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# The Swiss Observer

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## HOME NEWS

A Federal subsidy of about Frs. 100,000 is to be allotted to the canton Appenzell A.Rh. in order to succour the embroidery industry, which is passing through a serious crisis.

Locarno is to be the venue of the Allied conference on the "Security Pact," though some of the French papers stated that this place possesses "one telephone line and no telegraph." Several other towns were under consideration, such as Lucerne. Sitings are to commence next Monday.

The military tribunal in St. Gall has sentenced to three months imprisonment four Swiss residing abroad who refused to return when called upon to fulfil their military service.

Heavy rain and cloudbursts have during the last week done considerable damage in several districts of the canton Ticino, notably in Lugano and Bellinzona; near the latter place the Ticino has overflowed its banks, causing a temporary interruption of the railway service.

A remarkable mishap, which took place as long ago as May 30th, 1923, has just been disposed of by the local courts in Locarno. During army manoeuvres the driver of a military automobile ran into an electric train of the Locarno-Bignasco line. The engine, which became uncoupled from the eight accompanying cattle trucks, ran along the line for another 40 metres, when it left the track and fell into the Maggia. The four electricians who were in charge of the engine and who, owing to heavy rain, had taken shelter away from their allotted stand near the brake mechanism, lost their lives in the swollen torrent. The military chauffeur has now been sentenced to one month imprisonment, the fact having been established that he omitted to sound the hooter when approaching the crossing.

## EXTRACTS FROM SWISS PAPERS.

**Un Suisse qui se distingue à la légion.** — Dans les termes les plus élogieux et les plus flatteurs, en vantant l'énergie et la bravoure dont il a fait preuve en plusieurs circonstances, le général Naulin, commandant supérieur des troupes françaises du Maroc, vient de citer à l'ordre des troupes du Maroc Georges-Luc Roulin, sergent au 2<sup>e</sup> bataillon au 3<sup>e</sup> étranger. Cette citation comporte la croix de guerre avec palmes. G.-L. Roulin, est un jeune écrivain suisse, originaire d'Estavayer, qui a débuté vers 18 ans par un volume de vers: "L'Envol." Epris de vie héroïque, il s'est engagé dans la légion étrangère il y a quatre ans.

(Journal de Genève.)

**Un festival suisse à Paris.** — La colonie suisse de Paris a offert, samedi soir, au Grand Palais, à l'occasion de l'Exposition des arts décoratifs, un festival des plus brillants, sous la présidence d'honneur de M. Dumant, ministre de Suisse à Paris, entouré des membres du comité d'organisation, M.M. Charles Courvoisier, Mouvet, Paul Léon, de l'Institut, directeur des beaux-arts, ainsi que de nombreuses personnalités de la colonie suisse.

Plus de 700 exécutants costumés appartenant aux 22 sociétés suisses de Paris prêtèrent leur concours à cette manifestation à laquelle assistait un nombreux public.

Au lever du rideau, après le pittoresque défilé à travers les salles illuminées du Palais des tambours de Bâle, des violons d'Appenzell, des chanteurs du Tessin et des guides du Valais, des artistes des théâtres subventionnés français récitèrent des poèmes exaltant les héros des légendes suisses. Après quoi ce fut, dans une suite de tableaux colorés l'histoire même de l'Helvétie qui défila sous les yeux du public, depuis 1291 jusqu'à 1813: le serment du Grütli, Guillaume Tell, les vendanges, les cantons, enfin l'apothéose qui fut saluée d'unanimes applaudissements.

Ajoutons qu'une semblable manifestation aura lieu dimanche.

(Journal de Genève.)

**La maison suisse de Paris.** — Samedi après-midi (19 Sept.) a eu lieu à Zurich une séance du comité suisse pour la fondation de la Maison suisse de la Cité universitaire de Paris, comprenant des représentants des différentes parties du pays. Le rapport du président, Dr. R. Fueter, Zurich, sur les

travaux du comité restreint, a été approuvé et diverses décisions ont été prises sur l'organisation et la mise au point d'une collecte. Les travaux du comité tendent à la construction d'une maison offrant à nos étudiants faisant leurs études à Paris un foyer véritable. Un appel du comité sera prochainement lancé au public. (Le Genevois.)

**Les finances de quelques communes suisses.** — Les "Basler Nachrichten" publient un article concernant les comptes annuels des 56 communes les plus importantes de la Suisse, d'où il appert qu'en 1919. 11 seulement d'entre elles ont bouclé leurs comptes par un excédent de recettes, toutes les autres ayant dû enregistrer un déficit. En 1924, changement complet: les comptes déficitaires ne concernent plus que 15 communes, partout ailleurs on a réussi à rétablir l'équilibre.

On voit, la situation s'est améliorée de façon incontestable au cours de ces cinq années. En effet, après la guerre, la plupart des communes se sont mises courageusement à l'œuvre pour assainir leurs finances qui se trouvaient à ce moment-là dans une situation très précaire. Néanmoins les ombres ne manquent pas au tableau: c'est presque partout en augmentant les recettes qu'on est parvenu à équilibrer le budget. Les dépenses n'ont diminué la plupart du temps que dans une proportion très faible. Aussi les impôts présentent-ils actuellement très lourdement sur les contribuables, si lourdement que cette situation présenterait de graves inconvénients si elle devait durer trop longtemps. Un certain nombre de communes ont, il est vrai, obtenu un supplément de recettes appréciables au moyen de leurs services publics (gaz, électricité, etc.), mais il n'en est pas moins vrai que la charge retombe presque entière sur le contribuable. Et l'on se demande maintenant comment les choses vont aller et quand les communes pourront entreprendre de nouveaux travaux d'une certaine envergure qu'on a dû ajourner jusqu'ici.

(Journal du Jura.)

**Der Bananenhandel rentiert.** — An der Ausstellungsstrasse in Zürich 5 erstellt die Westindische Bananenzentrale in Kürze einen Neubau im Kostenbetrage von rund 1 Million Franken. Der auf dem von der Stadt Zürich erworbenen Bauareal zu erstellende Bau, geleitet von Architekt J. Geiger, wird dem Quartier zur Zierde gereichen. Es dürfte interessieren, dass dies der erste derartige Bau in ganz Europa sein wird, der speziell zum Ausreifen und Lagern grosser Mengen von westindischen Bananen errichtet wird. Das Gebäude wird die neuesten Anlagen für Erwärmung und Befuchtung der zum Ausreifen der grün eintreffenden Bananenbüschel bestimmten Räumlichkeiten, sowie Garagen für etwa 20 Autos aufweisen. Welchen Aufschwung der Handel mit Bananen genommen hat, erhellt daraus, dass die Firma vor 3½ Jahren mit dem Import von einigen Waggons pro Monat begonnen hat, während heute allwöchentlich vier bis fünf Eisenbahnwagen eintreffen, und zwar erfolgt der Versand in speziellen, elektrisch geheizten Transportwagen. (Neue Zürcher Ztg.)

## NOTES AND GLEANINGS.

By "KYBURG."

It is quite nice to be away from the usual scene of one's activities. As the Chinese adage wisely says, the farther one is away from a given object, the better one can see its true proportions. And so with controversial matters and such like. All the same, I enjoyed reading the various remarks made in subsequent issues of the S.O. and could afford to smile serenely, knowing that much water would flow under London Bridge ere I had to resume my duties. And now, with one single exception, I propose to bury the old controversies, which have anyhow grown stale by now, and I propose to reserve my energies for fresh ones. The exception referred to is that remark of Mr. A. De Trey in his letter which appeared in our issue of the 12th September, and where he states that "when he ('Kyburg') actually lectures us on the blessings of Free Trade, it is bound mildly to annoy people who, like myself, contend that, having regard to world conditions as they are at present, free trading is pure heresy."

To this I beg to remark that *The Swiss Observer* is published in England as the especial paper for the Swiss Colony, and I have always been under the impression that we Swiss in the Diaspora, as it were, were not only pioneers helping the homeland to trade, but that the homeland's interests, moral and material, were the alpha and omega of our endeavours as members of the colony. Even Mr. A. De Trey will probably not assert that the introduction of Tariff Reform by Great Britain would be a blessing for Switzerland! Hence

it follows that 'Kyburg,' writing in a published organ for the Swiss Colony of England, and not *pro domo*, has no choice but to defend Free Trade. By the way, Free Trade is so obviously the better way towards World Peace, that one can hardly argue about it, except where special interests are drawn into consideration.

'Kyburg's' effusions would soon become extremely tiresome to all readers were he to eschew all controversial matter. On the other hand, 'Kyburg' very frankly admits that very many of his paragraphs would be much better unwritten; because he has not given them sufficient consideration; because—and that is the chief reason—he knows from experience that, unless he makes somebody wild, there is not the slightest expressed opposition to anything he may write. And that is not good for a newspaper writer and is, incidentally, the everlasting complaint of 'Kyburg,' as the Editor knows. If only one more of our readers, especially one from among our French or Italian-speaking compatriots, would be energetic and public-spirited enough to share 'Kyburg's' labour for the S.O., we would then begin to have "Notes and Gleanings" worth reading, because the different points of view and the friendly rivalry would produce argumentations which all thinking readers could enjoy.

Cela dit, passons à l'ordre du jour!

**The Late Mrs. Gatti.**

Most Swiss have at one time or another been to Gatti's in the Strand, but it is surprising how few have been acquainted with the "Romance of London Trade," as the Rt. Hon. T. P. O'Connor, M.P., calls it in the following article in the *Daily Telegraph* (Sept. 19th), which went to make Gatti's.

The name of Gatti figures in the early memories of every old Londoner like myself. My first recollection of it is when, still without a job and with little money in my pocket, I took a meal in what is now known as the Adelaide Gallery, and was shocked and intimidated when I found that it would cost me half a crown, about half of what would be the charge in these days of big prices. But the contrast between the well upholstered and bright room and the dingy coffee-house in Drury-lane, where I often had breakfast for twopence—a penny for the coffee and another penny for two slices of un buttered bread—was some compensation. In time I found myself in another Gatti establishment—that which was, and is, in Villiers-street—and the presiding genius and founder of the family and the business was to be seen there almost nightly. I don't suppose that he took any special interest in the personality of his guests, but if he had done so he might have seen there a number of the young Irishmen who were creating the great Parnell Party; among others the obese, thunder-voiced old Irishman, Major O'Gorman, who used to amuse and to outrage the House of Commons of the period with bursts of wit now and then, dangerously approaching his Rabelaisian model. This Gatti remained and was proud to remain what he was at the start. He took the keenest interest in his restaurant; he was capable, now and then, of taking his turn at watching the steak or the mutton chop on the big grill—of which he was one of the pioneers—as he sat gossiping with his cronies. He was very corpulent, and probably found his armchair, in the midst of his work and in sight of his growing wealth, the best form of relaxation. It is not accurate to place him in the business of his relatives; he left his property to two daughters.

The Gattis were the forerunners of a movement of the Italian waiter that gradually became general, from the Italian canton of Switzerland—Ticino—and from the neighbourhood about the Lake of Como. This Carlo Gatti, as I have said, was not, however, associated with the Gattis of our time in business, though he was an uncle of two of them, and though the brothers Agostino and Stephano probably left their home in Ticino to help their prosperous relative, they were too energetic to remain subordinates, and started for themselves as far back as 1863. Their first place was that Adelaide Gallery where I took my choice meal in 1870. They were both very thorough men of business, always deeply interested in their concerns, and always very proud of them. They had vicissitudes of fortune in their steadily upward course, but that did not in the least abate their interest.

One of their habits became known to all that big section of the population of London which surges around Fleet-street and the Strand—the London of journalists and of the members of

the dramatic profession. In the Adelphi every day, except for an interval to which I will presently refer, the two brothers were to be seen always at the same table; always eating a quite frugal meal; always surrounded by some of the very large circle of friends they had among their customers. They were both well educated, very intelligent, and very agreeable men, and always perfectly simple and modest. There was no appearance of the pride of purse which their immense success might well have produced in men of less refined nature.

Now and then one of them, Agostino, would be absent for a while, and when he returned to his usual seat at the same table he revealed to you another side of his character. He was a member of the National Council of his native Switzerland—the popular Chamber of the sturdy little republic. He was a man of strong convictions; very Catholic, very Conservative, and probably he found it necessary to be regular in his attendance, because in the National Council the Radicals have usually the majority, and with their policy Agostino, both on religious and political grounds, had no patience. Doubtless he fought his battles quietly, but I am sure he fought them very resolutely and very tenaciously. As everybody knows, the firm gradually went into theatre enterprises, and for a number of years were in control of the Adelphi and the Vaudeville theatres, where they had many successful productions; their reign was one of clean pieces and dignified management. They are both now dead; and the chief responsibilities of the great firm have fallen mainly on the shoulders of John M. Gatti and his brother, Rocco, the sons of Agostino Gatti. John M. Gatti, born in London and a lifelong Cockney, threw himself into the life of London to a degree that would have been impossible in his father or his uncle. He is one of the pioneers of the modern electrical industry in London—especially in Westminster—with which he has always had a very close association. He was at one time Mayor of Westminster, and seemed inclined to take an interest in the larger political life of the country in the House of Commons. But primarily a business man and of too tranquil, perhaps of too shy, a nature to court public life, he has been content to remain one of the most active and prosperous business men of his native city. He has found besides full scope for his activities in the London County Council, where he fills the responsible position of chairman of the Finance Committee.

A transformation in the social life of London has been created by members of this family, for until the Gatti restaurants came, there was scarcely any provision for the large class whose means are between extreme poverty and great wealth. The only place at which to get a cup of tea or of coffee in London was in those frowsy coffee-houses—sadly declined from the coffee-house which was in the days of Swift and other eighteenth-century figures the resort of the aristocrats and the wits of that splendid age. It was the Gattis also who, besides producing finely ornamented and airy restaurants, introduced music at a meal—an unheard-of novelty at the period when they began. These restaurants, in their well-chosen position, have been for two generations very popular, especially in the literary and artistic circles, and the family must be regarded as one of the pioneers of the brighter, more comfortable London we have to-day, a transformation which can be appreciated by those only, like myself, who had to find their frugal meals either in the coffee-shop or the tap-room of a humble public-house.

Mrs. Gatti, the widow of Agostino and mother of John M. and Rocco Gatti, who died late on Thursday night (Sept. 17th), was a striking and winning figure, which perhaps may have accounted for the name "Madame" by which she was popularly known and was addressed when she appeared in one of her children's restaurants. As the remaining female head of a large family—for she was a great-grandmother—she might have been appropriately called 'The Matriarch' of the Gattis. She had some months of illness in her house in Carlton-hill, W., and she was in her 79th year at the time of her death. I never saw her, but I have heard a great deal of her. She inherited all the best qualities of her race; she was pious; a combination of strength and gentleness—the gentleness predominating over the strength—and her benevolence to those in trouble or need was inexhaustible.

And now they are building at Gatti's, as my readers know, and the Red Room has already disappeared, never to gladden our ladies' hearts again, I am told. A pity, because there are not many public rooms, at once so cosy and friendly and as get-at-able as that Red Room was. Alas!

#### Alpine Flora.

*The Times* (18th Sept.):—

Authorities and associations in Switzerland and Tirol are making great efforts to protect the Alpine flora. Travellers can help them by refusing to buy flowers (edelweiss, rhododendron, orchids, etc.). State your reason each time, so as

to educate the natives. They will then discover that gardening is more profitable. The picking of wildflowers is really the predatory instinct turned into a thoughtless habit. As a legitimate trophy a single specimen is better than a hundred. For colour effects in rooms our garden flowers are far more suitable.

To which, I am sure, my readers will all say, "Hear, hear!"

#### Swiss National Council Protest Against U.S.A. Action.

*The Nottingham Guardian* (23rd Sept.):—

The Federal Council assembled on Monday afternoon (Sept. 21st) for their usual autumn session, which will be the last before the general election on October 25th.

The Council of States began a debate on the arbitration treaties with France, Japan, Belgium and Poland, and approved the treaty with Japan.

In the National Council, during a debate on the administrative report of the Federal Council, the reporter made a protest against the introduction by the United States of a control over Swiss production, and claimed that Switzerland might with as much right establish a control of the American motor industry through her consular officials.

I have previously referred to the matter, and am glad a protest has been made in the National Council. The action complained of is, of course, merely an example of Tariff Reform and its quite logical interpretation.

#### "I miss my Swiss."

a tongue-twister in English, is likely, according to the *Daily Mail* (24th Sept.), to be one of the hits of the programme which "The Chauve Souris" present at the Strand on October 2nd:—

I miss my Swiss,

My Swiss miss misses me;

I miss the bliss that Swiss kiss gives to me.

I hear her yodelling sweet melodies,

Like the birds and the bees from the Swiss trees.

Her dear papa makes watches that are Swiss,  
That's why he watches me like this;

I lost her in the mountains—

In the mountains she must be;

I miss my Swiss,

My Swiss miss misses me.

Well, well—pretty, pretty—but rather feeble all the same, and hardly up to "Chauve Souris" excellence. By the way, I have always considered the Chauve Souris the one purely and sublimely artistic show London gave us last year, and I hope that this year's season of the talented Russians will be as good. Good luck to them!

#### Economic Conditions of Europe.

*The Times* (10th Sept.):—

A Central European Economic Conference which has been sitting at Vienna for two days was concluded on Sept. 9th. The Conference, which was attended by representatives from 12 European States, including Great Britain, France, Italy and Switzerland, was useful and successful in that it afforded the opportunity of the free expression of the economic grievances which exist in Europe to-day.

A resolution proposed by Dr. Elemer Hantos (Hungary) was unanimously adopted. It was to the effect that the present situation in Central Europe was largely the outcome of tendencies on the part of small nations to isolate themselves and to try to enforce their will upon their neighbours. As a remedy, it suggested the conclusion of a series of non-political agreements, embracing transport and currency. Preferential Customs tariffs were also advocated, together with an identical gold basis for the currencies of all States.

The constitution of a permanent Central European Economic Organization for the study of these questions and the drafting of agreements is to be the first step in the policy recommended by the resolution.

If "preferential Customs Tariffs" have any meaning at all, I should say that they are meant to remedy to some extent the mischief done by "tariffs pure and simple." Which reflection I commend to my tariff reform friends for study during a quiet hour of leisure.

There is not much else to glean from the British Press this week. Mention is made by *The Times* (17th Sept.) of "Calderon's Miracle Play—Open-Air Performance at Einsiedeln," and the article is worth reading. *The Catholic Herald* (19th Sept.) has a long article on "How Switzerland Celebrated the New Saint," viz., St. Peter Canisius, at Fribourg.

Meanwhile the summer has passed away; summer time will be a thing of the past when these "Notes and Gleanings" are read by my readers on Sunday morning, and autumn and winter will again awaken our appreciation of deep, comfortable easy-chairs, snugly drawn up to the fire. May the weather clerk be lenient this season and give us plenty of nice, sunny days, so that we do not forget altogether how it feels to be in the open air when the sun is shining, and there is a nice, keen tang in the air, which makes us feel strong and alert and years and years younger. And so say all of us, including "Kyburg."

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