

# Home news

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# The Swiss Observer

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## HOME NEWS

No less than nine constitutional amendments were submitted during the last week-end to the electors of the canton Basel-Land. The majority of them were rejected, notably a proposal for female suffrage in church and scholastic matters, and another one to extend the suffrage to civil servants and school teachers: on the other hand the right to poor relief will be based on the actual place of residence and not, as heretofore, on the commune of origin.

An initiative demand signed by the requisite number of voters has been presented by the communist party to the Basle Grosse Rat: it seeks to establish complete equality in political matters between the two sexes.

The offices of the town hall in Zug, which latter also includes a police station, were broken into during the luncheon interval, the thief abstracting notes to the value of frs. 9,000.

The population of the town of Zurich to the end of June last records with 211,020, an increase of nearly 5,000 souls as compared with twelve months ago.

The next federal musical festival will take place at La Chaux-de-Fonds in 1927 from July 23rd (Saturday) to July 26th (Tuesday).

The sums subscribed and collected in the canton of Neuchâtel in favour of the sufferers from the recent cyclon amount to frs. 456,301, which, according to the "Journal de Genève," largely covers the damage caused to property in the canton.

Owing to the abnormal amount of precipitation the Pissot dam near Villeneuve (Vaud) burst last week, inundating a large stretch of cultivated land; the vines over an area of about 1,000 square metres are said to be ruined.

For inciting to violence, attacking workers and generally obstructing the police, six carpenters have been sentenced by the Zurich courts to fines and hard-labour ranging from two days to six weeks. The carpenters' strike is gradually collapsing.

Through colliding at the level-crossing Uzwil-Flawil (St. Gall) with a run-away trap, a cyclist, Valentin Frei, from Niederuzwil, was so badly injured that he died two days afterwards in the local hospital. Noticing the galloping horse the guard had re-opened the closed barrier in the belief that the animal would follow the straight road; it however turned to the left, following the railway track, and dashed itself against the approaching express train.

Through trying to avoid running over a dog whilst motor-cycling, Alfred Bürgi, an architect of Berne, was thrown from his machine and succumbed to a fracture of the spine.

For having endeavoured, as he maintained, to force his wife out of the house by setting part of it on fire, Ernest Tschopp, the owner of the hotel "Krone," in Aarburg, has been arrested on a charge of arson.

Some excitement has been caused in Langnau (Berne) by the discovery that an inmate of the local infirmary is suffering from arsenic poisoning. His wife, whom he remarried after divorcing here, has been arrested, together with her lover, who already on a previous occasion had been charged with an attempt of murdering her husband.

Mr. Rudolf Sprüngli-Schifferli, the founder and for 50 years the director of the well-known chocolate concern, Lindt & Sprüngli, in Berne and Zurich, died at Rüschlikon (Zurich), at the age of 80.

## NOTES AND GLEANINGS.

By "KYBURG."

### "Un pour Tous, Tous pour Un."

In June, 1881, a terrible hail-storm devastated a strip of country north of the Thur, where the Cantons of Thurgovie and Zurich meet.

I remember my grandfather telling me how the hail, large as hen eggs, left the trees bare of leaves, the vines ruined, the corn stamped into the ground, and how he and his fellow villagers sat about for weeks, because there was absolutely nothing to do for the rest of that season. Ruin, stark and irreparable stared them in the face.

It was then that those villagers were given a proof of the living force which stands behind our proud motto, "Un Pour Tous, Tous Pour Un," and within a couple of months all the sufferers by that terrible storm were in receipt of money gifts collected among the rest of Switzerland for that purpose. Well do I remember my mother relating how that was the only time she had seen my grandfather in tears, when he received the gift which was his lot, the gift which gave him proof of "freundeidgenössische Gesinnung und Hilfe in der Not."

To-day a similar appeal for helping fellow-Swiss who have been badly hit by another terrible storm and who are sadly in need not only of money, etc., but of a tangible proof of that federal sympathy which will give them the moral courage to rebuild what has been devastated, is being made by the City Swiss Club and the N.S.H. and possibly by other Swiss Societies in London. La Chaux-de-Fonds and District have suffered. That the rest of Switzerland is eager to help, goes without saying, and, I think, we may well feel proud that we, Swiss in London, may also be permitted to give our contribution and thereby testify that the lofty language we are apt to hear and to speak at all sorts of festive occasions here and at home, really has got a basis of fact and is not idle and emotional vapouring only.

Send your contribution, be it large or be it small—none can be too large and none can be too small, be sure of that!—to the Treasurers of the Societies named or to the Editor of the *Swiss Observer* who, I feel sure, will gladly forward it to the proper receiving quarters. Do it and take away with you, in return, that feeling of having once again shown yourself a good Swiss and worthy of our motto. None of us is too poor to spare a modicum and were it only a sixpence and if you remember that it is the moral "geste" as much as the actual cash value that is required to help our brethren in distress, you will feel that not to help quickly will make you burn with shame next time you help to sing or hear one of our patriotic hymns.

I have in a previous issue mentioned the Fête des Narcisses of Montreux and I am sure the following article which I take from *Liverpool Echo* of July 3rd, and which is written with a fine understanding, methinks, of Swiss customs and practices as far as such festivals go, will interest you.

### Summer Festivals in Switzerland.

Summer festivals in Switzerland are of all sorts, but the most popular are those that are got up by the numerous gymnastic, sport, or choral societies. For all Swiss go in for physical training, for games and for song, and the remotest little village sends its representatives when a festival comes round.

There are certain unwritten laws about these assemblies which are the same in every case, certain traditions that are always carried out. For instance, the town chosen for the festival always sees to it that streets and houses are profusely decorated. Flags are strung across the roads and hang from every window; yards of gaily coloured little pennants trim the fronts of the quaint old dwellings, and great care is taken to give pre-eminence to the cantonal flags and colours of the Confederate visitors; while over and above all floats the great red banner with its white cross, reminding guests and inhabitants of the national motto, "All for one, one for all."

Then there is that most important institution, the "cantine," much akin to an English canteen, but far more elaborate. It is usually a temporary structure, a sort of glorified marquee, or, in less important towns, a shed or barn arranged for the occasion. Food and drink are to be had there at all hours of the day, and well on into the night, while plentiful and excellently cooked banquets are served in the "can-

tine" at stated hours. Sometimes sleeping quarters are adjoined to the canteen for the visitors, but as a rule the elementary schools (and maybe the high schools) are requisitioned as dormitories, to the great joy of the boys and girls of the town, who are thus sure of two or three days' holiday.

No Swiss festival would be complete without swingboats, roundabouts, shooting galleries, and the usual noisy gaiety of a fair. So for days before the event, the town is invaded by gypsies, from the old-fashioned kind with caravans drawn by tired-out hacks, to the up-to-date Romany, with his motor-tractor, string of vans, and merry-go-round of little motor-cars. These people fill the big market-place, and when, as sometimes happens, they add a menagerie of more or less unhappy-looking beasts, the din is terrific, and law-abiding citizens yearn for the hour that brings the great closing banquet of the festival. The fair does a roaring trade, and recently in a little town on the Lake of Geneva, the motor-car roundabout made as much as eight hundred pounds, carrying over 20,000 people at a franc a head. The tradesmen of the aforesaid town are now wondering what they can do to prevent such sums going into the pockets of outsiders instead of into their own.

And then there must be the procession at every Swiss festival, and this is always a most picturesque affair. All the societies taking part in the festival march through the town, the town bands (there are two or three in every self-respecting Swiss community), and their own "fanfares" taking it in turns to play, so that there is music all along the line. Gymnasts will be all in white shorts and jerseys, with their coloured scarves across their chest; football, or rowing, or swimming clubs will be clad in their parti-coloured jerseys; the members of the different choral societies will be resplendent with gay cockades, and are sure to be preceded by their standard-bearers, whose hats are trimmed with feathers in the club colours, who wear scarves of the same, and who carry respectively a cornucopia of flowers of the right hue, and the beautifully-embroidered banner of the society. And some of the more enthusiastic members are probably shielding themselves from the hot rays of the burning summer sun by means of paper umbrellas, also in the correct colours. Sometimes, too, there are historical groups in the procession, and hearty cheers greet William Tell, or the well-known bears from Berne cheek-by-jowl with pretty girls in the picturesque costumes of other cantons.

But even Swiss festivals have an end, and with laurel wreaths round perspiring brows, palms and medals decorating proudly-floating banners, the competitors take their departure. Flags are pulled down, roundabouts and swings disappear, the dustmen of the clean little town spend long, hot hours putting things to rights, and thirsty committeemen, over an iced "bock," make up the accounts, and explain to each other for the hundredth time how, thanks to them, the just over festival has been the most successful for years.

By the way: with regard to the silly statistics enumerating the festivals and festive cum spiritive meetings which are held annually in Switzerland and which are supposed to be far too numerous, I disagree with that idea and with the tendency to decry the value of these meetings and Festivals.

There may be a number of "pot-hunters" among our Riflemen, among our Gymnasts, our Wrestlers, etc. But, having witnessed a good many of such Festivals and knowing something of the good they do, especially in the way of getting whole populations of villages and small towns to work for weeks and months harmoniously together for one common object, I think it is far, far better to have too many such festivals and meetings than Sundays given over to less commendable pursuits.

### Electrical Engineering in Switzerland.

The Scotsman (July 6th):—

In reference to the firm of Brown, Boverie, & Co., to whom the contract for the new plant of the Portobello Power Station has been allotted by the Corporation of Edinburgh, I may perhaps be allowed, from intimate personal knowledge, to mention that it was founded in 1890 by a rare constellation of electrical, mechanical, and industrial genius in the persons of three young engineers—Mr. Charles Brown, his younger brother, Sydney Brown, and Mr. Walter Boveri. The two brothers Brown