

# Home news

Objekttyp: **Group**

Zeitschrift: **The Swiss observer : the journal of the Federation of Swiss Societies in the UK**

Band (Jahr): - **(1926)**

Heft 250

PDF erstellt am: **01.05.2024**

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# The Swiss Observer

Telephone: CLERKENWELL 9595

Published every Friday at 23, LEONARD STREET, LONDON, E.C.2.

Telegrams: FREPRINCO, LONDON.

VOL. 6—No. 250

LONDON, MAY 15, 1926.

PRICE 3d.

## THE STRIKE.

We have, for obvious reasons, abstained from publishing any strike news in our last week's issue, but as the struggle is now happily terminated, we wish to give, on behalf of our many compatriots, expression of the great admiration for the truly British doggedness and traditional good humour which have enabled the country whose hospitality we so liberally enjoy to successfully emerge from a grave crisis.

## HOME NEWS

The personnel employed by the Confederation on the 31st of March last amounted to 65,749, a decrease as compared with twelve months previously of 388, chiefly due to retrenchments in the military, postal and telegraph services. The major part, i.e., 35,225, constitute the staff of the Swiss Federal Railways.

The Federal Tribunal in Lausanne has just awarded an indemnity of Frs. 15,000 to the widow of a 57-year-old news-vendor in Menziken (Aargau), who in October, 1924, was run over and killed by a motorist.

Elections and a number of far-reaching proposals were placed before the electors of the canton of Berne during last week-end. About two-thirds of the 120,000 voters on the register recorded their wishes. A bill subsidising liberally communal unemployment funds was accepted by a two to one majority. A slightly larger majority passed a cantonal Shops Act—the first of its kind in Switzerland—under which the business hours of shops are regulated, the working hours of assistants limited to 52 per week, and a compulsory week's holiday at full pay is introduced. A third measure, a Fishery Act, was rejected. In the elections for the Regierungsrat the former office holders were confirmed, whilst the constitution of the Grosse Rat was slightly changed in favour of the Liberals, who captured five seats from the farmers, though the latter with 104 mandates out of a total of 224 are still the strongest party in the council; the Socialists, the second strongest party (62), also lost one seat.

With a view of curbing the present craze for dancing, the authorities of the canton Ticino are enacting a new bill. In future dancing is only allowed at certain times of the year; juveniles under 16 are barred from attending public dances altogether, and girls between 16 and 20 must be accompanied by their parents.

For libelling a Winterthur advocate and stating in a leaflet that his professional charges were those of an usurer, Kantonsrat Ackeret has been mulcted by the local assizes into the payment of an indemnity of Frs. 1,600, besides heavy costs.

The Zindelspitze (Glaris) was the scene of a fatal accident last week, when two young tourists, Frieda Müller and Bernhard Thut, both from Engstringen (Zurich), lost their lives.

The discovery of the corpses of two young women in Sonceboz and on the Zürichberg has led to the arrest of one Max Kaufmann in Zurich, who has now admitted one of the crimes. He is stated to have sought the acquaintance of young ladies with the help of matrimonial advertisements for the purpose of robbing them of their savings.

Through the bolting of his horses a farmer, Christian Schaller, of Küttingen, near Aarau, lost his seat and fell underneath the front axle of his wagon, in which position he was dragged on for about 100 yards; he succumbed to his injuries the same day in hospital.

Wild boars are said to cause considerable damage in the canton of Thurgau. In order to rid the forest between the Thur and the Thunbach valleys of these animals, a party of 50 huntsmen, with over 120 beaters, has been organised.

The late Mr. Karl Häfelin, of Walchwil (St. Gall), a former flour-mill owner, has bequeathed Frs. 300,000 to charitable institutions of several communes of his canton and to home and foreign missionary societies.

Dr. J. Wyrsh died in Zurich at the age of 64 from the after-effects of an operation; he was Landesstatthalter in Stans, which office he occupied alternately with that of Landammann since 1911.

## NOTES AND GLEANINGS.

By "KYBURG."

### Peace in Sight.

Just as I was going to start writing these "Notes and Gleanings," I heard a news-vendor calling out the above blessed words, and, buying the single-page sheet which now does duty down here as a newspaper, I find that there is a rumour, a well-founded one, I hope, that peace moves are taking place beneath the surface. I fervently hope that Peace will have become a fact by the time my readers read these lines, and that Old England will be at work again—and work with a will to make up for the lost time—early next week. Amen.

Of the Strike I will not write at this moment, the matter being, as one might rightly say, "sub judice," but I hope to make a few comments on various thoughts which occurred to me recently in one of our next issues.

A dear friend of mine, writing from Switzerland, mentions the awful weather they have been having over there of late, and opines that if we are enjoying similar weather conditions, it may have a sobering effect on excited spirits. My yes. But, as he says, the bad weather we have been having, especially during the first week of the Strike, is bad for outdoor sports, golf especially, and what is the use of enforced holidays if you cannot enjoy outdoor sports?

If anyone could find the beautiful weather, and let us have a sample of it, we should all feel very much happier, I am sure.

But do not despair! Prepare now for your summer holidays among Alpine scenery, buy your tickets at the Federal Railways' London office—they ought to give me a free ticket anyhow for this advertisement; if they don't I shall recommend Cooks next time!—and meanwhile read about the beauties of Switzerland and get your mouth into a thoroughly watery state in doing so. You'll then only want "one neat," and so save a bit off the water bill!

The *Queen* (28th April) publishes an illustrated article concerning the—

### Narcissus Festival in Montreux.

that "Queen of the upper Lake Léman." Here goes:—

When the famous prisoner was languishing in the Castle of Chillon, near Montreux, the heights which protect this resort from the north wind were not covered as they are to-day with a vast white blanket of fragrant narcissus. In those times there were forests where now there are meadows, but even then the terraced vineyards which cover the lower slopes were producing the wine which is the main industry of this part of Switzerland. When did the narcissus rear its dainty head for the first time in this region, and how has it come that the firstlings have propagated themselves so prolifically that the whole country is inundated with them? I have been told that the soul of Narcissus, that disagreeable lad who lived and died in Greek mythology, came finally in its unhappy wanderings to Lake Léman, where, directed by Echo, it once more saw itself mirrored in these clear waters. Affrighted at the ugliness of its self-centred picture, the soul began to weep, and the narcissi of Montreux are the tears of repentance of this poor, vain, foolish, idle boy of long ago!

Be this as it may, the little Swiss town of Montreux has evolved a kind of a cult for the narcissus, which has resulted in an annual festival that serves as a herald of summer and partakes not a little of the old pagan worship of the return of the season of warmth.

The festivities in Montreux last two days. They begin with an open-air ballet danced by celebrated troupes from some great city, before a grand stand containing thousands of people. Then comes a cortège of decorated carriages and costumed groups on foot. The first time that the cortège passes the judges' stand these artistic creations are received with sedate admiration and much applause. The second time bedlam breaks loose, and then begins the confetti battle which rages for hours.

The Bay of Montreux is always illuminated on the two evenings of the fête. Little decorated boats float back and forth; fireworks are set off; the houses and chalets on the hillside are outlined in electric lights; the trains of the various funiculars, blazing in festival glory, crawl up and down and across the surrounding hills like great glow-worms, while hoary old Chillon, closing the scene to the right, stands

out in bold relief against the light of powerful reflectors. The Casino of Montreux stages a wonderful ball as its offering to the festivities, and the special excursions to the narcissus fields the following day are just what is needed to refresh the jaded reveller and fill him with wonder and delight.

And the illustration showing "A Narcissus Hill-side above Montreux" is enough to make you wonder next time you pay 1s. 6d. for a dozen narcissi bought locally over here. Ah, well, perhaps they have not got Daffodils in such profusion at Montreux, or Southdown Lamb!

And while some of us might have been seen carrying small or large parcels of Blue Bells—I was not one of them, knowing how quickly the poor things fade away at home, and preferring to admire them in their natural surroundings—and others looking out for the first blossoms of the May Tree, not to take them home, because, according to a widespread superstition, this would bring bad luck—probably the baby might prick his tiny fingers or toes on the thorns!—but to gaze upon the beauty of those May Trees, sure harbingers of Spring and even early Summer, over there in the home-land, Nature was busy preparing for the Feast of Flowers which happens every June in Switzerland. What a joy it is to wander among the Alps at that time, when the meadows, the rocks, the cliffs and ravines are lit up by a host of multi-coloured small flowers. Small they are, smaller, most of them, than their kin down in the lowlands, but what they lack in stature, they make up, and more, in beauty of colour, and, above all, in the wonder of their scent. Cyclamen, Gentian, Rhododendron, Männertreu (Joke: Where is the Weibertreu?), all the numerous Saxifrage, the Ranunculus, etc., etc. One of the best times, surely, to see the beauties of Switzerland is June, and having had that wonderful experience some years ago, when, on the Kleine Scheidegg, near the Eiger-Glacier, it was possible to stand with one foot on masses of tiny, beautifully-coloured flowers, and with the other on 90 feet deep ice—I hope that as many of my readers as possibly can arrange it will take this tip from me and go and see for themselves how wondrously beautiful Swiss Alps can be in June. They will thank me for this tip, I know.

Meanwhile, further to whet their appetite in this direction, let them read what the *Graphic* (1st May) writes:—

### Sunshine in Snowland.

Summer in the Alps is a time of tremendous contrasts and furious haste. By May the snow has melted from the lower meadows, and the flowers are tumbling over one another in their race against early autumn frosts. First come myriads of crocuses, whitening the still barren meadows more than the islets of unmelted; brownish snow, then soldanellas in the woods and heathy land. After that, mountain primroses, huge dandelions, campions, pansies, pale violets, and patches of gentian like constellations of lovely, lowly, profoundly blue stars; anemones, downy and lilac, sulphur yellow, and white; and then the pace quickens till only a botanist can keep abreast.

Summer is so short that most of the flowers have only a few days to live, but for those few days they hold possession of the green meadows, and dye them with their hue. The grass—a richer green than in England—is like a gorgeous pile carpet unrolled on the mountain side, and over it flush the changing colours. One day wave on wave of kingcups pour down a grassy slope like a headlong cataract of gold, and the next day they are gone, the slope dusted with the blue of wild forget-me-nots.

And though the flowers are fugitive, it is only necessary to go higher up the mountain to catch them again. There are little grassy bowls hidden away in the peaks, where the snow melts so late that crocuses bloom in August.

All through the summer crops of hay are being mown from the prolific land, and narrow conical haystacks cover the shorn meadows that roll down in great folds to the very edge of the forest-bordered lake. The rich scent of new-mown hay, fruitful and sweet, drifts over the mirror-waters, and the splashing and laughter of bathers 6,000 feet above the sea are the only sounds that break the ripening, midsummer hush.

In the thick of summer sports visitors hardly see summer beauty—silver torrents tumbling down bouldered gullies; placid streams flowing through meadows gorgeous with a thousand flowers; the close-cropped, sun-flooded grazing grounds—no, unlike parts of our own South Downs—vibrating