water is not lacking, but it is only to be found in the subsoil and it is very hard work to pump this water in order to be able to use it for drinking purposes, to assuage the thirst of man and beast, or else for the irrigation of fields and gardens. This is, in particular, the case in the numerous technically under-developed regions, which have not got at their disposal the necessary motive power for the pumping of water. A Swiss firm is now engaged in building, for use in these countries, a solar pump which will bring the subsoil water to the surface, as a result of the heat of the sun's rays. The "Somor" pump is composed, primarily, of a large panel which is fixed on to a tripod, which can be oriented, by hand, in the direction of the sun. Within this panel there are winding tubes containing a liquid with a low boiling point, which evaporates easily under the action of the heat of the solar rays; the steam which is produced in this way makes the engine revolve, and this puts into operation a pump which brings the sub-stratum water to the surface. In its turn, the water cools the steam which escapes from the engine and condenses it anew, in the form of liquid which restarts the circuit. Once it has been started by hand, this pump functions as long as the sun provides it with the necessary heat. It should not be forgotten that this pump is intended primarily for tropical and sub-tropical regions, where motive power is a rare thing, but where the sun's rays shine generously upon the earth. Possessing a very economic action, and being very easy to handle, as it only requires to be turned in the direction of the sun, every two hours, in order that the panel may absorb its rays, the solar pump "Somor" will help to bring the advantages of irrigation, at a low cost, to numerous regions, if these happen to possess a sheet of water lying in the subsoil. The output of the machine depends, naturally, on the depth from which the water has to be pumped.

TIBET IN SWITZERLAND

A first group of twenty-three Tibetans are being trained for permanent settlement in the Toggenburg mountain area of Northeastern Switzerland. More groups will follow. The newcomers, refugees from the "Roof of the World" now occupied by Red China, seem to feel perfectly at home in the chilly climate of this "Roof of Europe." The Society for Tibetan Homesteads in Switzerland which, in co-operation with the Red Cross, is responsible for this generous resettlement operation, is confident that the experiment of bringing together two mountain peoples will be a full success.

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MINIATURE CLOCK AND RADIO COMBINED

The combination of a radio set and a clock is an idea that has been in the air for some time now, but what is absolutely new, in the "Swisselectric" model, is the combination of a high quality electric clock with a transistor radio set of extremely small size. In fact, measuring only 4½ in. long, 2½ in. wide and 1½ in. thick, the "Swisselectric" is the smallest radio-clock in the world. The clock has a 7-jewel electric movement running on a 1.5-volt battery with a life of one year. The radio set is equipped with 6 transistors, runs on a 9-volt battery and is designed for a single wave band (medium wave). The "Swisselectric" can operate as a clock alone, as an alarm clock or as a clock and radio combined, with volume control and individual audition by means of an earphone automatically cutting out the loudspeaker. In order to use the set as an alarm clock, the radio is switched to the required wave length and volume, and the time at which one wishes to be woken is set simply by turning the appropriate knob. At the required time, the radio set comes on.

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