

**Zeitschrift:** The Swiss observer : the journal of the Federation of Swiss Societies in the UK

**Herausgeber:** Federation of Swiss Societies in the United Kingdom

**Band:** - (1925)

**Heft:** 219

**Rubrik:** Home news

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**Download PDF:** 19.01.2026

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# The Swiss Observer

Telephone: CLERKENWELL 9595

Published every Friday at 25, LEONARD STREET, LONDON, E.C.2.

Telegrams: FREPRINCO, LONDON.

VOL. 5—No. 219

LONDON, OCTOBER 10, 1925.

PRICE 3d.

## PREPAID SUBSCRIPTION RATES

UNITED KINGDOM	{ 3 Months (13 issues post free) -	3s 6d
AND COLONIES	{ 12 " (26 " " " ) -	12s 6d
SWITZERLAND	{ 6 Months (26 issues post free) -	Fr. 7.50
	{ 12 " (52 " " " ) -	14s

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## HOME NEWS

A general election will take place in Switzerland on Sunday, October 25, when the present mandate of both the States Council and the National Council comes to an end.

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Dr. Georg Leuch, at present a cantonal judge in Berne, has been elected a member of the Federal Tribunal in Lausanne; he is only 37 years old and has already been officiating at the Tribunal in Lausanne. Since 1923 he has been president of the Swiss Alpine Club. — In place of Dr. Alfred Stos, who died last month, Dr. Weiss has been advanced to the presidency of the Federal Tribunal.

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Owing to the bursting of a rear tyre and the sudden jerk caused thereby, Mr. Eugène Monnin and his wife and brother, while motoring from Geneva to Lausanne, were thrown out of the car and all three suffered serious injuries.

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Col. Hermann Steinbuch died in Bischofszell at the age of 62. An officer by profession, he was for a long time in command of the Fifth Division and since 1919 of the Third Army Corps. He was a very engaging instructor and speaker and was extremely popular with the rank and file.

**Leistungen der Schweiz für den Völkerbund.** — Der Vorschlag der schweizerischen Eidgenossenschaft für das Jahr 1925 sieht an Beiträgen für den Völkerbund und den Gerichtshof im Haag, sowie alle sonstigen durch Kommissionen, Konferenzen usw. verursachten Kosten insgesamt vor Fr. 430,000. Das macht auf den Kopf der Bevölkerung etwa 11 Centimes. Vergleichen wir damit unser schweizerisches Militärbudget pro 1925. Es beläuft sich auf Fr. 84,990,653, somit auf den Kopf der Bevölkerung Fr. 21.90. Es gibt Leute, die die Ausgaben für den Völkerbund als himausgeworfenes Geld taxieren. Aber neben den riesigen Militärausgaben spielen denn doch diese 11 Rappen für den Völkerbund keine Rolle. (Rüttliener.)

## NOTES AND GLEANINGS.

By "KYBURG."

Many hearty thanks to Papa Geilinger, happily restored from the effects of his nasty experiment of trying to see what motor-car looks like on the under-side; also to L. Sch. of Aylesbury and a few others, who, however, will be interested to know that the announcement in our last issue re Papa Stork's visit to the family of B. Bretscher, of Caterham, referred to a dear kinsman of mine. The congratulations addressed to me made me feel very glad on account of their underlying kindness, but they made Mrs. 'Kyburg' and self blush not a little. However, let us unite in wishing Bruno and his dear family all the best, and hope that the pure air of Upper Caterham will do the rest!

It is perhaps not as funny as it sounds, the fact, I mean, that a lot of people, and not the worst either, are able to discuss food, cooking, etc., for hours and hours, referring to all the various experiences they have accumulated in that direction during their lifetime. After all, you will often find that people with keen brains, with great talents, or, again, with great organising power are gourmets rather than gourmands. I confess, with becoming modesty, that a well-cooked dish, however simple it be, has a great attraction for me, and that I doubt very much whether I could give of my best if fed carelessly.

All this is merely an excuse, or rather an excuse — a smarter writer would have said "hors d'oeuvres," or, as a Mancunian friend of mine calls them, "horses' hoofs" — to the following article about —

### A Mushroom Market.

*Liverpool Daily Post and Mercury* (25th Sept.):

The vendors of mushrooms are, in this town of Geneva, a race apart. They have a street all to themselves: a short wide street, lined on each side with stalls. The street ends in a place, with its fountain playing in the centre, and underneath the half-dozen great plane trees are stone seats, on which a few old men sit dream-

ing peacefully in the warm autumn sunshine. The blue river flows gently past under the bridge, on which two or three urchins in patched blouses, but with the eternal optimism of youth in their hearts, stand fishing.

The houses on each side of the street have balconies from which hang masses of bright-hued flowers — pink and crimson geraniums, orange and flame-coloured nasturtiums, and, here and there, the deep purple of a handful of overgrown petunias.

Only mushrooms are sold on the stalls in this street; mushrooms and fungi of all sizes and colours, gathered from field and forest, far and near. Here one sees a heap of tiny orange-coloured chanterelles, further on are baskets of hard-looking black truffles; here, again, are mushrooms, fresh and dried, of every conceivable shade of yellow or brown. On a stall across the road is a great china dish, containing a dozen or so of dangerous-looking fungi of a bright purple hue; further down are slabs of fungus greatly resembling a raw beef steak. Madame of the sloe-black eyes and large gold ear-rings offers you specimens as large as the top of a child's head, and several inches in thickness; in colour a speckly dark brown on top, underneath a soft tender green. This, she tells you, is a special delicacy, to be found only in the *bois des sapins*.

Madame, in the intervals between customers, exchanges gay *badiage* with the lady on her left, whose stall apparently consists of a couple of shelves laid across an old perambulator, but which is nevertheless decorated with bouquets of brightly-tinted autumn leaves.

In the road the official inspector walks majestically up and down; his large black cloak falling in heavy folds around him; while his assistant passes from stall to stall. An important person is Monsieur the Inspector, whose duty it is to see that only edible mushrooms are displayed for sale here, and that the population runs no risk of dying a sudden and violent death by mushroom poisoning.

The pastures, woods, etc., of England produce a great variety of mushrooms, many of them not only edible, but very succulent and nice to eat, some of them in the raw state, with just a wee bit of salt and pepper added. Mushroom-gathering is a very fine sport, too, especially where "Trespassers will be prosecuted" notices are plentiful, so that one has to be ready with an excuse at a moment's notice. When the new Act becomes law, in a short time from now, trespassing will become a criminal offence — so beware! It will always be found that permission is willingly given by most farmers, if asked for politely, and during autumn many a countryside walk might be enlivened by a bit of mushroom hunting, quite apart from the welcome addition the result would make to the Sunday evening supper.

The *Morning Post* on Sept. 25th had the following timely paragraph on —

### Mountaineering Exhibitions.

"A number of Alpine climbers," says "One of Them," "are much saddened by the ready publicity that has been given lately to sundry feats and adventures in the Alps. Climbing is a contemplative, non-competitive, and highly intrinsic form of enjoyment. It leads to picturesque incidents, no doubt; but these are part of the game, and the extent to which they are accepted as normal is a measure of the climber's true attachment to his sport. It is no credit to a large guided party, Boy Scouts or anyone else, to be put out of countenance by weather trouble on the easy slopes of that dullest of dull mountains, the Breithorn. To spend a night on a glacier without mishap is no more a matter for publicity than losing the last train and walking home to Hendon; and I can assure you that it is far jollier. The heroine of this morning's papers is creditably sound in wind and limb, but her rushing of four-and-a-half thousand feet of Matterhorn, up and down, in seven-and-a-half hours, means either that the party was frightened into excessive speed by the threat of bad weather; or else that the girl was in the hands of one of those pernicious guides who drag their clients of getting the job over rather than enjoying it; or that the client herself was out for a record, a thing to be deprecated. My own ascent of the Matterhorn, under amateur leadership, took twelve hours, and we thoroughly enjoyed each of the dozen. Every season in the Alps brings the stuff for an epic of climbing. But most of it will never be told, and that is the beauty of it."

To which all true lovers of the Alps will again say, "Hear, hear!"

### Swiss Water-power.

Most British papers recently contained pictures of the new "Swiss Niagara," as some of them called the new huge hydraulic installation which has been completed at Barberine. In the *Economist* of Sept. 26th the following very interesting article deals fully with the subject:—

The Swiss Federal Railways, on September 13th, inaugurated the huge Barberine hydraulic installation which is to supply electrical power to the lines of Western Switzerland. The pasture of Barberine lies at a height of 5,550 feet, in the Alps, above Salvan, near the French frontier. It has been turned into a lake containing 40 million cubic metres of water, and it is harnessed by a concrete dam 866 feet long, 285 feet high, with a width of 210 feet at the bottom and 14 at the top; the dam took several years to build, as, owing to the great quantity of snow, it was impossible to work at it more than five months every year. This lake is to drive the turbines of two electrical plants, the one at Châtelard, which is to produce 46,800 h.p., the other at Vernayaz, which is to yield 108,000 h.p. The completion of that important work will help towards the speedy electrification of several big lines. Apart from the Barberine plant, the Federal Railways own many others — Ritom (48,000 h.p.), Amsteg (68,000 h.p.) on the Gotthard line, Massaboden (10,500 h.p.) on the Simplon line — but they are still dependent on private installations for the supply of electrical power to many of their lines.

The use of water-power for the production of electricity has made good progress during the last ten years. Switzerland has no coal of her own, and she imports it mostly from Germany, France, Belgium, and Great Britain. Imported coal is generally transported by rail, so that it is rather expensive, particularly on account of the high tariffs of the Swiss railways. Switzerland found herself in a difficult position during the war, when coal imports were practically stopped; she had to accept the drastic conditions of the coal-producing countries in order to keep her railways and manufactures running, and, at one time, the price of a ton rose to over £8. The consequence of this was a rapid development of the Swiss water-power resources, which are estimated at 4,000,000 h.p., and of the electrification of the railways.

In 1914 the existing plants produced 500,000 h.p. of electrical power, and by the end of 1924 that amount had been raised to 1,570,000 h.p.; a further 407,000 h.p. will be added before the end of the present year, and several thousands more will be available in the course of the next two years. The number of hydraulic stations, which was 6,860 on January 1st, 1924, is now nearing 7,000, and of the total production of 1,570,000 h.p., 225,000 k.w. are exported to France, Germany, and Italy. Among the most powerful Swiss electrical plants are Laufenburg (yielding a maximum of 50,000 h.p.), Augst-Wylen (62,400 h.p.), Rheinfelden (24,000 h.p.), on the Rhine; Olten-Gösgen (80,000 h.p.), on the River Aar; Campocologno (45,000 h.p.), in Canton Grisons; Biaschina (55,000 h.p.), in Canton Ticino; Chippis (52,200 h.p.), Martigny-Bourg (20,000 h.p.), in Canton Valais; Lütsch (31,000 h.p.), in Canton Glarus. Some of these plants are driven by the stream of the river properly harnessed (this is the case of Laufenburg, Olten-Gösgen, etc.), while some others, like Lütsch, get their power from a lake high up in the mountain. Some of these Alpine reservoirs are so placed that they can drive successively the turbines of two or three power plants, situated at different levels; this is the case for Barberine, which drives two plants — Turtmann-Ilsee, now under construction, where three plants are to be driven by a lake and several torrents; of the Grimsel, which will be begun next year, and will supply three big plants with the necessary water-power.

The creation of artificial lakes in the Alps is now developing, as this system offers many advantages. It makes it possible to obtain a high fall, and thus to drive several sets of turbines placed at different heights, and to assure an important and regular supply of water when, in winter, the production of the hydraulic installations in the plains and lower valleys is reduced owing to the low level of the rivers.

Ten big power stations are now under construction, and their aggregate production will reach 407,000 h.p. Some are already working. For