News at Random

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1666

The Swiss Observer

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NEWS AT RANDOM

Federal

M. François-Charles Pictet, a secretary of the Swiss Embassy in Moscow until he was recently declared *persona non grata* by the Soviet authorities without explanation, has returned to Switzerland.

The expulsion order against M. Pictet appears to have been made as a reprisal against the Swiss for having expelled a Russian official attached to the Soviet Embassy in Berne, M. Vladimir Koukourine, who was alleged to have engaged in espionage activities. M. Koukourine, whose name was not listed among the staff of the Embassy, was said to have had as his main mission obtaining information on Swiss military installations and armaments.

* * *

The Swiss Federal Council, in a report recently issued, has proposed reducing the working week for salaried workers from 48 hours to 46 hours, with a two-week annual holiday with pay. One object of the proposal is to make the working week and holiday period uniform throughout the country.

The trade unions, who have been pressing for a 44-hour working week, are expected to oppose strongly the Government's proposal when it comes before Parliament.

As the proposal now stands it covers 260,000 firms employing 1,800,000 workers, or a 20-fold increase over those protected by the existing law.

* * *

Customs receipts for the month of September 1960 total 106.4 million francs; of this amount the Confederation (Bund) receives 74.3 million francs, or 13.4 million francs more than in September 1959.

The receipts for the first nine months of the current year earmarked for the Confederation, amount to 649.9 million francs, or 120.6 million francs more than during the same period in 1959.

M. Max Petitpierre, President of the Swiss Confederation, has sent a congratulatory message to the Premier, Sir Alhaye, Abukakar Tafawa Balewa, of Nigeria, on the occasion of that country declaring its independence.

* * *

The Federal Council has appointed Dr. Fritz Walter to the post of Director of the Federal Insurance Office, and Dr. Hans Streit (Zimmerwald) to that of Vice-Director of the same office.

* * *

Two diplomats received at the Palais Fédéral in Berne by M. Max Petitpierre, President of the Swiss Confederation, on the occasion of presenting their credentials, were Monsieur John Edward Bruce, Ambassador of the South African Union, and Monsieur Raif Abillama, Ambassador of Lebanon.

* * *

The States Council has accepted a Government proposal to raise the price of petrol by the equivalent of 1½d. to 3s. 9d. a gallon — the increase to be used for the construction of motor-roads.

* * *

Cantonal

The new " Mühlemäss " hut of the Ski Club Lucerne was recently inaugurated; the old one was destroyed by fire some years ago. [A.T.S.]

* * *

The " Brandversicherungsanstalt " of the canton of Lucerne has celebrated the 150th anniversary of its foundation, on which occasion the management has made a donation of 100,000.— francs to a fund for the benefit of the employees. [A.T.S.]

Xmas Greetings

Following former years' practice we propose to publish again in our December issue a collective greeting.

The high costs of Xmas cards, should induce many of our subscribers to make use of this facility to extend to their friends the compliments of the season.

Those of our readers and friends wishing to be included should forward name and address to our office not later than Friday, November 25th, 1960, together with remittance for 10/-.

The " Gasthaus Bellevue " on the Pilatus Kulm has been totally destroyed by fire. The visitors, numbering twenty, escaped unhurt. [A.T.S.]

* * *

During a recent heavy storm on the lake of Zurich many boats and yachts were torn from their anchorage, and boat-houses were shifted. The damage caused is estimated to exceed 100,000.— francs. [A.T.S.]

* * *

The accounts of the 1st " Gartenbauausstellung " (G.59), which was held in Zurich last year, close with a deficit of 1 million francs. [A.T.S.]

* * *

A waitress on her way home from work was attacked, in Zurich, in the dark by a man who snatched her handbag and took to his heels. He was later arrested. The thug (aged 26) had only recently been discharged from prison. [A.T.S.]

* * *

For the second time within a few weeks a burglary occurred at the jewellery establishment of Richard, S.A., at the Untertor in Winterthur. Goods to the value of 25,000.— francs were stolen. [A.T.S.]

* * *

The " Kantonalbernischer Handels- und Industrie Verein ", with a membership of 2,000, has celebrated its 100th jubilee, in Berne. Amongst the six hundred guests present at the celebration were former Federal Councillors E. von Steiger and Walter Stampfli, and Ministers Stucki, Jean Hotz and H. Schaffner.

To mark this event a donation of 20,000.— francs was made to the University of Berne for the benefit of the " Betriebswirtschaftlichen Institut ". [A.T.S.]

* * *

The " Rudolf Minger Commemoration Home " was recently inaugurated at Schüpfen (Ct. Berne), the birthplace of the late Federal Councillor, in the presence of a large number of the population. Amongst the many visitors who attended the ceremony were Federal Councillor T. F. Wahlen, F. Moser, President of the Government of the canton of Berne, Professor Laur, Divisional Colonel Rüenzi, Commander of the 3rd Division.

Professor Dr. Guggisberg and former Federal Councillor von Steiger paid tributes to the late Rudolf Minger, and Federal Councillor Wahlen spoke in moving terms of Minger as a wise statesman, shrewd politician and excellent officer. [A.T.S.]

* * *

The secondary school in St. Imier has celebrated its 100th jubilee. 1,200 former pupils attended the celebration. [A.T.S.]

* * *

M. Gabriel Kolly (55), a farmer, has been elected a member of the National Council, in succession to M. Robert Colliard, who has vacated his seat. The new Member of Parliament hails from Essert (Saane district). He is also a member of the Grand Council of the canton of Fribourg. [A.T.S.]

* * *

The OLMA exhibition in St. Gall was opened on 13th October by Federal Councillor U. A. Spühler. [A.T.S.]

* * *

A thief rifled the safe of a public house and a butcher's establishment at Safenwil (Ct. Aargau) and got away with 20,000.— francs in cash. He was later arrested by the police, who found on him 11,000.— francs of the stolen money. [A.T.S.]

* * *

Renovations to the Cathedral of St. Gall have started. The cost is estimated to be 700,000.— francs. [A.T.S.]

* * *

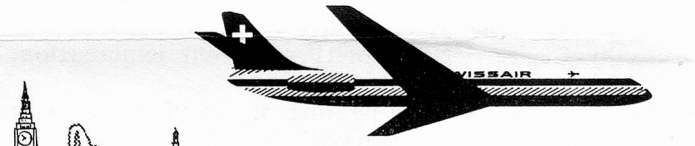
On 1st October the population of the town of Lausanne numbered 123,221. [A.T.S.]

* * *

The " Bodensee-Toggenburg " railway has celebrated the 50th anniversary of its foundation. [A.T.S.]

* * *

Mr. Kurt Steiner (38), of Langnau i.E., has been elected rector of the " Mädchen Sekundarschule " Basle, in succession to Dr. Hans Stricker, who has vacated his post for health reasons. [A.T.S.]



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Mr. Konrad Graf (B.G.B. party) has been elected Mayor of the town of Stein a. Rh. [A.T.S.]

* * *

The commune of Zetswil (Ct. Aargau) has bestowed honorary citizenship upon Mr. Arthur Weber, for his successful services rendered as " Gemeindeammann ". [A.T.S.]

* * *

Mme. Marie-Caroline Bourquin-Jaccard, of La Chaux-de-Fonds, has celebrated her 100th birthday, on which occasion she was presented by the cantonal government with the traditional easy-chair. [A.T.S.]

* * *

The Government of the canton of Geneva has made a donation of 10,000.— francs to the Swiss Red Cross, to be handed over to the Indian Red Cross for the victims of the recent inundations. [A.T.S.]

* * *

For the first time in the history of the canton of Geneva, a woman has been elected as deputy to the president of a commune (Meyrin). She is Mme. Veuve Pellet (50), who polled 349 votes. Her opponents, a Christian Socialist and a Liberal, received 265 votes and 310 votes respectively. [A.T.S.]

* * *

Pierre Jaccoud, who was some months ago sentenced in Geneva to seven years' imprisonment for murder and attempted murder, has again made an attempt on his life in his cell. He was, however, prevented from committing suicide by a warder. [A.T.S.]

* * *

DEATHS

The following deaths are reported from Switzerland :

Robert Bory, judge, author and President of the commune of Coppet, in Coppet, at the age of 69.

Carl Hess-Keller, well-known world champion in pistol shooting, and " Schützenkönig " at the Federal Shooting Competition in Berne, in Rapperswil, age 86. The deceased was at one time a member of the " Kantonsrat " Zurich, and a district judge.

Frau Witwe B. Guggenbühl-Schnorf, the second oldest female inhabitant of the town of Zurich, in Zurich, at the age of 100.

Professor Rud. Tschudi, at one time *Ordinarius* of the faculty of Philology at the University of Basle, in Basle, aged 77.

Otto Spreng, landscape painter, and from 1901 to 1934 a teacher at the " Kunstgewerbeschule " Lucerne, in Lucerne, at the age of 84. [A.T.S.]

* * *

ARMY

A reconnoitring machine of the Vampire type, of the 12th Mountain Brigade, crashed in the Silvretta district. The pilot, Lieutenant Rudolf Hofer (36), of Zumikon (Zurich), was killed.

A military lorry left the road near Zinal (Valais) and fell 300 feet down a slope; three soldiers were killed and eleven injured. Those killed were Heinz Lüscher of Baden, Peter Kurth of Derendingen, and Hansjörg Kurth of Waliswil (Wangen an der Aar).

At the shooting range, Schwendi, above Wildhaus, Fusilier Albert Huser (24), of the Fus. Comp. 3/66, received serious injuries when a hand grenade exploded in his pocket. [A.T.S.]

* * *

ANNIVERSARIES

Paul Geheeb (90), of Halsberg (Ct. Berne), pedagogue and founder of the " Ecole d'Humanité ".

Edmond Gilliard (85), of Lausanne, author. He

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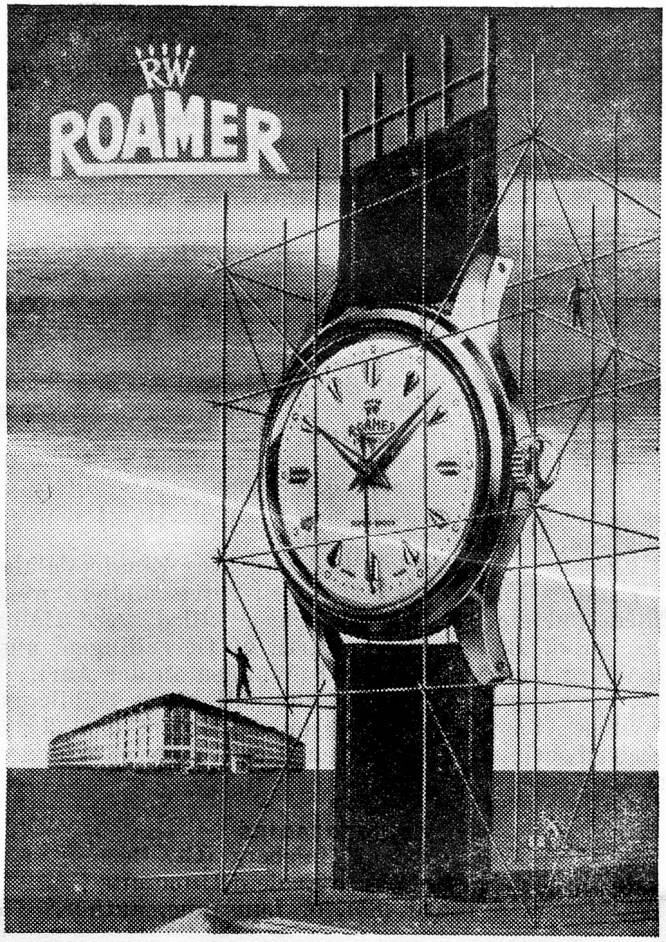

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has recently published two works, " Entretiens avec Georges Anex ", and " Carnet de la huitaine ", which have been well received.

Professor Dr. Hans Plattner (70), of Billings (Montana), from 1927 to 1956 a teacher at the " Kantonsschule " Chur, and author of a great number of novels. [A.T.S.]

* * *

DIAMOND WEDDING ANNIVERSARIES

Mr. and Mrs. A. Botzum-Hermann of Basle, Mr. and Mrs. E. Schaffner-Kyburz of Schönenwerd, Mr. and Mrs. E. Schaffner-Kyburz of Schönenwerd, Mr. and Mrs. A. Langjahr-Moetteli of Zurich, Mr. and Mrs. A. Bolzan-Deon of Zurich, Mr. and Mrs. G. Baehler-Feller of Interlaken, Mr. and Mrs. A. Rey-Schwar. [A.T.S.]

* * *

LEGACIES

The late Fritz Jann, embroidery designer, of St. Gall, left 50,000.— francs towards the cost of a new building for the " Evangelischen Pflegeheim " St. Gall.

Frau Seraphine Pfenninger-Faeh, who died in February 1960, bequeathed 21,000.— francs to various hospitals and charitable institutions.

The late Mlle. Marguerite Joyet, of Lausanne, left 10,000.— francs to the "Eugenie Basset Foundation". [A.T.S.]

* * *

VARIOUS

Up to 1st October 1960, the Swiss Insurance Company for damage caused by hail, had paid out seven million francs in settlement of 14,300 claims. [A.T.S.]

* * *

On 30th September 1960, the number of television subscribers in Switzerland attained the figure of 114,297. [A.T.S.]

* * *

The 50 million francs loan at 4 per cent issued by Swissair has been considerably over subscribed, and allocations have had to be reduced. [A.T.S.]

* * *

TRAFFIC ACCIDENTS

Various serious traffic accidents, costing many lives, are reported from Switzerland.

Josef Blattmann (45), a farmer, of Cham, and Josef Boos (24), of Hünenberg, were killed in a collision which occurred at Cham. Several persons were injured and were taken to hospital.

Two persons were killed, and two were seriously injured, when a motor-car collided with a lorry near Morges. Those killed were Jean-Pierre Ritter (43), locksmith, of Lausanne, and his mother, Julie Albertine Ritter.

Two motor-cars were involved in a head-on collision in Jouxtens-Mezery, causing the deaths of André Ravessond and Mlle. Simone Clerc.

Miss Delphina Mazzoni (40), of Zurich, was run over at a zebra crossing at the Löwenstrasse in Zurich, and received fatal injuries.

A motor-cycle collided with a jeep on the Gaiserstrasse in Meisterrüti near Appenzell. Emil Baumann (47), of Appenzell, was killed.

Hermann Stämpfli (51), of Kreuzligen, riding a motor-cycle, collided with a motor-car and received fatal injuries.

Two motor-cycles were involved in a collision at Unterlunnern, causing the death of Mr. Arthur Huber, and Walter Bleiker (51), of Oberfelden (Zurich).

A motor-cyclist, Emil Nebiker (58), of Basle, collided with a pedal-cyclist on the road between Reinach and Basle, and was killed.

Frl. Minna Kellerhals (50), of Felsberg, was run over by a motor-car on the road between Chur and Ems, and received fatal injuries.

A motorist, in overtaking two cars, collided with an oncoming vehicle, causing the death of Edmond Parvex (31), of Monthey.

At a level-crossing near " Weite Wartau " (St. Gall. Rheintal) a horse and cart were struck by the express train, Buchs-Chur. The driver of the cart, Mathias Sulser-Fontnas, was killed.

Siegfried Duss (53), chauffeur, of Kriens, whilst cycling in Lucerne, was run over and killed. [A.T.S.]

VARIOUS

Zurich: After favouring Paris, London, Rome and the Riviera for years as locations for feature films, producer companies from abroad — particularly from America — have discovered Switzerland as " a film makers' paradise ". The primary attraction is not the Swiss scenery, highly photogenic though it is, but the fact, as one producer put it, " that two of the national virtues here are decency and reliability ". It is certainly true that wages in Switzerland are somewhat higher than elsewhere in Europe, but in return the film producers find an exceptionally healthy industrial climate in this country, where there has been no strike worthy of the name since 1918, as well as extremely well-trained technical staff. Another advantage, in line with the proverbial Swiss efficiency, is the smooth functioning of the telephone and telegraph system, one of the most advanced in the world, particularly as regards international communications. Among the companies temporarily active in Switzerland are Universal International, from Hollywood, who are at present shooting several scenes for the feature film, " The Secret Ways ", in Zurich and suburbs. The film stars are Sonja Ziemann and Richard Widmark.

* * *

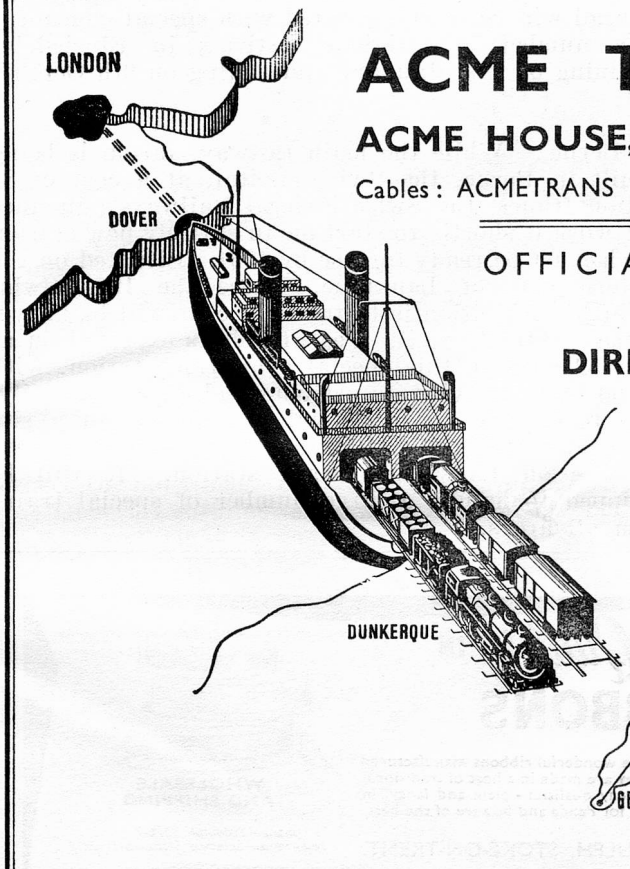
Murten: French and Swiss film makers, among them Lausanne-born actor, singer and producer Pierre Dudan, are shooting a film at " Le Vieux Manoir ", a country house — now turned into a smart restaurant — in the hamlet of Meyriez, near the little medieval town of Murten. They are doing so because the film's adventure story is based on the novel, " La Chair à Poisson ", whose author, Marcel G. Prêtre, has lived for over two years in the romantic " Vieux Manoir " on the Lake of Murten. While the film is being shot, author and producer are already planning a further production which will again be set in the neighbourhood of Murten and also at Villars, the skiers' paradise in the Vaudois Alps.

* * *

The annual report of the Berne Tourist Office calls for the Swiss capital to be linked to the international air network by construction of a continental city airport. The report also stresses that Berne is particularly suitable for national and iternational conferences and can offer ample hotel accommodation and modern conference halls all the year round.

* * *

Le Brassus, in the Swiss Jura, will be the scene, on 14th and 15th January 1961, of the international ski contests in the Nordic events — Langlauf, jumping and relay racing.



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Nineteen skilifts, aerial cableways and funiculars will be available to winter sports enthusiasts in the Saanenmöser and Gstaad regions this winter. Information about them can be found on the back of the free relief map which shows all the important transport lines and ski downruns in the area between Zweisimmen and Chateau d'Oex.

* * *

" Curl your way to health at Pontresina " — that is the new slogan with which the sunny Engadine winter resort hopes to influence winter holiday plans — even those already fixed. It appeals particularly to followers of the gentle sport of curling, who are becoming more numerous year by year. The highlight of Pontresina's " curlers' winter " will again be the curling week, which takes place from 10th to 16th January 1961.

* * *

An 11th-century former monastery, the " Chà Granda " or Big House in Tarasp-Plaz, an architecturally unique part of Scuol-Tarasp-Vulpera, the Alpine resort and spa, has for some time housed the Lower Engadine folklore museum. Further sections of the building are still in course of reconstruction. One of the rooms already in use for museum purposes is a costly 1702 Renaissance salon.

* * *

On 21st January in the year 861, the pious hermit, Meinrad, was murdered in the " Finsterer Wald " — The Dark Forest — of Central Switzerland, south of the Lake of Zurich. On the reputed spot where the deed was committed now stand the village and the Monastery of Einsiedeln with the wonderful abbey church, one of the loveliest Baroque buildings in Europe. Eleven hundred years after his death, St. Meinrad will be commemorated with special pageantry by a number of religious festivals in Einsiedeln, beginning on 21st January and ending on 9th October 1961.

* * *

Berne : While the main railway station is being rebuilt in Berne, the Swiss capital, at a cost of 81 million francs, the Swiss Federal Railways announce that work is shortly to start on an entirely new station which must be ready for use by 1964. Situated on the western side of Lausanne, where the 1964 Swiss National Exhibition is to take place, it will be known as the " Gare Expo ". Peak traffic is expected on at least 52 days in this special exhibition station, with 30,000 to 40,000 visitors arriving and departing daily. This temporary structure will be erected on a site between the town and the suburb of Renens to relieve pressure on Lausanne's main station. It will be equipped to handle a large number of special trains from all areas.

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Zurich: Among the most attractive features of Zurich are the venerable guild houses on the banks of the Limmat and in the medieval winding, narrow streets of the old quarter. Some of them are still owned by the historic guilds or craftsmen's associations; others, in addition to the official guild halls, have restaurants open to the public — gastronomic as well as architectural gems!

In St. Peter's Church recently the Zurich guilds commemorated the 600th anniversary of the death of their founder, Rudolf Brun, who was also the city's first Burgomaster. A 114th-century member of a patrician family, he took advantage of the discontent of the craftsmen he had organised to bring about the revolution in the guilds which overthrew the ruling nobility and bourgeoisie. He was thus a pioneer of republican government and democracy.

* * *

Riederalp: Among the finest of Switzerland's 76 nature reserves is the 637-acre Aletsch Forest, bordering the Grosser Aletsch glacier, Europe's greatest river of ice. Its lowest point is 5,350 feet and its highest point 7,660 feet above sea-level. Owing to this considerable altitude difference it is possible to make a particularly impressive study of the widely varied growing conditions from the glacier upwards to beyond the upper tree line, embracing climatic conditions ranging from temperate to arctic. The reserve's characteristic tree is the cembra pine, and it is only here that really fine specimens are to be found. In the Aletsch Forest there is still a splendid stock of "Arven" (cembric pines) and of larch, some of the trees being over a thousand years old. Several aerial cableways from stations on the Furka-Oberalp Railway open up this unique reserve for the enjoyment of the nature lover.

* * *

Lausanne: During the last few weeks a band of students, under the guidance of archæologists, have been enthusiastically excavating parts of a two-thousand-year-old town on the little River Flon at Vidy, a western suburb of Lausanne. The Gallic-Roman settlement was called Lousanna, indicating that it can in fact be regarded as the ancestor of Lausanne, second largest town in French-speaking Switzerland. The results of earlier excavations are exhibited in the Roman Museum at Vidy. The present excavations are taking place because very soon the latest road-building equipment will be replacing the solicitous hands of the archæologists where the old Roman town once stood, for the route of the Geneva-Lausanne motorway, now under construction, passes right through the site of Lousanna. One of the most beautiful recent finds was a Roman plaque in cast bronze depicting the fall of Icarus.

Brigue: Laying and maintaining over 90 miles of track in the wildest and most impassable Alpine country is an incomparably greater feat than a similar length on the flat. Comprising more than 90 miles of permanent way, the Brigue-Visp-Zermatt-Gornergrat, Furka-Oberalp and Schöllenen Railways were for 35 years in the charge of Mr. Paul Schneller, an engineer who retired as director at the end of September. This distinguished mountain railway expert rendered particularly outstanding service by making winter traffic safe on the four railways. Largely from his own designs and on novel construction principles, extensive protective works, such as galleries to safeguard against avalanches, were built, guaranteeing uninterrupted operation in winter. Mr. Scheller was thus a real pioneer of winter sports in valleys which used to be completely cut off during the winter months. The best-known example is Zermatt, and the fairyland

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ascent to one of Switzerland's leading winter sports resorts would scarcely have been possible without the pioneering work of this great railway engineer.

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" Youth Hostels in Switzerland " and " Private Sanatoria in Switzerland " are two free booklets newly published by the Swiss National Tourist Office in three languages — German, French and English. They give concise information regarding these two types of institution in all parts of the country.

* * *

" A City of Many Possibilities ", according to a new illustrated folder, is Basel, whose are treasures are world-famous. A complete information kit for foreign visitors, containing artistically designed literature on local places of interest, has also been issued by the Basel Tourist Office.

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A new wild-life and nature sanctuary has been created, by decision of the government of the Canton of Berne, in the upper Lauterbrunnen Valley, which is one of the beauty spots of Switzerland's Bernese Oberland. Bordering on the Canton of Valais in the south, it is studded with a great many snow-capped peaks soaring to between 10,000 and 15,000 feet and dominating the glaciers and ravines near the source of the Weisse Lütschine.

* * *

The Swiss love sociability, and the most sociable of all Swiss towns appears to be Morges (population 8,500) on the Canton of Vaud shore of Lake Geneva. In that community there are more than 160 clubs of which, it is true, a mere 30 are explicitly of a "social" nature. One of the most violently discussed problems in public as well as club affairs recently has been the Geneva—Lausanne motorway now under construction. " It mustn't cut our town in two but should be built around it," was the unanimous opinion of all 160 local clubs.

* * *

Zurich, the Venice of Switzerland, has a new nautical attraction — a pompous motor-boat decorated with intricate gold ornaments. As a fad of a romantically inclined owner of a fleet of hire-boats, it is the exact replica of an old-fashioned Venetian party-ship, destined to take sightseers up and down the river Limmat and the lake of Zurich.

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Some 2,000 ski adepts are to meet at Villars-Chesières, in the Vaudois Alps of Switzerland, in December, for the traditional prelude of the Swiss winter sports season, the 27th Ski Instructors' Group, which is organized every year by the Swiss Ski School Association. Thanks to the many local transportation facilities, including the Roc d'Orsay aerial cableway, the big crowd of participants can be carried beyond the 6,500-foot " snow-safety line " within less than an hour.

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" The Leysin American High School ", which will cater for teenage children of U.S. families living in Europe, is to open at the mountain resort of Leysin, in the Vaudois Alps of Switzerland, in September. A former resort hotel has been remodelled for this purpose.

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A " Fisherman's House " featuring conference and exhibition rooms, a library and a small museum dedicated to the art of angling, is to be established at the medieval castle of Klingnau in the Swiss country town of the same name. It will overlook the river Aare, an angler's bonanza.

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DAM BUILT WITHOUT CONCRETE

Swiss try new method

According to an ancient custom — of Celtic origin, it is said — a fir tree, decked with coloured ribbons, was placed the other day on the top of a dam in the Göscheneralp, in the St. Gotthard group, to indicate that construction had been completed.

The new Göschener dam, 505ft. high and 1,771ft. across, is the first large dam of its kind to be erected in Switzerland, without a single cubic foot of concrete in it. It is made entirely of rocks, stones, sand, and earth, with inside a thick layer of clay, and displaces a total volume of 318m. cubic ft. It took five years to build.

This new system of dam building has two advantages. Its construction costs are much less than concrete, and, owing to the greater plasticity, it is much less vulnerable to earthquake shocks. Another advantage is that such dams do not disturb the landscape, since once vegetation has covered the sides the dams will blend with the scenery.

The Göschener dam will serve to provide at Göschenen (3,640ft.) power for several groups of turbines whose production will reach 425m. kWh. when they start working next spring. Electricity will be supplied to the Federal Railways, Lucerne, Basle, and Zurich, and a number of industrial concerns.

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