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# The Swiss Observer

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**TO OUR SUBSCRIBERS.**

The regular publication of the *S.O.* will be interrupted for the next four weeks, and the next issue will appear on September 12. This course has been found necessary if the Editor is to enjoy an undisturbed and peaceful holiday. A good many of our subscribers will be away, and we trust that the faithful ones for whom the *S.O.* has become an indispensable week-end diet will bear with us for this short period. The date of expiry of the prepaid subscriptions and advertising contracts will be correspondingly extended. Any correspondence or enquiries received in the meantime will be attended to as usual.

THE PUBLISHERS.

## HOME NEWS

Heavy thunderstorms visited last week the western part of Switzerland, the lightning causing considerable damage to farmhouses and factory buildings; the downpour of hail and rain was especially copious in Basle, where several streets became inundated. Along the Lake of Zurich and generally in the canton of Argovie vineyards and fruit trees have been ravaged by hailstorms.

As a result of a collision between a lorry and a private car near Erlenbach (Berne) at a partly hidden road crossing, Mr. Zurmühle, a master baker of Solothurn, lost his life. He died solely from shock, nobody having been injured in the accident.

A motor cyclist, Rudolf Häuptli, a postal employee from Rohr (Argovie), collided last week with an automobile and subsequently died from his injuries in the Basle hospital.

Ascending the Bluemlisalp horn without a guide, two tourists, Mr. H. W. Binz and Mrs. Fuchs, both from Berne, fell over a snowfield into a crevasse on Wednesday (July 29th); their bodies were later on recovered by a relief party and brought down to Kandersteg.

Owing to a heavy storm, a small sailing boat got into difficulties on the Zurich Lake near Meilen last Sunday night. The mast having broken, the boat capsized, and the four occupants disappeared in the waves, their shouts for help being in vain. The names of the victims are: the two brothers Max and Werner Lehmann, Mrs. Max Lehmann and a Miss Benninger.

The well-known jewellery establishment on the Zurich Paradeplatz, belonging to Messrs. Meister, was broken into during lunch time on Wednesday (July 29th), the thief being able to abstract goods to the value of Frs. 700,000. No trace has been discovered of the burglar yet, though a considerable reward is offered for his apprehension.

A terrible motor accident happened last Tuesday in the Fluela pass near the village of Süß. A somewhat antiquated automobile, which had been hired at Chur for an excursion into the National Park, fell over a high bridge wall; the brakes, for some unknown reason, having refused to act. Fortunately for the five occupants, they fell out of the car during its fall, but they all contracted more or less serious injuries, with the exception of the chauffeur. They are all Dutch tourists.

*NOTES AND GLEANINGS.*

By "KYBURG."

### A Personal Note: "Counter-Reformation."

The letter published in last week's issue under the above heading, was published with my full approval, as our Editor should have mentioned in his footnote. My readers have now my article of July 18th and Mr. Ernest D. Hamilton's effusion of August 1st, and I think I can safely leave them to judge. A simple "tu quoque" is no argument, and abuse is not worth replying to. I intend

writing these "Notes and Gleanings" without bias and without fear or favour. I invite criticism and will enter into a clean fight, but I will not be drawn into personal aspersions. And I shall cease my weekly articles whenever my readers, through pressure upon our dear Editor, so demand it. And will they please remember that 'Kyburg' will not be one single penny out of pocket. And will they also remember that our Editor has not been able so far to find one single other Swiss who would undertake to write these "Notes and Gleanings" once a fortnight, in order to make them more interesting than they are now. Yes, we Swiss are very fond of getting something for nothing, but when it comes to rendering service without being paid for it, we Swiss are great artists in the hiding line!

"KYBURG."

### Birds of the Alps.

*Baptist Times* (July 23rd):—

British bird-lovers, taking a tramp abroad into Switzerland, soon discover how favoured is their native land in the number and variety of its feathered folk. The country which is so rich in Alpine beauty is undoubtedly poor in bird-life. That must be said, but nevertheless it is not the whole story, for a bird-man in Switzerland will often meet familiar songsters: black-birds, thrushes and finches on the wooded shores of Lake Thun, warblers in the reed-beds on the margin of Lake Lucerne, and merry troupes of gold-crests and tomtits in the mountain pine-trees. In addition to these homeland species he can make acquaintance with others hitherto unknown to him.

Who, having journeyed to the summit of the Jungfrauoch, could forget that amazing experience? A wonderful mountain railway carries the traveller higher and still higher, until at last he stands on the plateau outside the Joch station at the dizzy height of 11,480 feet. He seems to be standing on the roof of the world. Around and below stretches an icebound region of glacier and snow. But, hark! what is that loud "chack, chack!" bringing to mind garrulous jackdaws at home? Soon, guided by the continued harsh chattering, he discovers that even this desolate region is not entirely devoid of bird-life; for below, on the glacier, are a company of Alpine-choughs: large, black birds, showing bright red legs and stout yellow beaks. They are close relatives to our own Cornish chough, which, owing to zealous protection, is happily becoming less rare. What those Alpine-choughs found to eat in such inhospitable surroundings was a problem they alone knew how to solve; but there is no doubt about their appreciation of the beef we threw to them from the store of provender given us at the hotel.

On lower levels, but still in the region of the snow-line, we may happen upon a lively flock of snow-finches. Very occasionally a few stragglers reach our shores, but the bird is by no means rare on Swiss mountain-sides. In summer dress the snow-finch is a handsome bird, his grey head and chestnut back serving to make the flock conspicuous when they alight upon a patch of sunlit snow. Alarmed, away they fly, and then open wings reveal striking feathers of snowy white. Descending toward the valley, at length we reach the tree-line, and straightway are greeted by the musical, bell-like notes of the Alpine pipit. From the topmost twig of some tall pine tree he tosses his little brown body aloft into the blue, and then, with outspread wings, pours out his tuneful song as he slowly descends to his perch again. Writing of the Alpine pipit recalls to memory the Wengernalp with Murren on the edge of the hill across the valley; on the left the stalwart, white Mönch and in front the matchless Jungfrau--queen of all the Oberland.

4. Sometimes in winter a few black redstarts may be found in the warm South and West of England. Uncommon here, the bird is plentiful enough in Swiss valleys, and often may be seen flirting his fiery tail and warbling his merry ditty near some quaint old chalet. In the attention of Swiss folk the redstart, or Röchel, as they familiarly call him, takes the place we give to the redbreast, and they sorely miss him when, in autumn, he flies away to winter in the sunny South.

A book beloved of many birdmen is "A Year with the Birds," by the late, greatly gifted Prof. Ward-Fowler. Its pages reveal some of his glowing enthusiasm as well as careful knowledge and scholarly diction. Most of the chapters deal with bird-life in or near Oxford, but two of them describe birds of the Alps. These

may be recommended to any seeking information before or after their tramp abroad.

### Mr. Spahlinger's Test.

*Daily Herald* (28th July):—

The Medial Group of M.P.s, which has been negotiating with Mr. Spahlinger, announces that his arrangements with the Tuberculosis Committee at Crewe for the tests of his vaccine on animals are now complete. At the end of three months he will be in a position to proceed with the completion of his remedies for human beings.

### Switzerland and the New British Duties.

*The Times* (25th July):—

The restoration of the McKenna duties and the introduction of the silk duties in Great Britain is the general subject of interest in Swiss commercial circles. Figures which have just been published by the Customs Department show that the foreign trade of the country has been substantially affected by the prospect of the new duties. There has been a considerable growth of sales to Great Britain. The total value of exports has risen from 165,000,000 fr. in April to 190,000,000 fr. in May, as compared with 166,000,000 fr. only in May, 1924.

Swiss imports, on the other hand, have fallen, and the trade balance for the month is 4,000,000 francs to the good. Here the reduction is due partly to the falling prices of certain merchandise and partly to a diminution in the quantities of cotton, iron, and cereals imported. There has been rather a remarkable decline in French imports, the value of which was only 38,200,000 fr. in May, as compared with 40,400,000 fr. in April and 44,700,000 fr. in March. On the other hand, German imports have slightly increased, while British imports have fallen by nearly 5,000,000 fr.

Swiss exports to Great Britain showed a very remarkable rise, viz., from 37,400,000 fr. in April to 62,700,000 fr. in May. This activity, due to orders given in anticipation of the new import duties; has also contributed to a temporary improvement in the labour market, the official returns at the end of May showing 7,189 applications for employment, instead of 8,591 at the end of April, and 3,995 offers of work, instead of 3,997 at the end of April. Unfortunately, this situation shows no sign of being permanent.

I cannot say that I honestly regret the lesson which our countrymen, including 'Kyburg' by the way, have to learn again. Duties in any shape or form are an anachronism, and until people begin to digest this and compel Governments everywhere to abolish such duties, there is precious little hope of economic recovery. Duties raise the costs of production, and the money which in turn is got from the collection of such duties goes into armaments and other war preparations, as can very easily be ascertained by taking the total figures of customs revenue and war preparation expenditure of each country. What fools we humans are, to be sure, and how slow to learn from bitter experience !

## Swiss Kep's for Turkey?

*Daily Express* (28th July):—

The recent order from Angora abolishing the fez as headdress in the Turkish army and substituting the English military cap for officers and the Swiss "kepi" for soldiers has been received with much satisfaction in Switzerland.

It is hoped that the Turkish Government will buy a large stock of the Swiss soldiers' 'kepis,' which have been replaced since the war by metallic helmets resembling those worn by French infantry.

I should like to meet the jolly Turk who will cut a dash wearing 'Kyburg's' old kepi. I could tell him exactly where that spot is where it presses so horribly against the head and where a bit of an old or new newspaper can effect a great improvement! Won't the Turks regret having abandoned their comfortable fez? Fancy adopting a kepi, if one is not forced to do so! But then, you will, of course, observe that the kepis are going to be for the soldiers only, whereas the officers will wear the English military cap. 'Twas ever thus, and 'twill always remain so!

## New Parcel Air Mail

*The Times* (24th July):—

The Postmaster-General announces that on Tuesday, July 28th, a new air parcels service to Switzerland will be started. Parcels intended for transmission by this service will be forwarded from London, usually in the morning after posting, by direct aeroplane each week-day to Basel or Zurich (i.e., by the route numbered 2 on page 2 of the Air Mail Leaflet of