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# The Swiss Observer

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## HOME NEWS

The autumn session of the Swiss Parliament commenced last Monday; in the National Council the project of an accelerated electrification of the Federal Railways is being discussed.

Over 44 million francs have been voted for the construction of the electric power works Barberine-Vernayaz (Valais); this power station is expected to supply current to the Federal Railways by the end of 1928.

\*\*\*  
A preliminary enquiry into the fracas at Lugano between Socialists and Fascists seems to establish the fact that these two political parties have simply transferred their activities to Swiss soil. Of the nine arrests effected by the local police amongst the Socialists, seven were of Italian nationality. Nobody has been hurt, and the allegation that the Ticinese authorities have allowed Italian honour and dignity to be violated seems to be as unfounded as it is ridiculous.

Minister Wagnière has called upon the Italian Prime Minister in Rome to inform him of the result of the official enquiry, and Signor Mussolini has now expressed his entire satisfaction, which should dispose of the matter.

\*\*\*  
A conference is at present sitting at Berne to prepare the way for a new international society, the Middle Class Union, which seeks to combine the middle classes of all countries, with a view to defending their economic interests.

\*\*\*  
The race for the Gordon-Bennett Cup started last Sunday from Brussels under most unfavourable weather conditions, with the result that some of the intrepid aeronauts paid the supreme penalty for the hazardous venture. Considering that a balloon race under adverse atmospheric conditions is as poor a test of personal skill and endurance as it is practically meaningless from the point of view of science and research, we may well ask whether the deliberate sacrifice of valuable human lives, to satisfy the terms laid down for an antiquated sporting event, is justified. The whole thing was a gamble, and as Fate willed it, luck was against the Swiss competitors. Of the three Swiss balloons, the "Geneve" was struck by lightning soon after the start, caught fire and fell to the ground, killing on the spot the pilot, Lieut. Chr. von Grüningen, and his assistant, Mr. Rud. Wehren. Von Grüningen was an engineer by trade, 45 years old and leaves a widow and three children; Rud. Wehren was a well-known sports enthusiast, 38 years old and the proprietor of the Grand Hôtel des Sports in Saanenmöser. The balloon "Zurich," piloted by Prof. Picard, of Brussels, had to make a forced landing on Sunday evening in Holland, whilst the third one, "Helvetia," in charge of pilot Armbruster, came down early on Monday morning somewhere in Schleswig, about 310 miles away. The winner of the race will probably be Lieut. Demuyter, in the "Belgica" (the holder of last year's cup), who came down on Monday evening at Örebro (Central Sweden); the distance he covered is barely 750 miles.

\*\*\*  
National Councillor Jonas Burki, from Biberist, died after a serious operation in a Solothurn nursing home at the age of 61. He was a well-known and respected figure in cantonal politics and held many important offices.

\*\*\*  
LE COMMERCE AVEC L'ETRANGER.  
La participation des divers pays au commerce spécial de la Suisse en 1922 a été la suivante:

Aux importations:  
Allemagne 365,585,609 fr., ou le 19.10% du total des importations.

France 302,597,695 fr., ou le 15.81%.

L'Italie 224,463,782 fr., 11.73%.

Grande-Bretagne 173,917,266 fr., 9.08%.

Etats-Unis 190,352,034 fr., 9.94%.

Ont participé aux exportations:

Grande-Bretagne 347,946,780 fr., 19.75%.

France 240,185,918 fr., 13.63%.

Allemagne 192,591,471 fr., 10.93%.

Italie 92,569,245 fr., 5.26%.

Etats-Unis 215,366,711 fr., 12.23%.

Sur les importations, 566,240,739 reviennent aux denrées alimentaires, 728,837,433 aux matières premières, 619,386,947 aux produits fabriqués.

Sur les exportations, 145,507,093 reviennent aux denrées alimentaires, 210,627,962 aux matières premières et 1,405,438,778 aux produits fabriqués.

## NOTES AND GLEANINGS.

### Mussolini's Message to Switzerland.

We do not care to deal in these Notes with matters of high politics. To do so with any appreciable degree of pertinence or force would require specialised knowledge and reliable sources of inside information which, we frankly admit, lie, for the present at least, outside our province. We appreciate the element of truth in the saying that "Fools step in where angels fear to tread." We are not angels—we know that for certain. On the other hand, we have always had haunting suspicion at the back of our minds that we really might be justly included in the other category. Of course, we have often called ourselves a fool (with or without the picturesque adjective). That is nothing. When a man calls himself a fool he never means it, and when another man calls him a fool he never believes it, but, on the contrary, "denies the allegation and scorns the alligator"—sometimes in quite a rude and violent manner. Hence our caution in striving to avoid any glaring exhibition of folly, whether inherent or accidental, chronic or temporary. As we have said, therefore, we refrain from dabbling in matters of high politics. We need not hesitate, however, to quote what is matter of common knowledge as reported in the public press. Mussolini's message to Switzerland is thus given in the *Daily Express* (Sept. 14th):—

Italy has officially notified the Swiss Government that she cannot accept arbitration by Switzerland in the dispute with Jugo-Slavia about Fiume.

"The Italian Government," says the message, "does not think that the Government of a country which is a neighbour of Italy could intervene as an arbitrator with complete impartiality."

The comments of the *Liverpool Daily Courier* (Sept. 14th) on this same message, under the heading "Why fear to arbitrate?" are as under:—

Signor Mussolini's refusal to accept the Swiss President's arbitration in the Fiume dispute is in direct contravention to the terms of the Treaty of Rapallo. A special clause written into that agreement provides that in event of the failure of the joint Italo-Jugo-Slavian Commission to agree as to the detailed application of the Treaty terms, the question at issue should go before the President of the Swiss Republic for final and unappealable settlement. The hour for that has arrived, and Signor Mussolini quits.

The reason he offers is significant. The good offices of the highest Swiss official may lead to dangerous difficulties between Switzerland and Italy.

The explanation given in many League quarters in Geneva is that by this action Signor Mussolini has made possible the reopening of direct negotiations with Belgrade, and has prevented the issue's being brought before the League of Nations Assembly.

Rather more amused than provoked, the British public would like to ask the Signor why?

We need not fear that any occupant for the time being of the highest office of the Swiss Confederation would be found lacking in the high moral courage that would calmly undertake and fearlessly adjudicate in any dispute that might be submitted to him.

### Impressions of Switzerland.

If we were to collect for the information of posterity all the complimentary things said about our country and people even in the course of a single summer season, it is certain that posterity would adjudge Switzerland to be the finest country and the Swiss the finest people that ever were, or are, or will be. Of course, we know that posterity would be quite right—with certain unimportant reservations—but our natural modesty restrains us from saying so. Joking apart, however, it is really a fine thing to find men of culture and refinement expressing themselves as they do regarding our native land and us. May we never fall short of these sincere and appreciative commendations! We quoted one clergyman last week; we give extracts from the impressions of two others below—it would occupy too much of our space to reprint in full

## "In the Mountains of Switzerland"

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their articles in the *Lewisham Borough News* (Sept. 12th) and *The Methodist Recorder* (Sept. 13th) respectively. What do you think of the enthusiastic assurance of the Rev. W. H. Boyne Bunting, Vicar of St. Bartholomew's, Sydenham: "There is nothing like a visit to Switzerland to do one good *in every way*?" (The italics are ours.)

At the time this is being written, I have just returned from Switzerland, where I had a most glorious holiday. . . . The journey here was not so comfortable or short, thanks to a roughish sea, and the still rougher treatment of our British Custom House officials! One notices the difference between our insular arrangements for travelling and those of other countries, when going abroad. We are strangely behind the times in these ways; nor do we receive the same courtesy and attention as we receive, say, in France and Switzerland. Having had my growl, let me now proceed, in the brief space at my disposal, to tell you of one or two things which struck us most of all in our travels.

Zermatt itself is interesting, especially at night, when the main street is thronged with people from all lands, speaking many and various languages, chatting in groups or buying what the natives have to sell. We happened to be there on August 1—a National Festival—when there were fireworks in the evening, but not quite the kind which we in Sydenham are accustomed to see—and to hear! Visitors from the hotels provided themselves with Chinese lanterns and formed up in procession to the middle of the village, where the people were addressed by an ex-President of the Republic and a very eloquent Swiss pastor.

But I think I was most impressed there by the caves and the cell of St. Beatus. According to tradition, this holy man was the first Christian Missionary to Switzerland, and probably came from Britain, having sought refuge there after being persecuted by northern heathen tribes. He is said to have lived in a cell adjoining the caves for over 50 years. There is a figure of the Saint in his cell, writing at a table; while, in a cell opposite, is the representation of a family group of prehistoric times. The cave itself is accessible to a depth of over a mile and a half. It contains numerous canyons, grottoes, cauldrons, glacier mills and stalagmites and stalactites of many weird objects. We wended our way to the very end and back, conducted by a rather facetious young Swiss guide. No one who goes to that part of the country should miss seeing it.

There is nothing like a visit to Switzerland to do one good in every way. It is an absolute change, which an ordinary seaside holiday does not always give one, and is no more expensive. It broadens the mind as well, and helps to break down national and religious prejudices. It was especially interesting to one like myself, keen on the re-union of Christendom, to see how Roman and Anglican Catholics as well as Nonconformists and French Protestants worship in Churches adjoining one another, where the old monastery once stood. It only needed the walls between to be pulled down to see them worshipping together! By the way, I heard in our Church there one of the very best sermons it has ever been my privilege to listen to, on the life of Service being the true Christian life.

The Rev. Peter Kynn writes as under, and we quote his remarks specially for his version of the extraordinary accident which was recorded in bald and unemotional manner in our columns a few weeks ago:—

A month in Switzerland! That ought to be holiday enough for any man...

It is not difficult to grow enthusiastic when speaking about Switzerland, with its mountains, glaciers and lakes, its wonderful flora and fascinating people. I have heard all the usual adjectives, and a good number of unusual ones, called into service by those who have visited that delightful country...