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# The Swiss Observer

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## HOME NEWS

The French Government handed to our Minister in Paris last Wednesday, Jan. 23rd, its reply to the note of the Federal Council, dated November 12th, with reference to the Savoy Free Zones. From a telegraphic *résumé* it would appear that, whilst the French Government is not averse to arbitration, it prefers and urges the advantages of a resumption of diplomatic conversations with a view to a settlement.

\*\*\*

Under the lead of the Federal authorities, steps are being taken to create an adequate fund in order to assist those who this season have suffered so heavily from avalanches: as is known, risks under this heading cannot be covered in the ordinary way by insurance.

\*\*\*

Interesting data about the canton of Grisons are being published in the Census Report, Part 9, which analyses the figures and other particulars established during the Federal census of 1920. A slight increase in the number of inhabitants has taken place, the same being given as 119,854, i.e., 3.1% of the whole of Switzerland. The average of foreign residents has fallen from 17% to 12%; they reside nearly exclusively in the three health centres Davos, Arosa and St. Moritz, where they represent 30 to 40% of the population. German is the predominant language (51%), Romansh being spoken by 33% only and Italian by 15%. The Protestants claim 52% and the Catholics 47%. Agriculture remains the staple occupation, those employed in commerce and the hotel industry not exceeding 17%.

\*\*\*

The town of Solothurn, for the first time since the outbreak of the Great War, is able to balance its budget for the year 1924.

\*\*\*

After a lengthy discussion, a proposal in the Zurich cantonal council to impose an amusement tax for the purpose of reducing the accumulated deficits and subsidising social institutions, was not proceeded with. — A demand, insisted upon by the Socialists, to reduce the credit granted for rifle-shooting practice, was rejected by a large majority.

\*\*\*

The index figure compiled by the Swiss Co-operative Societies (Schweiz. Konsumvereine) records a slight decrease for the month ending December last, but is still 70% above the basic level of June, 1914.

\*\*\*

It is stated that the German Legation in Berne has requested the Berlin Government to refuse passports to German nationals who wish to enter Switzerland for pleasure and enjoyment; the Legation states that it considers this measure necessary to safeguard the reputation of the Reich.

\*\*\*

The long protracted proceedings with reference to the affairs of the Banque Commerciale in Fribourg came to an end last Saturday, and resulted in Director Fagi being sentenced to 3½ years' imprisonment.

\*\*\*

Under the heavy load of snow the roof of a house in Ste. Croix, belonging to M. Alf. Lassieur, gave way. There was no loss of life.

\*\*\*

In Geneva the police discovered in the flat of a retired policeman an absinthe distilling plant and a quantity of bottles, harbouring this "forbidden fruit."

\*\*\*

Lieut.-Col. Paul Russenberger, proprietor of a surgical appliances business in Zurich, was killed last Thursday evening (Jan. 17th) in a motor accident whilst driving in the Sihlwald; another occupant of the car, Mr. Landolt, a cotton manufacturer from Erlenbach, was taken to hospital suffering from a broken thigh.

\*\*\*

A large poultry farm, belonging to the brothers Chénal in Sus Etraz (Morges), was completely destroyed by fire, the estimated damage being in the neighbourhood of Frs. 80,000.

## EXTRACTS FROM SWISS PAPERS.

**Notre drapeau, ses origines.** — Ces points de notre histoire très peu connus du peuple suisse, ont été éclaircis, avec compétence, 17 janvier soir, au local de la Société des sous-officiers, par M. le premier-lieutenant Roger Lang.

Après une brève introduction démontrant combien ce lambeau d'étoffe suscite le courage des hommes, et combien il doit être respecté et défendu. M. Lang remonta loin dans l'histoire pour retrouver les vestiges de la croix qui figure actuellement sur notre emblème national. A l'origine, la croix fut d'abord un signe chrétien, qui figurait sur les fanions et écharpes des soldats des guerres saintes, puis fut de plus en plus utilisé par les peuples de l'Occident dans la composition de leurs armes et de leurs insignes.

Quant à la couleur rouge formant le fond de notre emblème, elle figure longtemps comme insigne impérial, et se répandit parmi les peuples guerriers, dont les chefs suprêmes accordaient ou donnaient à d'autres peuples le droit d'en faire un drapeau à leur usage.

Pour en revenir à notre drapeau, ce n'est que depuis 1480 que la croix fut adoptée dans les cantons suisses et seulement comme signe de ralliement. Depuis cette époque, chaque canton adopta la croix sur ses couleurs cantonales.

Ce fut en 1815 que Guillaume-Henri Dufour, qui fut plus tard général, proposa d'adopter un emblème fédéral, au lieu du drapeau cantonal, et créer ainsi une unité d'emblème. Ce projet rencontra une vive opposition de la part des cantons qui tenaient à leurs couleurs nationales. Ce ne fut qu'en 1840 qu'un drapeau fédéral fut adopté, avec la croix blanche sur fond rouge; les proportions actuelles ont été maintes fois controversées, et il n'y a guère qu'une vingtaine d'années que les proportions de la croix actuelle ont été arrêtées définitivement.

Le premier-lieutenant Lang, qui n'avait pas été moins éloquent qu'au prétoire, fut chaleureusement applaudi par une nombreuse et attentive assistance.

(*La Suisse*.)

**Terrible combat d'un chasseur contre un sanglier.** — Un chasseur de Termes, près de Charleville, M. Fréville, était à la chasse dans la forêt, au lieu dit Le Fond de la Barrière, quand tout à coup il se trouva en présence d'un énorme sanglier. Le chasseur tira sur l'animal qui, atteint, tomba d'abord sur les genoux, puis se redressant, fonça sur le chasseur. M. Fréville fut renversé et reçut un formidable coup de boutoir à la hanche. Un lutte violente s'engagea entre l'homme et la bête, sur le sol. Le chasseur était aidé de ses chiens. Pendant le combat, M. Fréville put introduire le canon du fusil dans la gueule du sanglier et faire partir le coup. Le sanglier fut enfin tué. Il pesait 240 livres. Au cours de la lutte un chien, qui défendait son maître, a été éventré. (La *Sentinelle*.)

## NOTES AND GLEANINGS.

By "KYBURG."

### "Die Schweiz im deutschen Geistesleben."

*The Times* (10th Jan.):—

"Von Art und Kunst der deutschen Schweiz." Von Josef Nadler. "Die Dichterschule von St. Gallen." Von Samuel Singer. "Walliser Sagen." Von Johannes Jegerlehner. (All published by H. Haessel, Leipzig.) These three little books are early volumes in what promises to be an interesting and very comprehensive series, entitled "Die Schweiz im deutschen Geistesleben" (Switzerland in German Intellectual Life), whose aim needs no further description. In the first, Professor Josef Nadler, whose authority on questions of race and culture is considerable—as readers of his "Berliner Romanistik" (reviewed here on February 23, 1922) will be aware—gives a general sketch of the development of Swiss culture, more particularly in regard to the German-speaking cantons. It is an excellent summary, the conclusion of which is that the Swiss people were never "übergeistig," never let the imagination and intellect obscure the claims of the body, in fact, regarding art as luxury, sometimes subordinated all to physical discipline; secondly, that Swiss literature has an ineradicable tendency towards the epic, the narrative is definitely unlyrical. From such generalizations we step into solid and detailed erudition with Herr Singer's account of the St. Gall school of literature—above all, the two Notkers and the two Ekkehards, the first and fourth. A separate chapter by Herr Wagner gives an account of the significance of St. Gall in the early history of ecclesiastical music. The third volume is a collection, by the best authority on the folklore of the Canton of Valais, of typical Valais popular stories. In an engaging introduction Professor Jegerlehner gives an account of his predecessors in the collection of the stories and of his own experiences in research. To specialists in folk-stories the collection will be interesting for purposes of comparison, while to the ordinary reader it has attractions as a reading book.

### Ten Alpine Pastoral.

*Musical News and Herald* (5th Jan.):—

Messrs. J. and W. Chester have published "Ten Alpine Pastoral" for voice and piano/forte arranged by Alfred Henry. They consist of old Swiss melodies with French words by various writers. Their chief

interest lies in the melodies, which are grateful to sing, rhythmic and ear-haunting. A selection from them would make an interesting group at a vocal récital.

### Swiss Judges to advise Angora Government.

*The Times* (11th Jan.):—

It is reported that the Swiss Federal Court, at the request of the International Court of Justice at The Hague, will nominate Judge Barde, of Geneva, and Professor Sauser Hall, of Lausanne, for appointment by the Turkish Government as judicial advisers to the Ministry of Justice in Angora.

### Stabilisation of the Mark—A Swiss Complaint.

*Financial Times* (14th Jan.):—

There is a good deal of discontent throughout the industrial world in Switzerland at the treatment extended to the Swiss franc in Germany, due to the system introduced in that country for the stabilisation of the mark. This stabilisation, it is pointed out, has been obtained by decreeing fixed exchanges for the dollar, the Swiss franc, the Swedish crown and the Dutch florin. The dollar exchange was fixed at 4,200 milliards paper marks, which corresponds in gold marks to the pre-war value of the dollar, while the Swiss franc has not been treated on the same basis. Thus the latter has been fixed at 732 milliards paper marks, corresponding to 73 pfennigs gold, whereas before the war the value of the Swiss franc was 81 pfennigs.

Owing to this depreciation of the Swiss currency, Swiss exporters to Germany, compared with American or Swedish, suffer a loss of 8 per cent. The Swiss newspapers have taken this matter up, and it is expected that steps will be taken to bring about a remedy.

Why it should be left to the Swiss newspapers to take this matter up, if the facts are as stated above, passes my comprehension. Have we got a Federal Government? Or are they still somewhat afraid at Berne of our once mighty neighbour across the Rhine? I should think that Switzerland is sufficiently strong and its goodwill sufficiently valuable to Germany for our Government to be able to prevent any injustice of that kind being done to our interests. If not, why not?

### Swiss expel Cossack Singers.

*Evening Standard* (Jan. 11th):—

Police have expelled from Switzerland the Cossack Singers from the Don, who for some time have been giving concerts in Switzerland.

Why?

### Winter Sports.

Last Sunday had a distinct feeling of Spring in it, or rather in the air, and Winter Sport articles will, no doubt, soon cease to have any special attraction for my readers. Nevertheless, I think, as a kind of final message from our snowy homeland, the following two articles deserve reprinting in our columns. \*

*Yorkshire Post* (15th Jan.):—

The races for the British Ski Association Challenge Cup, to encourage British ski runners to compete against other nations, were decided in Mürren on the 12th and 13th inst. Switzerland, Germany and France have followed the Norwegian model, and their big races always include an equal amount of uphill and downhill, and a long stretch along the level, but for British ski runners the art of skiing begins when the runner turns downhill. Getting uphill is regarded as a necessary evil. The British cup is awarded on the result of two events—a pure downhill race of three thousand feet, and a "slalom" race. The latter is a race round obstacles, and is a fine test of a ski-runner's powers to control his direction when moving at a high speed among obstacles.

The first race was run down the Tschuggen glade, in perfect weather conditions. There were twelve British and ten Swiss competitors. The race was won by A. Gertsch, a well-known local ski-runner from Wengen, who has competed in many first-class Swiss events. His time was five minutes five seconds. Others were placed thus:—2, C. E. W. Macintosh, the Scottish Rugby international, five minutes ten seconds; 3, Werner Salveisberg (Berne University); 4, Lord Knebworth; 5, H. Salveisberg (Berne University); 6, T. Lloyd (Cambridge University); 7, H. G. Waits (Oxford University); 8, Dr. Morland; 9, Howard Ford; and 10, Cardinale (Berne University).

On the 13th the Slalom Competition took place in delightful weather and perfect snow conditions. Macintosh came down the very difficult hard snow course in the morning with excellent dash and control, and easily finished first. The competition was concluded in the afternoon in soft snow. Macintosh's ski binding unfortunately came off at a critical point, and he lost a minute in readjusting it. This mishap undoubtedly lost him the cup, as he would otherwise have been easily first in the race.

The following is the combined result of the competition:—1, A. Gertsch; 2, Werner Salveisberg; 3, C. E. W. Macintosh; 4, Howard Ford; 5, H. Salveisberg; 6, Dr. Morland; 7, Lord Knebworth; 8, T. Lloyd; and 9, L. L. B. Angus.

Our compatriots have done well, it seems, and we are pleased. Too often our foreign guests take with them all the best prizes. In that respect Switzerland and Swiss Sports often are very similar to English Sports, i.e., the guests often gain the victories, the pupils outclassing their teachers, as it were.

### The Cradle of the Winter Sports Craze.

*Country Life* (12th Jan.):—

Sixty years ago or therabouts a doctor, whose practice was among the peasantry of a certain Swiss district, announced to the medical fraternity a very interesting observation which he had made during the

course of his work. He had discovered that phthisis occurs with extreme rarity among people (at any rate, among European people) living at an altitude of 4,000 feet and upwards. This is also the line above which beech trees do not grow; but whether there is any occult connection between these two facts I have no notion. In the Davos valley (where the doctor in question collected the statistics on which he based his conclusions) there are larches and spruce firs, and their aromatic scent in summer may conceivably contribute to the "healthiness" of the air; but in winter, save on a day of warm sunshine, it cannot be said that the resinous fragrance from the forests is particularly noticeable. And it is as a winter resort that Davos has gained its extraordinary, world-wide reputation.

Davos has the mean annual temperature of Petrograd and Iceland and Northern Siberia—a suggestive list of geographical bleaknesses to the mind of the average stay-at-home. Nevertheless, thousands of invalids have called the Davos climate blessed; and bleakness is the last word which can be associated with its wonderful winter beauty. The little town (which is now not so very little, either) lies snugly on slopes facing the sun and sheltered from the north by a barrier of majestic peaks. And though it is naturally "bracing"—because it is 5,000 feet above the sea, and at an enormous distance from the sea—and its air is filtered at intervals by myriads of falling snowflakes—my own private opinion is that the true secret of its curative value is its light.

This, I realise, is a rash and laymanish generalisation; but, after having wintered as an invalid (and later as a "cured") more than a dozen times in Switzerland, I have made up my mind that it is possible for a not-too-far-gone consumptive to recover by the fresh-air treatment almost anywhere; but the reason why he has a better chance to recover—and to recover more rapidly—in Davos (or at certain of the other recognised high Alpine retreats) than in England is mainly a matter of the larger doses of daylight which he receives at the former place than in the latter.

It is arguable that merely to go 5,000 feet upwards is to reach a level at which there are more of the ultra-violet rays flying about than can be found under the thicker blanket of atmosphere lower down. That is something. Secondly, Switzerland is much farther south than England. That is something more. But if to migrate south were the sole recipe for our cure, we should certainly go farther southwards than Switzerland and find the sun still higher in the heavens. In that case, however, we should lose the snow; and the snow is not only a cleaner of the air, but is a tremenous factor in the light-ray bath.

There is an astounding amount of reflection and refraction from the immense area of snow at Davos. The consequence of the snow's presence is that there can be no such thing as a dark day or even a dull day during the winter. When the sun shines from the characteristic blue and cloudless sky, the glare is terrific; but on days when the heaven is overcast, the valley is still pervaded with brilliant, if more diffused, light. And light is at least as big a factor in the cure of tuberculosis as is pure air. Moreover, there is actually more light at these high-altitude places in winter than in summer, owing to the snow carpet; and, for some reason which I will not presume to explain, "cold light" is better for the cure than light which carries a great deal of heat along with it. These are, perhaps, the two chief reasons why Davos and the other Alpine sanatorium centres achieve an actually higher percentage of cures—and relatively quick cures at that—in the depths of winter than in mid-summer.

Davos began, of course, as a summer resort. Summer continued to be its "season" until the year 1875, when, for the first time, as the local records show, there were more patients in winter. The pioneer Englishman to "risk" wintering at Davos did so in 1869, and, having found the experiment successful, built himself a house and remained till 1905. It is typical of the eccentric paradoxes of human nature that, perched 5,000 feet above the sea, this gentleman busied himself in writing learned papers on ocean-bed zoology. But a good deal of important writing has, in fact, been done by members of the British Colony at Davos. John Addington Symonds, who resided at Davos for sixteen years, wrote his "Life of Michelangelo" there; and Robert Louis Stevenson, while spending two winters at Davos, finished "Treasure Island" and composed some of his best-known essays. Since 1888 Davos has had an English weekly magazine. It has a daily, printed in German.

One of the most far-reaching results of the founding of the British Colony at Davos has been the development, throughout the whole of the high Alpine districts, of the enormous winter-sport industry. This industry, now involving millions of francs of capital and employing an uncountable army of native Swiss, arose out of the tobogganing and skiing indulged in by the first British invalids who had launched themselves on the then daring (and much disapproved of) adventure of wintering as well as summering in the Davos valley. The consumptive who winters in the Alps soon loses his first lassitude and becomes wholesomely restless. This restlessness was a boon to Davos, for in the winter of 1876-77 the younger members of the British Colony, by their united efforts, brought into existence the first skating rink ever seen in Switzerland; and in the winter of 1881-82 a British visitor to Davos arranged the first toboggan race ever held in Switzerland.

These two events are historic. Every Swiss resort now boasts its rink and its toboggan run, and thousands of Britishers go annually to Switzerland for the skating and tobogganing (and also for the skiing, which came to Davos about the eighties of last century) who have, happily, no occasion to go in search of health—though, indeed, they find health incidentally.

I just wonder whether the word "Craze" is really justified. Perhaps to some extent and in respect, I fear, of a certain number of people who go out to Switzerland merely in order to be doing the proper thing.

#### MOTHER-WIT FROM THE MOTHER OF PARLIAMENTS.

*The following humorous passages are extracted, solely for their original and characteristic witicism, from the present parliamentary debates, as reported day by day by "The Times," and do not necessarily cast any reflection on the parties or individuals concerned:*

"The present Government had only been responsible for the conduct of foreign affairs for a little more than 12 months, and the problems with which they had had to deal were inherited. Mr.

Asquith, at the beginning of the election, said that the evils from which the country was suffering were due to the gross mismanagement of affairs for the past five years. That speech was made before the two Liberal turtle-doves began to coo on the same perch. He suggested, therefore, that at the most the present Government could only be debited with one-fifth of the blame."—R. McNeill, late Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, on Jan. 16th.)

"Last Session a Bill was brought into the House for the protection of performing animals. It was intended to protect the jumping frog and the camel with a hump. The Labour Party would require far more protection than that if they had to conform to the desires of the troupe directed by Mr. Asquith and Mr. Lloyd George. That, however, was a matter which rested between the Labour and the Liberal Parties. Sleeping sickness in many cases was fatal, and when the Liberal Party again went to the country, the indignant electors would wrap them up in their soiled bedclothes and bury them forthwith."—(D. G. Somerville, U. member for Barrow, on Jan. 16th.)

"In the history of Parliaments this Parliament might be defined as the "wangling Parliament." It was said to be a wangle if the Government and the Liberal Party united to keep the Labour Party out of office, but it was not considered a wangle if the two parties in Opposition united to turn the Government out. There was likely to be a succession of wangles before the next General Election."—(Sir M. Conway, English Universities, U., on Jan. 16th.)

"The Protection flag is not the only bit of bunting which is knocking about. At what precise altitude on his flag-pole does the Red Flag stand? What is the precise shade of sanguinity which characterizes it, because it appears to resemble a certain reptile in its habit of changing its shade according to its environment? If we always have to listen to speeches like that which has been delivered this morning we should call it only a very faded pink."—(N. Chamberlain, late Chancellor of the Exchequer, in reply to Mr. Thomas, on Jan. 18th.)

"The Liberal Party might find themselves in the position of the individual who attempted to clean the alligator's teeth and found himself swallowed up."—(D. Herbert, U. member for Watford, on Jan. 18th.)

"My hon. friend may save his breath to cool his porridge."—(Dr. Macnamara, Lib. member for Camberwell, rebuffing repeated interruptions by a Scottish Labour member, on Jan. 18th.)

"I have realized at last what I have always been told, that gratitude in political life is the rarest of virtues. I say that because amongst the charges of vacillation, of impotence, and of pusillanimity which have been brought against our Government, not one word has been said about the great healing work which I wrought, the reconciliation of my right hon. friend the member for Paisley and my right hon. friend the member for Carnarvon Boroughs. What was beyond the power of the Liberal Party to do, I did."—(Mr. Baldwin, late Prime Minister, on Jan. 21st.)

"All parties have their sides that they are ashamed of."—(Viscountess Astor, U. member for Plymouth, on Jan. 21st.)

"The attack from the other side has not been upon us, but upon right hon. and hon. members of the Liberal Party. I find myself rather, if I may use this illustration, during this debate, somewhat in the position of Rebecca in "Ivanhoe," who sat, a poor maiden, with an enemy and a champion. She looked on while a knight came from one end of the lists and a knight came from the other end of the lists. They did the fighting. They knocked each other on the head. They unhorsed each other, with the result that she became free."—(Mr. Ramsay MacDonald, Prime Minister, on Jan. 21st.)

#### FINANCIAL AND COMMERCIAL NEWS FROM SWITZERLAND.

The returns of the Swiss Federal Railways, showing that the working of the year 1923 actually resulted in a small net profit, are very gratifying. The gross surplus of revenue, before making allowance for interest charges, deprecations and reserves, amounted to 113 million francs. One of the economies practised by the Railways becomes evident from the latest returns of persons in the Government employ, from which it appears that a reduction of 1,000 has been affected in the staff of the Federal Railways since the end of 1922.

The Swiss hotel-keeping industry is experiencing a very satisfactory time just at present, which augurs well for the future. The year 1923 on the whole, though it brought some alleviation, was hardly a period of general recovery for this badly-hit industry. The number of foreign visitors showed a decided increase, and notably the number of tourists brought by the English travel agencies. This inflow of visitors, whose arrivals and departures are not in the first place regulated by weather conditions, means a great deal to Swiss hotels. The number of travellers who came to Switzerland in 1923 is estimated at about two-thirds of the pre-war

average, and English visitors took a very considerable share in bringing up the numbers. From America there were perhaps about the same numbers as in the preceding year. On the whole it may be said that the hotels in Switzerland were able to earn their interest charges, but any real relief from their liabilities is not yet achieved.

The Bank in Zofingen showed a net profit of Frs. 590,038 for 1923, against Frs. 573,983 in the previous year. Seven per cent. is again to be paid on the share capital of Frs. 6,000,000.

#### STOCK EXCHANGE PRICES.

BONDS.	Jan. 15	Jan. 22
Swiss Confederation 3% 1903	76.00%	75.37%
Swiss Confed. 9th Mob. Loan 5%	100.50%	100.50%
Federal Railways A-K 3 1/4%	79.10%	79.85%
Canton Basle-Stadt 5 1/2% 1921	102.25%	102.12%
Canton Fribourg 3% 1892...	69.50%	70.50%

SHARES.	Nom.	Jan. 15	Jan. 22
Swiss Bank Corporation ...	500	668	656
Credit Suisse ...	500	705	708
Union de Banques Suisses ...	500	567	556
Fabrique Chimique ci-dev. Sandoz	1000	3505	3545
Société pour l'Industrie Chimique	1000	2580	2585
C. F. Baldi S.A. ...	1000	1090	1127
Fabrique de Machines Oerlikon...	500	630	632
Entreprises Sulzer ...	1000	635	650
S.A. Brown Boveri (now) ...	500	287	302
Nestlé & Anglo-Swiss Cond. Mkt. Co.	200	194	110
Choc. Suisses Peter-Calle Kohler	100	111	192
Comp. de Navij's sur le Lac Léman	500	470	465

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