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# The Swiss Observer

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## HOME NEWS

The public appeal made on behalf of those who suffered from the inundations which took place last autumn in the canton Ticino brought in a sum of Frs. 290,000. About half this amount is reserved for the reconstruction of roads and bridges, and the remainder (Frs. 140,000) will be used to indemnify individual sufferers, for which purpose the Confederation has also voted Frs. 50,000, in addition to Frs. 34,250 taken from the special fund of non-insurable risks. The total of the indemnities amounts therefore to Frs. 224,250, excluding the Frs. 150,000 reserved for road construction. \*\*\*

Widespread opposition is manifested in the canton Basel-Land to the construction over its territory of an overland high-tension line for the purpose of exporting electric power generated by Nordost Schweiz Kraftwerke. The Federal Council has already granted a concession, enabling the electrical undertaking to expropriate the necessary strips of land. \*\*\*

Animated discussions took place in the Basle Grosse Rat with reference to the recent Communist demonstrations, resulting in a number of people being wounded by police swords. A motion by the Communist party to appoint a special committee of investigation was only defeated by the casting vote of the president, the votes on each side numbering 61.

At the police courts, three of the demonstrators, including Dr. Wieser (the Communist leader) were fined Frs. 20 to Frs. 30 each, plus costs, for disobeying orders and throwing offensive epithets at the inspector in charge. \*\*\*

A well-known quack practitioner in Herisau (Appenzel) has been sentenced by the Basle courts to four weeks imprisonment and a fine of Frs. 100 for having pretended to cure by correspondence a local invalid; needless to say, the execution of the sentence remains in abeyance until the impostor chooses to enter Basle territory. \*\*\*

Prof. Ernest Roguin, of the Lausanne University, an authority on international law, has had bestowed on him the degree of *doctor honoris causa* by the University of Lyons. \*\*\*

Three lives were lost in consequence of a remarkable mishap on Wednesday (Feb. 4th) at the cider works Keller at Fahrwangen (Aargau). An employee, named Breitenstein, had occasion to descend into one of the presses or vats, where he was at once overcome by carbonic oxide gas; a colleague of his, bearing a similar name, endeavoured to extricate him, but suffered the same fate. A passing farmer, Jos. Fischer, hearing their cries for help, went down the ladder, but was unable to resist the fatal gases. Later on a properly organised gang extricated the three asphyxiated men; efforts at reviving them, however, were of no avail. \*\*\*

Dr. Michael Bühler, the editor-in-chief of the *Bund*, died in Berne at the age of 71 as the result of an attack of apoplexy. Born in Tenna (Grisons), he studied law in Berne and Leipzig and practised for a short time in Coire. For the last 42 years he has been identified with the great Bernese journal. \*\*\*

A farmer of Olten has been sentenced at Aigle to three months imprisonment and a fine of Frs. 500 for having a few months ago run over with his car and killed a local hotel proprietor, without taking any notice of the accident. \*\*\*

Near the Jochpass a group of skiers was overtaken in the darkness by an avalanche, three of them being buried. Two of these were able to extricate themselves in time, whilst the body of the third was found by a search party the following day. He is an engineer named Beyeler, employed in Innertkirchen. \*\*\*

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## EXTRACTS FROM SWISS PAPERS.

### Sa Majesté l'Empereur et M. le Syndic de Prangins.

Un parlementaire français, passant ses vacances sur les rives du lac Léman (mais à bonne distance de la Société des Nations), fit, l'été dernier, la connaissance du syndic de la commune où résida l'empereur Charles de Habsbourg.

Le syndic de Prangins se rappelait surtout les petits ennuis que lui avait valus la naissance du troisième ou quatrième fils de Sa Majesté impériale. Un chambellan était venu le trouver pour faire la déclaration de cette naissance et en assurer l'inscription à l'état civil.

"Moi, je veux bien, avait répondu le magistrat avec son petit accent vaudois traînant et chantant. Mais la loi est la loi. C'est le père qui doit faire la déclaration. Amenez le père."

Le chambellan essaya d'expliquer qu'un souverain, même déchu, ne se dérangeait pas aussi facilement. Il discuta longtemps sans rien obtenir, retourna au château, revint chez le maire, insista. "Eh bien! vous savez, proposa le syndic, je vais téléphoner à ceux de Berne."

Il téléphona donc à "ceux de Berne," qui répondirent que pour une fois la déclaration du chambellan et du médecin suffirait. Le syndic alla quérir son gros registre et demanda quels étaient les nom et prénoms du nouveau-né. Le chambellan tira un papier de sa poche et se mit à le lire devant le syndic abasourdi: "Ferdinand-François-Louis-Henri-Charles-Rupprecht-Hubert-Georges-Marie-Gaëtan-Pie-Ignace, etc., etc., archiduc d'Autriche, duc de Modène, Plaisance, Parme et Guastalla, prince de Brixen, comte de Feldkirch, vöwode de la vöwodie de ceci et de cela..." Il y en avait une page entière en petit texte.

"Chez nous, dit le syndic, le registre n'a que deux lignes en blanc pour chaque nom. Vous voyez que je ne peux pas écrire tout ça. Choisissez trois prénoms. Prenez les plus beaux, et un ou deux titres, si ça vous fait plaisir..."

Le chambellan se récria, fit valoir que le jeune archiduc pouvait devenir héritier du trône, parla de procès et de complications internationales.

"Bien, dit le syndic. Je vais téléphoner à ceux de Berne."

Berne répondit que le cas allait être soumis au Conseil fédéral, qui rendrait un oracle dans la matinée. Deux heures passèrent, pendant lesquelles le chambellan et le médecin firent honneur à un excellent petit vin blanc. Enfin la sonnette retentit et ceux de Berne parlèrent dans le téléphone.

"Tout est arrangé, annonça le syndic. J'écrirai seulement trois noms sur le registre, mais je collerai votre papier entre les deux pages, avec le sceau de la mairie aux quatre coins. La loi est la loi. Encore un petit coup de vin à la santé de l'enfant?"  
(*La Tribune de Genève.*)

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## NOTES AND GLEANINGS.

By "KYBURG."

### To-day's Great Thought.

"To-day is the to-morrow of yesterday's lost opportunities."

### Human Sacrifice.

I take the following pithy line of thought from the *Daily Herald* (10th Feb.):—

It disturbs one's ideas to read that the leaders of a Burmese tribe which keeps up the practice of human sacrifices returned a "polite but firm" reply when they were asked to give it up. "Surely," one thinks, "such benighted savages cannot understand courtesy." They explained, however, with agreeable urbanity, that, if they gave up human sacrifices, pestilence would visit them.

Ridiculous, of course! How can such degraded superstitions be tolerated? Yet on the same day is reported that comical belief of a number of people in America that the world was to come to an end last week; and, if we reflect a little, shall we not be forced to admit that these polite Burmese chiefs have their counterparts in the European statesmen who refuse to give up war, with its enormous holocaust of lives?

"If we abandon human sacrifices in war," say the rulers of Europe, "we shall be visited by all sorts of evils." Just the same argument as the Burmese use! The only difference seems to be that in Burma a few lives are sacrificed, while in Europe the number runs into millions. The futility is the same in either case.

Think it over, dear reader, think it over!

### The Political Outlook.

Discussing political affairs with the Nestor of the Swiss Colony at Gatti's last night, I was impressed that he, an otherwise inveterate Conservative, should be greatly disturbed over the way political affairs are shaping in Europe. He thinks that never during his sixty odd years' stay in London have politics been more disturbed, less open and more dangerous than of late, and, it seemed to me, that my friend was slowly reaching the conclusion that hideous history will again repeat itself before long and new wars again be necessary to bring people to their senses. Personally, I do not take such a gloomy view, but I confess it requires a deal of courage not to be thoroughly disheartened by the sordid spectacle the various Governments give us in their international dealings.

### Baby's Finger Print.

Ament my remarks on this topic in our last issue, I think the following from the *Daily News* (3rd Feb.) is rather good:—

I see that the authorities of the Canton of Argovie—which is in Switzerland, thank goodness—have passed a law that all babies must be weighed, measured and their finger-prints taken within 24 hours of birth. A special form is supplied for the notification of birth marks.

This should effectually put a stop to all that rough-and-ready Solomon stuff for which the old king got such a lot of undeserved credit. But it does not seem to me to go far enough. If the Swiss authorities really want to get a grip on their happy citizens, they must do the thing properly.

A Swiss patriot has drawn up a code of rules for babies, which is to be strictly enforced. It runs as follows:—

1. Babies will be born between the hours of 10 a.m. and 12 noon, or 2.30 p.m. and 5.30 p.m. (Saturdays 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. only).
  2. All babies will immediately attend at the Town Hall for vaccination, inoculation, appendectomy, and tonsilotomy (but not dichotomy, you notice: that was Solomon's method).
  3. Babies will then be paraded at the local police court for the purpose of finger-print, photography and X-ray records.
  4. A further parade will then be held at the Central Politic Bureau, where the child's reactions to various political symbols will be tested and noted. A national flag, a red flag, a black shirt, a Ku-Klux-Klan nightie, and an income-tax form are among the exhibits for this test.
  5. Babies will attend once every six months at the Town Hall for amplification of details in the above records, and for the graded series of intelligence tests.
  6. When the child is ten years old it will be measured for its first handcuts and leg-chains.
- When the child is judged to be of sufficient intelligence it will be permitted, under super-

vision, to lay a wreath at the foot of the Statue of Liberty.

#### Foreign Contracts.

A great many of us will, no doubt, welcome the following letter by Dr. Henri Martin, our eminent Commercial Attaché. It appeared in the *Financial News* (3rd Feb.):—

My attention has been drawn to the recent discussions in the Press in regard to the placing of orders—especially municipal orders for electrical plant—abroad, particularly in Switzerland.

In this connection, Mr. D. N. Dunlop, the director of the British Electrical and Allied Manufacturers' Association, in his letter to the "Yorkshire Herald" of September 24, 1924, and that appearing in the "South Wales Argus" of November 10, makes about Switzerland and Swiss machine manufacturers several statements which, as representative of Swiss commercial interests in Great Britain, I find myself compelled to correct. While it is obviously the business of the British purchasers to decide where they choose to place their orders, your usual courtesy will perhaps allow me to put certain facts before your readers.

It is stated in the above-mentioned articles that the Swiss Government, through indirect financial subsidies to the Swiss manufacturers, enable the latter to export goods at lower prices than would be possible without such assistance. I wish to state categorically that this is incorrect, and that the Swiss machine industry does not receive Government subsidies of any sort or kind.

As Mr. Dunlop correctly states, Switzerland has no raw materials of its own. He doubts, however, whether Swiss manufacturers purchase raw materials and semi-manufactured parts in this country for the execution of British and other orders. It is a fact, nevertheless, that for many years past the Swiss machine industry has purchased, and it is still purchasing, large quantities of such materials from British producers, and this notwithstanding the additional expense involved in the transport and handling of these materials to the Swiss factories.

The director of the B.E.A.M.A. then proceeds: "It must also be borne in mind that British manufacturers of electrical machinery might equalise these conditions to a considerable extent by buying their materials abroad. I need hardly point out that this would be a suicidal policy as regards the welfare of the country generally." Trade being international in its essence, such a statement may lead the reader to wonder whether, or to what extent, there are or are not in Great Britain some leading British manufacturers who actually do purchase raw materials and semi-manufactured parts from Czechoslovakia, Germany and other countries with depreciated currencies.

The writer of the letters above referred to further states that British companies, working in agreement with trade unions as to rates of wages and hours of labour, cannot meet the competition of countries which sell at "dumping" prices, and he also refers to the fair standard of wages for British employees, to their higher standard of living generally, combined with shorter hours of labour. May I point out that Switzerland has adopted the 48-hour week, that the wages in the Swiss machine industry are about the same as those paid in the similar industry in Great Britain, and that the standard of living and education of Swiss workmen is, as everyone knows, higher than elsewhere in Europe.

It will be appreciated that Swiss industries generally and the Swiss export machine industry in particular, have an extremely difficult and exacting task in overcoming disadvantages brought about by the question of obtaining materials, by abnormally heavy transport and handling charges, and by the high cost of living and other adverse factors. If at the same time it is borne in mind that taxation in Switzerland is very high, and that Swiss currency has, for some considerable time past, been at a premium when compared with British currency, it will be easy to come to the conclusion that this industry can hardly afford to indulge in "dumping." It is, therefore, my duty, without wishing to open any controversy, to place these simple facts before the British public, well known all over the world for their "fair play."

The arguments are sound, just and timely.

#### Swiss Electrical Enterprise.

*The Times* (28th Jan.):—

The Brown-Boveri Electrical Manufacturing Company of Switzerland announced through its American representative that it had decided to invade the American field. The company will make an initial investment of from 35 to 40 million dollars by purchasing several large manufacturing plants now in successful operation, and expects to be in active competition with American manufacturers in 90 days.

This decision has been taken after a two-year survey of the field, on the urgent invitation of a number of American railway and public utility companies. The plants to be acquired are on the Eastern seaboard from Boston to Chesapeake Bay, in the mid-west and on the Pacific coast.

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While I think it a fine proof of Swiss enterprise, it is, of course, not always a good sign for a country when manufacturers open up abroad in the way indicated. Not, anyhow, as long as there are those idiotic national frontiers and customs barriers. Think it over, dear reader, think it over!

#### Pro Ticino.

*Financial News* (31st Jan.):—

A conference is being held in Berne between representatives of the Canton of Ticino and the Federal Authorities to discuss measures to meet the economic difficulties of the Ticino, and in particular the question of suppressing surtaxes in the Mont Gothard district, as well as agricultural problems and the question of subsidies for the maintenance of the Alpine roads.

And everyone of us who knows the Ticino and especially, I think, those among us who were privileged to stay there for a time during the war and who then had an opportunity of getting better acquainted with its charming, hospitable and thoroughly Swiss population, will earnestly hope that Mother Helvetia will find means to help as much as is required. The Ticino has not been gifted by Nature with much, except wonderful beauty, which explains the almost fierce love of the Ticinese for his Canton—a love which makes him return to his old village in his riper years to die there and to be buried in that land of his birth.

#### Beauty and the Cresta.

By H. C. Beasley in the *Sunday Express* (1st Feb.):—

"Achtung!" I cried faintly as my execrable luge rounded the bend and careered madly down the main street of St. Moritz. There was I sprawling head foremost over my detestable luge, like a gargoyle fallen from the top of Mont Blanc, and still going strong. And there was She, plonk in the middle of my path, with her back towards me.

"Achtsooong!" I muttered feebly in despair. The next moment the worst happened. There was a startled feminine scream, two green legs went up in the air, and a vision in green sat on my neck. And the abominable luge went wildly on.

Have you ever sat on a luge, with an unknown sweet young thing holding on to your neck with two green legs for dear life? And have you felt the mortification of you and the Sweet Young Thing being mistaken for professional performers until you deposit yourself and your fair burden in a snowdrift, and pray that an avalanche may come and overwhelm you? No? Then, my son, you have not lived.

I was introduced to the Sweet Young Thing at the Suvretta Ball last night. "Yes," she said icily in more senses than one, "we have met before. I understand he is practising for the Cresta Run, and I have promised to dance with him immediately he has done it."

"Great snakes and little guinea pigs," I exclaimed inwardly, swearing by that terrible and binding oath sacred to all true winter sportsmen. "Then that will be to-morrow night," I said aloud. "Fine," she replied with a most tantalising laugh.

I had never seen the Cresta Run, and imagined it to be a longish straight course. I told an old friend, a veteran of the Bob course, of my wager. "You are certainly going to enjoy yourself to-morrow," he said consolingly. But he would take me in hand and see me through. In fact, I could do the Bob course with him and three or four others. It would be all right. I must keep my nerve and do as I was told and leave the rest to him.

I pressed his hand, too full for words, nearly swallowed my Adam's apple, and, feeling like Sydney Carton, went to bed.

Next morning I awoke to the sound of the tumbrils going to the guillotine. They were the bob-sleighs setting out for the course. "They weigh half a ton," explained one enthusiast comfortably, "and when they overturn they usually break your back. You see, here's the start of the Cresta Run. It's three-quarters of a mile to the finish, and it's all over in less than a minute. You do over eighty miles an hour."

That settled it. For the rest of my life I shall always have to wear an artificial Adam's apple. "But this is not a run," I protested faintly. "It's a precipice."

A delighted roar from my four companions showed me that I was for it. Was there no means of escape? I wondered whether the "Daily Express" insurance covered this form of suicide, and thought what a mess I would make on the nice white ice. Then suddenly I found myself on the top of the bob run, in a medieval setting, surrounded by knights in armour.

My warders rushed me into the condemned cell. They screwed great steel rakes on the toes of my boots, steel that was inches long and sharp as dragons' claws; then they enveloped my arms in steel elbow pads; they flung iron casements round my knees; one member of the gang, whom I took to be the hangman's assistant, began to pinion my gloved hands in pads; a huge crash helmet was placed over my head, and I was led to the scaffold. . . .

Now we are starting. At least the others are starting, and I am doing my best to hang on. No, I have not made my will. . . . And that sub-editor whom I cursed before my departure, he was not such bad fellow after all. . . . Yes, I must remain calm. . . . But what in the name of the cat's pyjamas is this?

A frantic yell from the skipper, and we go tearing up the bank at Sunny Corner at an incredible speed and an unbelievable angle to take the hairpin bend. We seem to rise perpendicularly a distance of twenty feet up the sheer banking. A foot from the top, and we come down round the corner, hurtling through space like a comet gone insane. A Mexican revolution or an uprising of cannibals would be tame in comparison. The thing suggests a conflagration in Sheol, and a panic, and the fire engine disabled, and a door that opened backwards, and a crossword puzzle in Chinese, and the largest devil on top and the smallest devil underneath. Whoop! A hill fifty feet high comes swooping at us, and we are at the top and stationary before I can really focus it.

"Good run," said my friend, shaking me by the hand. "I think you've broken the record for this season."

"I felt sure I'd break something," I replied feebly.

That night, after I had claimed my dance, we were sitting in one of those romantic alcoves at the Suvretta, waiting for our coffee. I told her frankly of my nightmare of horror. "And," I said feelingly, "I did it all for you."

"Achtung!" cried the waiter as he tripped in the gloom and spilt the coffee down my neck.

Of course, I have never heard of the S.P.C.T.S.O.C., and probably neither have you. But that Society for the Prevention of Cruelty Towards "Swiss Observer" Collaborators might usefully take its place among kindred bodies. I could then apply to its Inspector to protect me from having to read, week by week, countless articles on Winter Sports. I also know the difficulty of getting up a really handsome subscription in the London Swiss Colony, otherwise . . . . [Sorry, no begging allowed in our paper.—Ed.]

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