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# The Swiss Observer

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## HOME NEWS

Early on Thursday morning (Jan. 8th) earth tremors caused some excitement along the Jura, no serious damage, however, being reported: the centre of disturbance is said to have been in the Orbe district. Most of the people were awakened by the barking of dogs, whose instinct is stated to have anticipated the shocks by a few minutes in some instances.

The electors in the canton Schwyz have negatived a proposal of the Grosse Rat, which sought to assemble the different administrative services in one central building at Schwyz: the erection of the latter would have cost Frs. 600,000, towards which the Confederation had promised a subsidy of Frs. 130,000.

In the Basle Grosse Rat a subsidy of Frs. 130,000 was voted to the Orchestral Society, although the official proposal suggested Frs. 100,000 only. The musical enthusiasts in the chamber were supported by the Communist party, whose leader dwelt upon the educational value of music.

Emigration from Switzerland in 1924 is showing a slight decrease as compared with the figures of the previous twelve months. The largest quotas are registered by the cantons of Zurich, Ticino and Grisons, the depopulation in the isolated valleys of the latter being very pronounced.

A fatal accident happened at the Altmatt level crossing (near Liestal). Mr. De Rey-Kohler, a restaurant proprietor in Binningen, drove in the darkness through the closed railway gate, the car coming to a standstill between the metals. Although the keeper and the engine driver made desperate efforts to stop the approaching train, the latter crashed into the obstruction, killing instantly the two occupants. Mr. De Rey, who was accompanied by his father-in-law, is said to have been returning from a party, where they had dined well if not wisely.

Prof. Millioud, of the Lausanne University, died in that town at the age of 60. A regular contributor to most of the large dailies in the western part of Switzerland, he attracted, during the last few years, widespread attention by strenuously opposing the policy of some of the Federal departments in Berne.

## EXTRACTS FROM SWISS PAPERS.

Genève en 1815 et Bâle en 1919. — Sous ce titre, un correspondant de la "National-Zeitung" se livre à des considérations mélancoliques qui lui inspire le 100<sup>e</sup> anniversaire de la mort de Pictet de Rochemont. Après avoir, en passant, rappelé que Bâle devait une reconnaissance particulière au grand diplomate genevois qui a obtenu de la France le démantèlement de la forteresse de Huningue, le journal bâlois fait un rapprochement entre la situation de Genève en 1815 et celle de Bâle en 1919.

Les événements du début du siècle passé, qui aboutirent à la transformation de la carte européenne, trouvaient Genève dans l'impossibilité de respirer. Pictet de Rochemont sut profiter du moment favorable: grâce à son habileté et son énergie, les puissances consentirent à arrondir les frontières de Genève. Il obtint en outre la création des zones économiques que la France de 1923 a supprimées par un acte arbitraire.

Bâle se trouve aujourd'hui dans une situation analogue à celle de Genève d'il y a plus de cent ans. Les deux tiers de sa banlieue sont enserrés par des poteaux allemands et français. Mais il ne s'est trouvé personne en 1919 qui profita du grand bouleversement pour obtenir une rectification de frontière en faveur de Bâle. Sans réagir. Bâle s'est laissé dépasser économiquement par Zurich; Berne et peut-être aussi Mulhouse et Fribourg suivront bientôt. On discute à présent à Bâle les impôts, les lois sur le travail, sur le chômage et l'on y a perdu la faculté de s'intéresser aux questions dont la portée dépasse le souci immédiat.

Et voilà pourquoi, conclut mélancoliquement le correspondant de la "National-Zeitung," l'anniversaire de Pictet de Rochemont remplit de chagrin mon cœur de Bâlois. (Journal de Genève.)

Des Guten zuviel! — In Lugano macht der canadische Indianerprinz Mac Rallay of Odyley, genannt "Der weisse Elch," durch seine Freigiebigkeit viel von sich reden. Hat er doch 1000 Fr. für eine Schule hergegeben, Kindern, die ihm Blumen zuwarfen, je 50 bis 100 Fr. und Damen, mit denen er getanz hat, noch grössere Geldgeschenke verabreicht. Aber einmal ist er doch an die "Lätze" geraten, als er einer älteren, einfachen, aber doch vornehm gekleideten Dame, die am See spazierte, einen Fünflieder in die Hand drücken wollte. Sie lehnte ebenso höflich wie bestimmt ab. War es doch die Prinzessin Viktoria, die Schwester des Königs von England. (Nat.-Ztg.)

Ehre der Arbeit. — Die Maschinenfabrik Oerlikon ehrte 80 ihrer Arbeiter, die seit mehr als 25 Jahren in ihrem Dienste standen. Es wurde ihnen ein Festessen geboten, und alle erhielten eine Uhr mit Kette; ausserdem bekamen die 25-jährigen Jubilare einen Monatsverdienst geschenkt, und die andern für je weitere fünf Jahre Arbeitszeit in der Fabrik einen weiteren Monatsverdienst überwiehen. (Wochenblatt.)

## NOTES AND GLEANINGS.

By "KYBURG."

The Economist (3rd Jan.) publishes the following highly interesting article on—

### Swiss Agreement with Germany—Swiss National Wealth and Income.

Switzerland recently concluded with Germany an agreement, providing for the mutual and gradual suppression of import restrictions, pending their final abolition on September 30, 1925. This agreement constitutes one of the most important features in the Swiss Customs policy, as it shows the intention of the Swiss Federal Government of progressively returning to that freedom which commercial exchanges enjoyed before 1914. On the other hand, this new agreement will bring considerable changes in the Swiss economic life. The agreement was strongly criticised by the Socialists, who favour the immediate and complete removal of all import restrictions; it was, and is still, attacked by those Swiss producers who were formerly protected by the import restrictions, and who dread German competition. But, on the other hand, it will possibly help and stimulate the export of Swiss goods to Germany. The consequences of that agreement will be felt in only a few months, and if they are really disastrous—as some people pretend—or only unsatisfactory, the agreement—which is concluded for a period of nine months—will not be renewed in September, 1925, or reconsidered and modified, according to circumstances.

The Swiss money market is now somewhat easier than it was three months ago; there is plenty of money in the banks, especially in long-term deposits, so that it is probable that the interest on long-term deposits—which has oscillated between 5 and 5½%—will soon be reduced. Since July 14, 1923, the Swiss National Bank has maintained the official discount rate at 4 per cent., thus preventing a further rise in money rates on the part of private banks, as well as a new increase in the cost of living. Money is now more abundant, business active, and it is believed that in 1925 Swiss trade and industry will record important progress.

Several Swiss economists have attempted to ascertain the value of the national fortune of Switzerland, and their estimates differ so much that a definite conclusion is difficult. The Swiss national wealth greatly increased during the war, but it decreased later, owing especially to losses on foreign investments and on exchange. In 1922 it had already been reduced by nearly 10 milliards of francs (£400 millions) and by another 8 milliards up to the middle of 1924 (£320 millions). The national wealth of Switzerland would, therefore, now reach a value of nearly 30,433,000,000 francs (£1,217,320,000). As regards the income of Switzerland, it was estimated at 3½ milliards (£140 millions) in 1913, and it now reaches nearly 4½ milliards (£170 millions).

For the period extending from 1918 to 1923, the yearly average of the adverse balance of foreign merchandise trade amounts to 415 mill. frs. (£16,600,000), which is partly compensated by various sources of income: the receipts of the transit traffic, amounting to 25 million francs (£1 million); of the export of electrical power, amounting to 10 mill. frs. (£400,000); of the hotel or foreigners' industry, amounting to 175 million francs (£7 millions); the income resulting from the investment of Swiss capital in foreign countries, amounting to 120 million francs (£5,800,000); the commissions paid to the banks and taxes paid by trusts, reaching 10 million francs (£400,000); the difference between insurance premiums of Swiss companies collected abroad and insurance premiums of foreign companies collected in Switzerland, amounting to 45 million francs (£1,800,000). These various items, which can be considered as invisible exports, make a total of 385 million francs (£15,400,000), and leave a net adverse balance of 30 million francs (£1,200,000)—a comparatively small amount. But though these figures were arrived at after long inquiries and calculations, their exactitude cannot be easily proved, and it is most probable that the net adverse balance was, in fact, much higher than the above figure during the past year. It nevertheless shows that Switzerland, apart from her export, has important revenues, which

make good a great part of her adverse foreign trade balance.

It would, of course, be highly interesting to know the source from which this statistical information is drawn. It would also be interesting and comforting to know on what facts the calculations for the national income, which is now supposed to be £170 millions, against £140 millions in 1913, are based. If Switzerland manages to get roughly 170 million pounds income on a fortune of only roughly 1,930 million pounds, being some 9 per cent.—well, all I can say is that I am glad I am a shareholder, but that, on the other hand, some other shareholders may have "preferred" shares!

Now, to get away from figures which, however absorbing they may be to us in our business hours, are yet, perhaps, not quite the proper fare for my readers, who read our pages when their leisure hours have come. Without wishing to write anything about Winter Sports, I think that I may print the following from the *Sunday Express* (4th Jan.):—

### Ski and I.

All I know about Switzerland is that it is a very hot country, famous for marvellous cherry jam, and there is nothing to do but eat it and sit still, because it is too warm to walk up-hill. People tell me that I have been there at the wrong time of year.

So have they sown a doubt in my mind. More, I have a premonition. I have slowly developed the belief that I shall, sooner or later, be lured into these winter sports, that some hopeless dawn will find me staggering about a mountain summit trying to saw my skis apart with a penknife, or yodelling hour after hour for some time to come and help me find my left leg.

Although I detest snow and hate the tyranny of Swiss scenery, which you have to admire by the clock sixteen times a day, I cannot rid myself of the idea that one of these mornings I shall start away with that "off-to-the-front" feeling and a couple of large rucksacks, a pair of ski, skates, a toboggan or two, a St. Bernard dog, and a set of seven-league boots, complete with "swanklets" and all the latest improvements.

It began with three fatuous men and two rather pretty wax girls in a shop window which I pass every day. The three men are smiling as if they have just found a cocktail bar at the North Pole, and the girls are smiling in a vague, puzzled way as if they have lost the express engine which they have dressed up to oil. How ridiculous! Why do people dress up like this to go to Switzerland? It gets worse every year!

I laughed! Then a week after I began to take an interest in them. I wondered if I could ski. I imagined myself coming down the mountain pass as the shades of night were falling with the creak, creak of the local ambulance sounding eerily in the crisp, cold air. And the voice of some girl I particularly wanted to impress:—

"Is he dead?" That is the sort of thing that would happen to me. A pair of ski, a draught of that champagne air that goes to the head, a sudden desire to show-off, and a little grave in one of those slanting churchyards in which cows wander when they have finished making condensed milk.

"No; I don't think I could ski."

Then—you know how these things happen—I began gradually to see myself ski-ing, rather to fancy myself as a ski-er. I was getting on awfully well! I could turn somersaults on ski and walk on the tips of them to pick fir cones for children. I was the pride of Grindelwald. An excited group would wait each evening for me to ski-jump off the opposite mountain over the roof of the hotel and roll with delightful skill to safety—as they do now and then in Pathé's Gazette.

In the evening a delightful flutter would go round the ballroom as I entered, pretending hard not to know that every one was saying, "That's H. V. M. Oh, amazing! Every time he skis he has to have his passport, in case he jumps over the frontier. And so modest!"

Dancing round with the prettiest girl in the hotel, I would murmur, "Give you a few tips. Oh, rather!"

Hardened young ski-ers would gnash their teeth in corners, or go away to Monte Carlo and take to drink.

Then one fateful night the test would come. Sadie Helleather is lost! Far up on some lonely height she is lying beyond the call of the monks of good St. Bernard. Without a moment's hesitation I strap my ski over a pair of evening shoes and, with a careless laugh, go out to the rescue. The snow makes my evening shirt a soft one (which annoys me slightly), but on I leap and fly, cheered by a friendly word from the inhabitants of lonely villages who turn out to watch me flash by.

Then Sadie! Far up beyond the vegetation line, up, up where the snow hides barren rock riven by wind and all sorts of things, she would be buried, just the pink pom-pom of her new winter sports hat lying like an anemone cherry on the whiteness. I ski up in splendid style—rather sorry no one is watching—and begin to excavate her.

After a swift half-hour's work she is sitting beside me like a frozen gnome; her beautiful little cold hands frostbitten and her boots like gigantic peaches melbas. So we sit together drinking brandy, which I thoughtfully snatched up at the moment of departure:

Oh, say, ain't you a reglar feller? she'd remark with a soft Pennsylvania purr.

I am a regular feller, Sadie.

You sure are.

The romance of those beautiful words would go right to my heart, and at this identical moment the moon would rise, turning the world to frosted silver. Far below we would see the tiny lights of the town

where they are waiting for us, the little blobs of the pine tree tops, the curve of the road . . .

"Sadie, will you marry me? From the first moment I saw your new woolly I kind of felt that we were . . . and when I found the little tip of your cap on the snow—like a cherry that has dropped from heaven; well, I . . . Oh, sure!"

Then, of course, I have to pull myself together and remember:

- (a) I am still married, and can't she.  
(b) I don't really know whether I can ski.  
Which is, of course, frightfully annoying.

#### High Prices in Swiss Resorts?

*A propos*, we hear a lot concerning the high prices charged by Swiss hoteliers in fashionable centres. The following article from the *Evening News* (7th Jan.) throws some light on this question, while also containing one of the *si non e vero bene trovato* sort of Kronprinzen stories:—

The English and the Americans are usually held responsible for making places on the Continent expensive. An M.P. who goes to St. Moritz every year was telling me that really it is the French who since the war have kept St. Moritz a resort de luxe.

"I know Switzerland very well," he said, "and I have always found that as a whole English people, the moneyed people, prefer the simple life when they are out for the winter sports. They look on it as a health-seeking holiday, and don't want ostentation or exotic luxury. But the rich French people, particularly the women, want their Swiss holiday to be like a holiday on the Riviera, with all the resources of Paris and Riviera hotels at their command. It is they who cause the St. Moritz hotels to compete with each other in luxuriousness."

Before the war Russians and Germans helped to send up the charges. When the Crown Prince spent that holiday at St. Moritz he made it a Mecca for German social "climbers." The influence lasted right up to the war.

The M.P. whom I have mentioned told me a story of the Crown Prince during that visit.

The Crown Prince had a liking for being regarded as a "sport" of the English kind. One day he announced that he intended to give a cup for a Cresta Run competition. A notice was put up at the Kulm hotel, and names began to be entered. Among the names written down appeared those of the late Danny Maher and some other jockeys. St. Moritz always had a number of celebrated jockeys among its visitors.

One day the Crown Prince looked over the list of competitors for this trophy. He noted the names of the jockeys. He took out a pencil and crossed out their names, saying, "My cup is to be competed for by gentlemen, not by professionals."

There was a great silence among those who stood round the notice board.

Then an Englishman, a blood aristocrat, let it be said, stepped forward, bowed slightly to the Crown Prince, and then quietly crossed out his own name.

"When we are here," he said calmly, "it doesn't matter what we are as long as we are sportsmen. And I have never heard it said that any of these jockeys are not sportsmen in the best sense."

And, it seems to me that, in spite of my endeavours, I shall not be able to get away from Winter Sports ideas this week: if my readers could watch me now, looking out over the Thames Estuary, or rather in that direction, and looking into white, thick, impenetrable fog, reminding me of one of those glorious days high up in the Alps when one is cloud-found and the clouds won't lift for days, and one has got absolutely tired of "Zuger" and other pastimes—well, I daresay, they could understand why it is so very difficult for me to keep off Winter Sports articles. The following (*Morning Post*, 2nd Jan.) is rather nice, although my readers will please understand that I do not subscribe to all that appears in our esteemed contemporary. It tickles me rather to refer thusly to the M.P., and I hope somebody at Kingsway will be good enough to acquaint the M.P. of it.

#### Swiss Christmas Dinner Customs.

Swiss hotel meals are nowadays little different from those served in every great cosmopolitan hostelry. Yet there still exist some Swiss houses in the less fashionable resorts where Christmas dinner has some of its former characteristics. Twenty years ago the occasion used to be celebrated in homely style. The proprietor and his family would dine with his guests. The entire staff would come in and sing Christmas carols round the tree that stood in every hotel dining-room.

Towards the close the senior visitor, an habitué of the house for many years, would rise to propose "The King," and this might be followed by "The President of the Swiss Republic"—to the mystification of the Swiss, for what Swiss is there who thinks much of, or even cares for, that high functionary? To him the symbolism of country takes another form, whilst his canton stands far higher in his thoughts than that colourless figurehead of the Confederation which he does not like to speak of as a "Republic."

Here and there these fashions survive, though sadly altered. We were fortunate, since the hostelry of our choice was one of the older type, even though it could for this season, and for the first time, boast of a newly imported jazz band. The tree had been set up in the centre of the room. The servants came in and sang the old carols, while the orchestra, abandoning the hackneyed foxtrot and two-step, embarked on some unwonted melodies. The cellist, with wrinkled brow, was trying to preserve a more sober rhythm, while the pianist's sardonic smile showed how great was his condescension in consenting to play such commonplace tunes. The proprietor, clad in a new morning coat radiant in its Parisian glory, moved slowly from table to table, deigning to stop by a privileged guest now and again to make an inquiry as to the quality of the menu.

The lights were turned down. The orchestra suddenly struck up "God Save the King." Hardly knowing what was to come we stood up—and there entered a line of flaming plum-puddings. With that climax the character of the ceremony changed. It was as though the crest of the mountain were reached; there remained nothing but the descent over the open snow ahead. The singers had departed, and the musicians, now casting all restraint to the winds, struck up a tune. With a shout of laughter it was soon recognised as the threadbare jangle of "No Bananas." Made merry

by the strains of the old refrain, young and old joined in with the words. Next there appeared a superb vanilla ice amid a yell of approbation from the children. The dinner ended with crackers and paper caps.

Three-quarters of an hour interval, and the Christmas ball began in the same room, now cleared of chairs and tables. It was all great fun—even for the more elderly.

#### The War all over again!

The *Yorkshire Evening Post* (2nd Jan.) states: People just back from Grindelwald, in the Bernese Oberland, say there has been serious friction this Christmas between British and German visitors to the principal hotels. The Germans are almost all of the prosperous manufacturing class. Their manners are not always of the best, and the chief "winter sport" seems to be beer-drinking.

In one hotel a number of young British officers objected to the German men bringing bottles of beer on to the dance floor where ladies were dancing, and their objection ended in a free fight. An English girl of 18 ran through the snow in her dancing shoes to fetch reinforcements from another hotel, where more English people were staying, and the male British population arrived in time to enjoy itself thoroughly before the proprietor turned out all the lights in the hotel.

Of course, I myself think that beer and dancing ladies do not go well together. But then, there is really nothing to be offended at if people will drink beer from finely shaped glasses; and "gentlemen" who make a row on such slender provocation are, to my mind, only gentlemen in their own belief. However, it seems to me that both parties were out for a scrap, and if so, who are we to dispute their ideas of how to amuse oneself?

#### The late Prof. Dr. E. Hedinger

is the subject of the following obituary in the *Lancet* (3rd Jan.):—

Medical science in Switzerland has to record a great loss. On Christmas Eve died at Zurich, after a short illness, Dr. Ernst Hedinger, University professor of pathological anatomy and histology. Born in 1876 at Schaffhausen, and educated in Berne, Hedinger studied medicine at the universities of Berne, Munich, and Berlin, graduating in Berne. He then became in succession clinical assistant under such great teachers and research workers as Kocher (surgery), Sahli (internal medicine), and Jadassohn (dermatology). Having thus gained a wide clinical knowledge and experience, he went to his favoured branch, pathological anatomy, becoming assistant to Prof. Langhans at the Pathological Institute at Berne. He was only 30 years old when he was appointed Professor of Pathological Anatomy at the University of Basle, a post which he held till 1922, when he returned to Berne to succeed his late master. Hedinger was an indefatigable worker, the author of numerous dissertations, chiefly on morphological subjects. His diagnostic skill was highly appreciated by all his clinical colleagues. In 1914 he undertook a special mission to South Africa on the invitation of the Union Government to investigate trypanosomiasis in cattle. This journey brought him into contact with General Botha and other South African statesmen, an experience which gave him a sympathetic understanding of the British Commonwealth at the beginning of the great conflict. Soon after his appointment to Basle Hedinger joined the editorial staff of the "Correspondenz-Blatt für Schweizerärzte," the leading Swiss medical paper, which under his guidance was transformed into the "Schweizerische Medizinische Wochenschrift" of enlarged size and raised scientific standard. Whether by mouth or by pen, Hedinger had a natural gift for lucid exposition, and the present generation of Swiss medical men owes its working knowledge of pathology largely to his teaching.

#### Ice Hockey.

Alas, some 21 years have gone by since 'Kyburg' played ice-hockey between Yverdon and Yvonand. London and its surroundings are not particularly excellent spots in which a young man could keep up and practise this particular form of sport. But all who have ever seen it or played it will agree that it is one of the finest games one can play and one of the fastest. Dangerous? Yes, but not more than other games if one takes the precaution of learning first the rudiments. The following article from the *Evening News*' special correspondent at Davos made me quite long to be over there in order to watch, but, alas, my enrolments as contributor to the *S.O.* have not yet reached the princely figure necessary to enable me to attend Davos winter sports. [They are not likely to start even.—Ed.]

It is to Alexander Spengler, the doctor who persuaded people with weak lungs to spend the winter in Davos, that we owe the origin of the Alpine 'boom.' For his patients became so well and vigorous that they made a skating rink for exercise; then they invented toboggan racing; and finally people who were cured kept returning to Davos, not because they must, but because they wanted to. The result was that Davos is now as much a pleasure resort as a health resort.

And Davos, still the largest of the resorts, is the father of a huge family, including the brilliant St. Moritz, Mürren, the Mecca of public school men, Grindelwald, Adelboden, Engelberg, Villars, and many others.

Alexander Spengler himself probably never foresaw that he would be the indirect cause of a vast influx of money to Switzerland, and that skis and skates would confer as much health and happiness on people with good lungs as the air and sun confer on people with bad ones.

His distinguished son, Carl Spengler, a genius of bacteriology, finds time to take an interest in sport as well as in microbes, and is one of the chief patrons of ice-hockey here. The Spengler Cup is competed for by teams from all over the Continent. This coveted prize, and others, have brought no fewer than fifteen ice-hockey teams to Davos, and for the past week the rink has been the scene of four matches daily.

Teams have come from Oxford, Cambridge, and London. Prague has sent its Olympic team. There are teams from Madrid, Milan, Berlin, Vienna, and Zurich. No one centre has ever before seen so much ice-hockey talent concentrated.

Now, ice-hockey may seem to be an altogether minor item in the grand pageant of winter sports. It certainly is of less consequence to the average visitor than skiing, because hockey requires an almost superhuman agility on skates, whereas anyone can learn to ski. But I have mentioned the vogue for ice-hockey, inasmuch as strangers may imagine that life here, because it began as a health resort, must be rather subdued.

The ice-hockey mania, now sweeping through this little town like a joyous fever, is itself an answer to that. Ice-hockey is perhaps the most violent game known to man, is unquestionably the fastest, and (according to connoisseurs of gore) is one of the most dangerous.

The onlookers of ice-hockey are at least as apt to lose their heads as the onlookers of football. This is especially true here, where the crowd is cosmopolitan. The English may remain calm (though not always), but nothing can restrain the paroxysms of excitement of the Italians, the Spaniards, and the more temperamental Helvetians.

Generally I gather the impression that half the hockey players will finish the day in hospital, and that none of the spectators will ever be on speaking terms with each other again. But, by the evening, all differences of opinion seem to have been settled over aperitifs; and when dancing starts, after dinner, behold! the members of the teams are quite capable of foxtrotting till midnight.

In the ballroom, it may be added, the "English" teams can hold their own as well as on the rink. You will divine the reason if you hearken to their accents. Those accents are not Oxford, nor Cambridge, nor London—but Transatlantic. These merry young athletes, in fact, learnt their hockey at their homes in Canada—where also they learnt their style in dancing.

They are off to St. Moritz and Mürren—and I am sure they will carry all before them as successfully there as they have done here. Their scores on the ice you will have read before these lines are in print. Their scores as personal propagandists for the British Empire are less easily definable, but no less valid.

And their presence here in Switzerland is a quaint but pleasant testimonial to that other propaganda done sixty years ago by Alexander Spengler—the man who first induced "foreigners" to winter in the Alps.

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