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# The Swiss Observer

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## HOME NEWS

Following an initiative taken by the Federal Council, the *visum* between Switzerland and Italy, Germany and Austria will probably be abolished from the beginning of next year. Employers of labour and landlords will in future be compelled to notify to the local authorities the presence and names of foreigners.

When discussing the 1926 budget of the Swiss Federal Railways in the National Council it was stated that steps would be taken to counteract the serious competition by motor-lorries, which in certain districts are handling goods traffic at considerably lower rates than those in force on the railway system.

The Federal subsidies to the cantons concerned for the upkeep of the international alpine roads have been doubled, the Ticino and the Grisons will therefore receive Frs. 400,000 each per annum, Uri Frs. 160,000, and Valais Frs. 100,000.

The introduction of a tax on beer in Switzerland is being seriously considered by the authorities. Though the tax is estimated to produce an annual income of about 10 million francs, it is asserted that the retail price to the consumer will not be affected, the intention being to reduce the profits of the brewers by increasing the import duty on malt.

The Socialist, Mr. Robert Grimm, has been elected vice-president of the National Council. He was the organiser of the great general strike in Switzerland in 1918.

Tumultuous scenes took place in the Geneva Grand Conseil during the discussion of the budget. The Socialists took umbrage at an explanation given by the cantonal finance director, M. Guillaume Pictet, and endeavoured to storm the podium. The sitting had to be suspended. Whilst the town fathers thus disported themselves, the school-boys held a demonstration outside the town hall, singing "Roulez tambours" and other war-like songs as a protest against the "ukase" issued by the educational department that this year's traditional celebration in connection with the "Escalade" should not contain any references to the military deeds linked to this historical episode.

The Genevese police commissioner M. Antoine Vettiner, committed suicide by shooting himself last Saturday at his residence. The tragedy is thought to have been influenced by an official enquiry which has recently been instituted into local police procedure. *Inter alia* the police have been accused of favouritism and shielding certain houses of ill-repute.

The Swiss Tommy will have to pay for his boots again. Since the time of the protracted occupation of the frontier, army boots were given out free of charge. Henceforth 12 francs per pair will be charged, though the cost to the Military Department will be in the neighbourhood of 50 francs.

In the course of an economic conference, held at Berne last week, it was stated by Dr. Lorenz, of Fribourg, that the Swiss index figure (indicating the cost of living) was below the one in England and Sweden and on a par with the German and Dutch indicator; it was higher, however, than the figures ruling in Italy, France and Czechoslovakia.

Efforts are being made by the union of Swiss postal and telegraph employees to eliminate from the different sections the Communist elements.

A fire broke out on Tuesday (Dec. 8th) at Schaffhausen in the corner building Fischerhäuser-Buchstalerstrasse. The occupants of the top floor, the family Werner, escaped through jumping out of a window into a court, but suffered serious injuries from which the father and a boy have now succumbed. One child is stated to have perished in the flames, whilst another one, together with the mother, are lying in hospital.

Returning on his bicycle from work, Alfred Huber, an employee at the Zurich gas-works, was

run into at a street crossing by a heavy motor-lorry and succumbed to his injuries on the way to the hospital.

A mechanic of the Jungfraubahn, Adolf Stenri, came into contact with the electric circuit at the Eismeer station and was killed instantaneously.

## CHRISTNACHT.

Zahllos, kleine Engelsflügel  
Rauschen auf die Erde nieder.  
Ahnungsvolle Tannenzapfen  
Summen leise Weihnachtslieder.  
Lichtersendend blicken Fenster  
Suchend in die Nacht hinaus.  
Hinter weissen Engelschleppen  
Leuchtet hell ein Sternentrauss.  
Eine Rose blüht inmitten  
Rot, in Liebe aufgeblüht.  
Kommt, wir dürfen pflücken gehen,  
Stern zu Bethlehem erglüht!

Martha Pfeiffer-Surber.

## EXTRACTS FROM SWISS PAPERS.

**Une page d'histoire lausannoise.** — Par décision de la Municipalité, la sonnerie générale des cloches, lundi 7 décembre, à 20 h. rappellera la signature, jour pour jour, il y a 400 ans, à Berne, du traité de combourgeoisie entre les villes de Berne, Fribourg et Lausanne.

Il a paru bon à l'autorité municipale d'associer l'ensemble de la population à cet important anniversaire des premiers pas de notre ville vers la liberté, de par son alliance avec les confédérés.

Les Lausannois de 1925 accorderont, le 7 décembre, une pensée de reconnaissance aux conseils et aux bourgeois de 1525, soucieux des droits et de l'avenir de leur ville, et qui furent les artisans du traité de combourgeoisie. Parmi ces derniers, il y a lieu de citer les noms, conservés par l'histoire, de Benoît Ravier, Claude de Praroman, Gérard Grand, François de Prez, Etienne du Flon, Etienne Grand, aubergiste du Lion d'Or (syndic en 1526), Jacques Winter (syndic en 1528).

Le traité, dont une expédition, existe aux archives communales, promettait aux Lausannois assistance en cas de danger ou de guerre. Il instituait une procédure pour les litiges pouvant intervenir entre les citoyens de trois villes. Il reconnaissait aux syndics de Lausanne le droit de pouvoir, avec les officiers de l'évêque, à l'arrestation des malfaiteurs. Les villes de Berne et de Fribourg assuraient aux Lausannois qui s'engageaient au service étranger, les mêmes conditions qu'à leurs ressortissants.

Selon la coutume d'alors, le traité fut juré le 15 janvier 1526, à Lausanne, par tout le peuple, puis par les députés de Berne et Fribourg. La même formalité s'accomplit ensuite dans ces deux villes. En janvier 1531 et janvier 1536 l'alliance ainsi conclue fut renouvelée.

Samedi 12 courant, les délégations officielles des trois villes commémoreront à Lausanne cet événement si caractéristique des annales de notre cité. (La Tribune.)

**Le plus jeune syndic du canton de Vaud.** — Quelle est la commune qui possède le plus jeune syndic du canton?

Selon la "Gazette" du 9 décembre, la commune de St-Saphorin s. Morges vient de se donner un jeune syndic de 23 ans, M. Albert Thurin, qui serait le plus jeune du canton.

Nous hasardons une petite rectification: C'est sans doute la commune de Malapalud qui détient le record. En effet, son syndic est M. Alfred Longchamp qui est âgé de 21 ans. Il a été nommé l'année dernière alors qu'il faisait usage de son droit de citoyen pour la première fois, et cela pour remplacer M. Maurice Longchamp, décédé. Ajoutons que ce jeune syndic a passé son école de recrues l'été dernier.

Serait-il peut-être le plus jeune de la Suisse? (Gazette de Lausanne.)

## NOTES AND GLEANINGS.

By "KYBURG."

The children had gone to bed, and if you had been able to peep at them quietly and see the happy expression hovering on their little faces, you might have known that their dreams were evidently connected with the approaching Christmas. Their tousled heads hove from one side to the other occasionally, their slightly parted lips half formed the words they were speaking in their dreams, and now and again one of them would stir as if to sit up, as if to grasp the

elusive figure of their dreams—Father Christmas—the bon père Noël—the Chrischi-Chindli!

Downstairs, Father and Mummy were holding secret and happy council. The presents were inspected, the dear names of the respective recipients were written on the parcels, and then, with much ado and secrecy, due not so much to the necessity for such behaviour, but more to innate and cherished old memories of their own childhood, the parents stored the happiness-bringing gifts away in safe places, secure from inquisitive little eyes.

They were happy, those two. They were not rich, but just able to manage, even if sometimes it did require good and very careful management to make both ends meet, to feed and clothe the kiddies, to equip them for school, and to leave a little bit over for an occasional treat and for a rainy day. You see, our two parents were fairly old-fashioned and they even tried, with more or less success, to practise the lessons their own parents had endeavoured to provide them with for their battle with life.

Once more, sitting cosily over the fire, did they check off the presents just hidden away with such care. Had they enough for everyone? Forgotten nobody?

Then they gave themselves over to joyful anticipation. Recalled to each other the happy smiles of the children last Christmas. Gloried in advance in the grateful kisses mummy and dad would be rewarded with this year, when the youngsters would see their wishes fulfilled, when the little eyes would sparkle with realised desire, when Christmas had happened once again.

And retrospection and anticipation also conjured up other pictures. Less joyful ones. Sad ones and tragic ones even and, imperceptibly almost, but surely our parents' faces grew serious, then sad and wistful. They were now thinking of other people's children. Kiddies of friends not able to celebrate Christmas with gifts and gladness all round. They knew of people who would be hard put to even to buy enough ordinary food and coal to keep comfortable. People who could not even like Christmas because the holidays meant two or three days' loss of income for the breadwinner, who would be unable to work on those days and whose pay-packet would be correspondingly smaller.

Then they thought of still poorer children who even at Christmas time were not properly clothed, not properly fed, and whose ragged and distressed condition seemed to cry out to Heaven and make their more fortunate brethren feel ashamed to feel glad and joyful.

But need they feel so ashamed?

Again they took counsel together. This time not for making their own children happy with lavish gifts, but to see whether they could not impart some of the Christmas Spirit to some poor child, some destitute mother, some out-of-work husband. Father especially realised what it must feel for a husband and daddy to be unable to treat his children at this time of the year, not even to feed and clothe them properly, and what soul-destroying anxiety many a poor mother must feel in similar circumstances.

And they remembered, too, that if "to give is more blessed than to receive," it is doubly blessed at this time of the year, and forthwith, lest their ardour for giving might become numbed during the night, they rummaged among their belongings, selecting this pair of trousers, that old jacket, one pair of old boots here and some discarded but still servicable toys there, made a big bundle, tied it well, and straightaway, although fetching the pen and ink meant going upstairs into a cold and dark room, daddy did it, wrote the name and address of a charitable institution which, he now remembered, had informed him that they undertook to distribute such gifts sent to them, and when all was done and finished, our friends went back to their fireside, and if you could have quietly peeped at them, you would now have seen their faces lit up wonderfully by the Spirit of Christmas.

## A Tintoretto Find in Switzerland?

The Times (9th Dec.):—

It is reported from Bellinzona, Canton Ticino, that during repairs in the Cathedral a splendid painting of the Crucifixion has been discovered which some experts attribute to Tintoretto. The painting will be taken to the local museum for further examination.

And so we come again to—

## Winter Sports.

After all, the weather is seasonable enough, and as I am writing this frosty Wednesday morning,

it looks and feels as if the skates which were so hurriedly imported from Switzerland last week might soon justify their existence. Therefore, this being Christmas week, I need not write about tariffs, foreign policy and suchlike controversial questions, and, to produce that local atmosphere at a time when our thoughts travel to the homeland more often than usual perhaps, the following article from *The Spectator* of 28th Nov. is quite appropriate:—

The first fact about Switzerland in the winter which breathes its peculiar spell on us is that you find a climate there which allows you to bask in the sun with twenty degrees of frost asserting themselves around. Undeniable frost! Genial sparkling sunshine! I remember hearing how some lusty young fellow at one of these pleasure-resorts was sitting in the sun after a bout of lawn-tennis, and remembered that he had secreted a tumbler of water under his chair; and thinking he would have a drink he picked it up and found inside it a solid block of ice! The tumbler had been placed in the shade, and that sort of thing teaches you in that region the difference between sun and shadow.

That reminiscence suggests a question very pertinent to those who may be contemplating a winter visit to Mürren or Pontresina. Does father Sol always shine? Supposing he sulks for a day or two; would young men be seen sitting on chairs, talking amiabilities with a fair fellow-gamster in their shirt-sleeves? Not they. They would be seen involved in a thick sweater and fur-coat to boot, tramping or more likely trotting up and down the road, trying to keep warm; and not infrequently failing; that is, if there is any wind moving while the sun hides his face. For when this occurs the nip of the wind playing upon the extremity of the nose or ear is far from being a joke. Indeed, I have walked as fast as I could against a light breeze at Pontresina, clad in a huge fur-coat, and felt that for purposes of warmth the effort was abortive.

The fact is that the advice uttered by our admirable Foreign Secretary on his departure for Locarno is very much to the point: "Don't expect too much." Human beings are perpetually being taught by sharp experience that there is no such thing as an earthly Paradise; and yet we go on planning, toiling, saving, risking in order to find the locality of our dreams. To hear some people talk you would suppose it is the simplest thing in the world to pack up your traps and land yourself into perpetual golden sunshine, 6,000 feet up in the dead of winter. It may come off. I remember some thirteen years ago revelling in nine hours of such sunshine daily for seventeen days. Subsequent ventures have revealed the sinister element of gambling which, as a rule, attaches itself as a warning to all optimistic hopes. Not infrequently a delightful mild spell of weather reigns from Christmas to about January 10th; delicious for the septuagenarian visitor who can add to his curling some most pleasant walks, made possible by the absence of snow. But the last fact spells tragedy for the youths and maidens who yearn to ski. The expression round the mouths of some young men is not to be forgotten. The poor fellows had come all the way out laden with skis, ski-boots, ski-sticks, and bubbling with anticipation. After four days of grumbling at the sun—for the merriment of the venerable curlers was no compensation for them—they succumbed to a pretty sharp attack of 'flu, lay in bed for ten days and decamped homewards with their heavy paraphernalia diminished and brought low. For this plunge into pleasure they had to pay a not inconsiderable bill.

And so on. That is the most tragic event of which I have any knowledge. The moral is, be prepared for the best-laid plans going "aft agley." If they don't there is no time like it for learning the use of a new faculty in a joyous company. The motions of the party get to be more and more untrammelled as their skill in coping with slopes increases; and though they dance to an almost insane degree, they may return to their native shores considerably "bucked up," as the elegant phrase goes, in general health.

By way of providing against untoward happenings it would be well to acquire beforehand a taste for reading good books. Nothing really tragic can overtake anyone who can browse on such sobering leisurely novels as de Morgan's, or Mrs. Gaskell's. To be of any use against too much or too little frost the novel I maintain should be long and interesting, without being too exciting. Some are so exciting that you can't put them down, and then you may be late for your ski-ing expedition or for the whist-drive, or even—just fancy!—for dinner; and I much doubt the staying powers of the modern detective story, useful though it be for a temporary emergency. There must be something wrong with narratives one forgets wholly in a fortnight.

There are aspects of human life revealed to those who keep their eyes and ears open, as is the case in a minor degree in most hotels. But on these I may not descant further.

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Now, dear readers, "Kiburg" thought he would not perpetrate a similar error. That is why I have given you first of all a nice homely picture, meant to produce a bit of Christmassy feeling in your bosom. Secondly, I skilfully led your thoughts away again, made you think of our dear homeland and Keller's beautiful song which always brings a lump into the exile's throat . . . and only now, when I hope you are sufficiently prepared, do I remind you that

The Swiss Churches in London have issued a United Appeal for Christmas Gifts. Old Clothes, Old Toys, etc., etc., to be sent to 79, Endell Street, London, W.C.2.

Dear reader, I am not asking for cigars, whiskeys, liqueurs, etc., to be sent to me, as a token of the many hours of more or less pleasant reading it has been my privilege to provide you with. But I do ask you, if my story at the beginning has any meaning at all for you at this festive time of the year, if you are one of the fortunate ones who can look back on a happy childhood, full of sweet memories, if you have kiddies of your own and are able to treat them to a beautiful Christmas, if you can manage it, even if doing so means a sacrifice, please send something to the Swiss Churches NOW, so that as many as possible may know that the Spirit of Christmas—le bon père Noël—'s Christ-Child—is still about!

A HAPPY CHRISTMAS TO YOU ALL  
is the wish of "KYBURG."

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