

# Notes and gleanings

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# The Swiss Observer

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## HOME NEWS



### FEDERAL.

#### SAVOY FREE ZONES.

According to an official communication from the Political Department in Berne no agreement has been reached with France in the above dispute which has now lasted for twelve years. By a tentative judgment the International Court at the Hague had on December 6th, 1930, laid down certain legal aspects of the case inviting the two litigants to resume direct negotiations and fixing July 31st as a time limit. The matter will now again come before the Hague Tribunal for final judgment.

#### THE MARK IN SWITZERLAND.

With a view of removing the difficulties encountered by German tourists in Switzerland to change their money an arrangement has been concluded between the Swiss National Bank and the German Reichsbank. The Swiss National Bank will accept from the hotel proprietors such amounts of Marks which arise through the holiday stay of German nationals; the rate of exchange is 100 Mark for 120 Swiss Francs.

#### A TAX ABATEMENT.

Subject to the ratification of the two respective parliaments an agreement has been concluded between the Swiss delegation negotiating in Berlin and representatives of the German Finance and Foreign ministries. Double taxation particularly where death duties are concerned will thereby be abolished.

#### A "GRAVE" AFFAIR.

A curious case was finally disposed of last week by the Federal Tribunal at Lausanne. Part of the old churchyard of St. Niklaus near Solothurn was recently sold and the new owner commenced building operations in the course of which he came across an old grave; the contents of the latter which evidently belonged to two different individuals were collected and packed into a case and handed to the ecclesiastical authorities for reburial. Some of the remains are said to be those of one Charles Sealsfield, an American writer, who had retired to his estate at "Unter den Tannen" and who died there in 1864. The Solothurn Council revoked the sale of this particular part of the cemetery on the ground that it contained a historical monument the transfer of which it had a right to object to. The new owner naturally appealed against this decision but the Federal Tribunal decided against him.

According to what has recently been published in local papers Charles Sealsfield, about whom we find no record in the ordinary English reference books, was a writer of considerable repute. Walter Scott and Balzac are stated to be his equals. He is believed to have taken French leave from a monastery in Bohemia and gone to America in 1822. He earned his living as a journalist in New York, Paris and London and wrote a number of historical novels. He acquired the estate "Unter der Tannen" near Solothurn where he spent the last five years of his life and where he died at the age of 71. His real name is said to be Karl Anton Postl.

#### EN AUSSCHAUSSCHWEIZER.

The well-known Milanese bookseller and antiquary Ulrico Hoepli, who celebrated his 80th birthday a few months ago, paid recently a short visit to his birthplace Tutwil (Thurgau). He was officially received by two members of the cantonal government; the local choral society and the schoolchildren also assisted in feting their famous countryman.

#### A DISTINCTION.

On the occasion of its 50th anniversary the Society of Chemical Industry in England has nominated Dr. G. Engi, of Basle, an honorary member in recognition of his eminent services in the domaine of chemistry.

### LOCAL.

#### ZURICH.

In a head-on collision at Wallisellen between a lorry and a private car Mr. Rudolf Bachmann, a 54 year old business man of Winterthur, lost his life; the latter's son, who was driving, lies in hospital in a critical condition.

#### BERNE.

A serious accident happened last Sunday morning when the "Altels" section of the S.A.C. were climbing the Lauterbrunner Breithorn; the party of twelve were accompanied by three guides. During the descent one of the guides, Fritz Ogi, slipped over a rock but was held on the rope by the others. Oscar Ogi over-estimating the dangerous position of his brother detached himself from the rope and went to his assistance; he however lost his foothold and fell over a steep stone wall. Both guides who are from Kandersteg escaped with their lives but one of them who had to be transported in an unconscious condition over the glacier lies at the Frutigen hospital in a precarious state.

#### URI.

The children in the canton of Uri can no more employ their Sundays and holidays by gathering the many eatable wild berries which now abound everywhere and taking them home to their parents in the customary baskets. The cantonal authorities have issued an edict forbidding the use of baskets or other suitable vehicles for carrying the berries on Sundays. On ordinary week-days baskets may be used but a licence costing from one to five francs must be obtained from the local revenue office.

#### BASLE.

The latest census of the population of Basle records 156,747 inhabitants.

#### GENEVA.

The collapse of the Banque de Genève in whose wake followed the failure of a firm of private bankers in Basle has brought forth vehement attacks by the socialist party against the management. The socialists further demand the resignation of the whole Conseil d'Etat maintaining that the latter has been negligent in its supervision. In the meantime a defence association has been formed by the depositors and creditors for the protection of their interests.

#### GRISONS.

A finance committee has been formed with the object of collecting funds for the acquisition of the "Klosterhof" in Truns. This hall was built in the second half of the 16th century by the Abbot of Disentis and served as the meeting place of the ancient council called the "Graue Bund." This historic building is at present in private possession; the Federal Council has promised a contribution of Frs. 10,000 if the Grisons government will support the scheme financially.

#### VAUD.

G. G. Mignot-Meyer, the town-clerk of Lausanne, against whom a warrant of arrest has been issued for defalcation and who absconded, has been detained in a small hotel at Grenoble. He is stated to have made a full confession.

#### TICINO.

Official representatives have been made by the Swiss authorities to the Italian government with reference to the severe customs examinations now enforced at Chiasso which are likely to cause a delay in transit and an accumulation of goods. It is stated that all goods are reloaded and that even cases consigned to an inland Italian Customs office are opened and inspected thus occasioning damage in repacking.

#### LUCERNE.

The former National Councillor, Ferdinand Steiner, has died after a short illness, in Malters, at the age of 63; he was a member of the Lower House from 1917 to 1926, and belonged, for a number of years, to the Grosse Rat of the Canton of Lucerne. In business, he was the senior partner of Messrs Steiner Soehne & Co., in Malters, and a leading figure in the Swiss milling industry.

### NOTES AND GLEANINGS.

By KYBURG.

I listened in to the "News" broadcast from Berne last Sunday, evening and to the Swiss Weather Forecast and gathered that much cloud, occasional bright intervals and now and again a rainy-shower were expected and that the temperature was just about normal, with a slight tendency to rise somewhat.

Thought I, having played golf that afternoon and during my pilgrimage across the links encountered two hefty showers, well, well, the Swiss climate seems to be tout comme chez nous and, although I felt some sympathy for those who are enjoying their holidays over there, I also felt some slight malicious pleasure, a quite heathenish feeling, no doubt. It is funny how the mildest among us—and Kyburg is about as mild a chappie as you can find in a day's wandering—occasionally feel malicious pleasure when thinking of our brethren's misfortunes, what? And when we get a letter from our Editor, saying "here are the gleanings for you to do for next week's issue, I am off tomorrow for my annual Swiss holiday and regret you are not one of the party, but hope to bear up all the same and trust you will see to your column being well filled week by week, while I am having a good time on the Lake of Lucerne," well, as I said, one does feel a wee bit envious! Naturally, our Editor did not write me the above, as I give it, but he thought it and that comes pretty much to the same, does it not?

And I have written the above, so that when he reads this week's issue and reads the above remarks, he will feel conscience smitten and will realise what loyal collaborators we are who keep the paper going while he gathers Alpenrosen and, perchance, fishes for Egli! And thank you, for promising to "Bringen I Eui daenn d'Blume!" And, "sobald I daenn an i der Schwyz bin, so chumeni Eui daenn nah!" Prost!

Now that the dogs days are on us—at least I feel it is about that period—I have to fill in my column as best as I can. I find very little help in the British Press. Swiss Holiday articles are always more or less the same. Besides, they make those who can't go envious and those who are going over, they will find out themselves what it is like. (I think your breakfast this morning did not agree with you, Kyburg? Editor).

"Oh no, Sir," he replied manfully, "It's not that, I assure you. But, I have read some Sunday paper or another yesterday and therein found an article by some wisecrack which told me that your really fine journalist or story teller—and aren't they all?—is he who writes just as he would talk, who does not elaborate, but writes simply and unaffectedly and I am trying to do so."

Well, most writers and journalists pretend in their articles and books to be much better men than they are. Witness Jean Jacques Rousseau. I have to name poor old Jacques, because of the laws of libel! But, thank Heaven, Kyburg is not like that. Kyburg writes how he actually feels and thinks and if he writes with a slightly vinegary sauce, as it were, you must remember that it is MONDAY, that the weather outlook is unsettled, that the temperature is on the coldish side for the time of the year and that there is still much work to be done, because on Tuesday Kyburg has to take a day off for health's sake. Anyhow, health, like patriotism and religion provides a fine peg on which to hang excuses of all sorts. Some rude friends of mine, envious, of course, will tell me on Wednesday when I reappear in our carriage on the "early" train, well and did you get many birdies and when I reply to them that I took a day off for the sake of my health, they will guffaw, yes guffaw, not laugh like gentlemen, but GUFFAW like inmates of Whipsnade or like whipper-snappers! Yes Sir, jealous they will be and why? Because they have not thought of that excuse themselves, because they go about boasting of their splendid health, instead of looking over-worked and thereby being able to convince everybody that must be convinced that what they need is a day off.

Meanwhile, work is irksome. Coming events cast their shadows before them and a day off is apt to spoil the previous day for work owing to anticipatory feelings and to mar the following day owing to sudden discoveries of (a) why one fluffed that drive at the fifth and (b) what the point of that story was which left one so cold when Smith told it at the 19th.

Life is like that. Full of troubles and full of anticipations and remembrances. The art of a successful liver—not the one which is fed by little pills, but the one who lives I mean—is to be able to blend the various feelings and sensations into a harmonious one.

I suppose after all these free and easy and natural vapourings which at one go stamp me as a true journalist and writer—see above—I must now pander a little to the thirst for news and knowledge of my readers. But before doing so, I have yet one more thing to say. You see, my column in the Swiss Observer is entitled simply "Notes & Gleanings." No hint is given as to the contents of my article. No glaring headline gives you any idea of what you let yourself in for when you start reading my musings. That is precisely why my article represents journalism at its very, uttermost best! If it be true that the seeker after truth will die as soon as he finds TRUTH, if it be true that happiness lies in the seeking and not in the finding or in the possession, then it follows that Kyburgs article must provide our readers with the very best, because my readers have to hunt and seek all through my column to find the corns of wisdom, of news, of facts hidden therein.

When you buy, as I hope you won't, the Daily Mail or the Daily Express and you find glaring headlines, such as "Paralysis (financial) creeps over Central Europe" what use is the reading of the article in question? Your brain, by getting an impression of that headline knows beforehand what the article contains. All your reading of that article therefore amounts simply to swallowing a dose of dope. No thinking required, no thinking even allowed. Only mechanical passing of your eyes over the lines, absorbing words the meaning of which, in their tout ensemble, you know beforehand. That is the uttermost NEGATIVE of journalism and the difference between those articles and mine is tremendous, so that now you know too why the Swiss Observer is extremely cheap at our present rates of subscriptions! q.e.d.

Some folks, bless them, have gone on holiday or will go. Good Luck to them, says I and may they all come back safely. Some of them may wish to go by Motorcar and for them the following article from the Daily Telegraph 15th July, may be useful:

#### Motoring In The Alps.

In France towns and villages are more widely spaced than in any other of the countries of Western Europe. But there is a corresponding infrequency of garages and hotels, a factor to be borne in mind by those who cherish comfort or have cars liable to give trouble.

On some roads I have driven fifty, or even a hundred, miles without finding a hotel where one could care to stop. But the motorist who keeps to the coast or to the beaten tracks need not fear any deficiency. And he who prefers to wander off the beaten track is often rewarded by the discovery of a small hotel, where better food and service can be obtained for half the price paid at places that have learnt to cater for the opulent transatlantic tourist of post-war days.

The motorist who goes beyond and crosses the Swiss frontier will, of course, find a plenty of good hotels, which offer good value for money. If not so cheap as the average of French hotels their prices are never so extravagant as some of the French hotels in the fashionable tourist haunts. For me the one common but not universal defect of Swiss hotel cuisine is that I cannot look a calf in the face for months after returning.

Swiss roads are generally good and extremely well graded, but they are hard on tyres, as few are tarred except in the most frequented valleys. Driving is tiring, because of constant bends and the narrowness of many of the mountain roads.

In planning a programme it is well to realise that a hundred miles in Switzerland are a good day's run, and the equivalent in fatigue to two hundred or more at home. A word of warning is advisable, too, for those motorists who have not a good head for heights—the A. A. might consider this factor when suggesting routes.

Many of the mountain roads wind sinuously, and sometimes acutely, above precipices that fall sheer. And such a comforting safeguard as a low wall or a close-set row of stones along the edge is rare. It is curious that the Swiss, who cater so well for the foreign tourist and have spent such vast sums on marvellously engineered railways, do not devote a fraction to fitting their roads to the feelings of the foreign motorist who lacks the familiarity that breeds contempt.

Another warning is wise as to the speed limits which rule, and in some cantons are strictly enforced. In many years of driving, the only time I have been fined for "speeding" was on a Swiss road where, actually, the instinct of self-protection from its natural danger had led me to drive at what seemed to me an abnormally slow and superabundantly cautious pace.

If one crosses the frontier from France into Germany, one finds roads that recall our own—without hedges. Surfaces are generally fair to good, and although a surprising number of the main roads in the Rhineland are "pavé," the Germans lay their pavé in a different way from the French and Belgian. Their smaller and more closely dovetailed blocks provide a really good surface over which one can drive smoothly up to 50 m.p.h. But this limitation, combined with the winding course of the roads and the frequency of villages, makes Germany a definitely "slower" country than France.

With large towns so numerous, good hotels are equally so. Their standard of cleanliness and modernity is only matched in Switzerland, and the cost is a little lower. Meals are very moderately priced for their quality, but the lover of Rhine and Moselle wines will be disappointed to discover that, in comparison with the French, his pocket profits little by drinking them in the land of their origin.

To reach the Rhineland the shortest route is through Belgium, but here pitfalls await the motorist. Old-world Bruges and Ghent, the natural beauty of Spa and other resorts in the Ardennes, are alike enticing. And Belgium to-day is the one really cheap country in Western Europe for the holiday-seeker. But its roads! Their endless miles of spring-crashing pavé are the motorist's purgatory. With careful investigation and by long detours he may to some extent mitigate the ordeal and obtain an occasional taste of a good tarred road. But Belgium assuredly will not reap the full reward of its attractions for the tourist until it puts its roads in order.

To finish up, I will quote one more article. This one is from the East Anglian Daily Times 9th July, and it amused me mildly on account of the crass superficiality with which the much belittled author saw things at Geneva. Our compatriots from Calvin's City will soon spot what I mean. I like those Swiss Soldiers, Officers with white trousers!

#### Geneva To-Day.

Just What I Saw There.

Very beautiful is the varied horse shoe of Geneva Harbour, as the setting sun dies beyond the western Alps. The myriad electric lights whose globes surmount the waters' parapet are reflected in quivering rays from its silver lake, stirred but softly by a twilight zephyr. Behind them rises the black bank of tall buildings, intermittently broken by the masts of shipping. In the background tier upon tier towers a long chain of snow-capped mountains, some miles away and nearly merged in the salmon of the cloudless sky, that indefinitely melts to palest green; and, higher yet, into the darkling azure of the central vault. As one drinks in the grand tout ensemble, one more fully realises how the brilliant, evanescent human lights wax solely for a few short hours, and how the eternal hills melt into soft comradeship with the velvet void in order to return and so persist, like the Alps and their enshrouding snows, as long as our earth endures. It does one good to think sometimes; and this Rade, with the two golden spindles of its entrance phares, is worthy of contemplation.

But a remarkable place is this Switzerland! As soon as the Douane has visited your possessions at the French frontier, you have to conform to lying by putting on your watch fifty minutes, to run a round of 24 (not twelve) hours, though no such tricks are needed at Calais, more sensible than Dublin. And the first paper you pick up in the lounge is the "Chicago Daily Tribune," beside the "New York Herald." Then come "La Suisse," "Berliner Tagblatt," "La Publicité," "Der Tag" (a phrase most Britons know), and the "Gazette de Lausanne," with the local "Tribune de Genève," and alien Continental edition of the Daily Mail. Everything is polyglot: the hall-porter talks English like a yankee, and I myself was insulted mistakenly for "Deutsch." One of the shops professed to speak (1) German, (2) English, (3) Italian, and (4) Spanish, French being current; note the order of presumable value in commerce.

Here sparrows are abundant, very much commoner than anywhere throughout France. Gulls of the species *Larus ridibundus*, Linn., frequent the lake in some numbers, and are locally termed Monette riense. Also on the lake are two kinds of grebe, and four ducks come in winter. Migrant birds pass over from West-Central Africa to both Britain and, via Cote d'Azur, to Eastern Europe. In general, small garden birds, including peafowl, are commoner in the town than France. The Musée Hist. Nat. is a fine, long building of four storeys in Georgian style, standing in University Square, below the Bastion; but the Ethnological Museum is beside the lake, locally known as Leman, on whose banks swans, in pairs, were nesting. Also, I investigated the Archaeological Museum "d'Art et d'Histoire" in rue Charles Galland, opened in 1910, now free from ten to noon and from fourteen to

seventeen o'clock. It is of similar architecture, and contains an extensive collection of armour in beautiful condition, though with hardly a piece older than 1450; here the stone implements of "époque Chelleanne" are effectively mounted upon red cloth, unlike those in the British Museum.

No Continental place I saw so closely resembled dear old London, not in the comparatively small population of some 80,000 souls, but both in the size and architecture of its good buildings, most especially the capital public ones, and in the very decent and un-French observance of Sunday (when I happened to look round) whereupon the folk turn out in their best clothes to chat with friends beside the lake or attend divine service in a rational manner. The general atmosphere of good law and order is refreshing after the light and airy do-as-you-please too common westward.

Much of this is evidently owing to the competence of the gendarmerie, who have no hesitancy in the regulation of traffic, and are a fine, upstanding lot of fellows, in black and blue-striped trousers (whereto serjeants add shiny black gaiters), peaked cap, white gloves, belt, epaulettes and facing: very smart. The Swiss Army officers carry most useful swords; and their uniform is dove-grey, with white piping round the black peaked cap, and white trousers: everyone is well drilled, walks as an officer should, conscious of his dignity, and is usually a wellgrown, athletic man.

Casual visitors are too apt to miss the old town, on the hill; here the local folk are very fully up-to-date in the conscientious preservation of all that goes to make ancient history: the mayor's beautiful courtyard, the medieval arcades, and every house with the least pretension to a past is rigidly scheduled by the commune.

#### ECONOMIC SITUATION.

Interesting conclusions can already be drawn from the results of the decennial census, which are now being published. Special attention is being called to the fact that, although the Swiss population has now got beyond the fourth million, the augmentation of the last ten years has been much less considerable, than that of the beginning of the century. It should however be mentioned that the always growing density of the population and the slackening down of the immigration are obstacles to a more accelerated rhythm of the demographic growth. There was a period, when many people announced an ent-nationalisation of Switzerland, owing to the exaggerated afflux of foreign elements. The last statements concerning this point are rather reassuring, as 365,000 foreigners, a little less than one tenth of the total population, are enumerated in Switzerland, whereas the figure still attained 550,000 at the beginning of the century. Although Switzerland is fully keeping up her traditional hospitality, she is at the same time maintaining her national character, which is not running a risk of changing, as certain people seem to have thought.

In Switzerland, as well as elsewhere, the attractive power of the towns is becoming stronger and stronger, in spite of the undertaken efforts to stop the development of this phenomenon. This afflux has never been as great as during the last ten years; nine tenths of the total growth of the population concern the towns. The principal Swiss cities are at present: Zurich (250,000 inhabitants), Basle 147,000, Geneva 144,000, Berne (112,000), Lausanne (77,000), then St. Gall, Winterthur, Lucerne, Bienne and La Chaux-de-Fonds. Amongst these Zurich (21%), Lausanne (12%), Bienne (10%) and Basle (9%) have grown the most rapidly.

By studying Swiss foreign trade with her principal customers and suppliers, some interesting constataions can be made. *Germany, Great Britain, France, the U.S.A. and Italy*, have, in that succession, been the principal buyers of Swiss products in 1930. By comparing this list with the one for 1929, it shows that, whilst Great Britain and Italy have maintained the second, respectively the fifth position, France, that was only fourth in 1929 has in 1930 become third in the list of Swiss clients, taking the place of the U.S.A., that have retrograded to the fourth place.

The 1930 list of the principal suppliers to Switzerland, which are, by the way, the same as the principal customers, is the following: *Germany, France, Great Britain, the U.S.A., and Italy*. Germany has succeeded in increasing her exports to Switzerland, which have attained more than 700 million Swiss francs in 1930. Great Britain has also been able to augment her sales, from 167 millions in 1929 to 232 millions in 1930, a fact which is worth consideration. On the other hand, the U.S.A., which in 1929 had still sold goods to Switzerland for more than 300 millions, have had to see their exports diminishing one third and tumble down to about 200 millions of francs, a phenomenon, with which the attitude that country adopted concerning the tariff-duties