

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: 190

Artikel: Basle Fair 1925
Autor: [s.n.]
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-686704>

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The Swiss Observer

Telephone : CITY 4603.

Published every Friday at 21, GARLICK HILL, LONDON, E.C.4.

Telegrams : FREPRINCO, LONDON.

VOL. 5—No. 190

LONDON, FEBRUARY 21, 1925.

PRICE 3d.

PREPAID SUBSCRIPTION RATES

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(Swiss subscriptions may be paid into Postcheck-Konto: Basle V 5718).

HOME NEWS

The Federal Council has approved the request of the Military Department for a credit of 16½ million francs for the purpose of manufacturing and introducing into the Swiss Army a new light machine-gun. Preliminary tests are stated to have given entire satisfaction. (See "Extracts.")

The terms of an arbitration treaty between Belgium and Switzerland have now been agreed to by the Swiss Minister in Belgium and the Foreign Minister of the latter country. Speaking generally, disputes are to be submitted to a special commission of five members, and in case the latter cannot arrive at a satisfactory settlement, will be referred to the International Tribunal at The Hague for final adjudication.

The net surplus of the Swiss Post Office, after providing for interest on capital invested, depreciation, etc., amounts to just under four million francs for the year 1924; the budget estimates anticipated a surplus of Frs. 442,000 only, that is to say, about Frs. 100,000 more than the surplus of 1923.

A new fiscal law which, by imposing a higher ratio on large fortunes, not only increases the revenue to the State, but also slightly decreases the taxes on income and capital levied upon the middle classes, was voted last Sunday by a large majority of citizens of the canton of Geneva.

Three new Bills were submitted last Sunday to the electors of the canton of Thurgau. Two of them, which mainly legalised modern administrative methods based on an antiquated law, were accepted, whilst the third, the most important one, regulating business in real estate, was thrown out by a small majority. Under the latter Bill it was hoped to put a stop to land speculations which injuriously influence the agricultural interests of the canton; one of the clauses decreed that no land or real estate could be re-sold, except under certain exceptional conditions, within five years of its purchase.

A Communist publication, issued in Berne during carnival week and called "Die Giftmudel," has been confiscated by the authorities on the ground that it contained serious personal reflections on the Italian Prime Minister.

For making fraudulent entries in the official record books and other irregularities, three committee members—including the president—of a Vevey Rifle Society were sentenced to three days imprisonment and to pay the costs of the proceedings.

The "Föhn" has visited the central and eastern part of Switzerland during last week with exceptional violence, bringing about torrential rain and causing damage to several farmsteads. On some sectors railway traffic has been interfered with.

Two hunting enthusiasts, Councillor Daniel Kohler and Mr. Ernst Ruggli, from Vättis (near Ragaz), were overwhelmed by an avalanche near the "Graue Hörner." Both were enveloped and carried down the mountain for about 1,000 metres; when the avalanche broke up, Councillor Kohler had the good fortune to come up on the outside, though somewhat seriously injured; the body of his companion was dug out the next day.

Karl Russ-Suchard, the well-known chocolate magnate, died in Neuchâtel at the age of 87; he was keenly interested in the municipal affairs of his canton and a liberal supporter of social and charitable institutions.

BASLE FAIR, 1925.

In connection with this year's Basle Fair, which takes place from April 18th to 28th, we are arranging a conducted party for English visitors. The party will leave on Saturday, April 18th, and is open to any of our readers who wish to make use of these special travelling facilities. Further particulars will be published in due course, but intending participants should communicate with us without delay.

EXTRACTS FROM SWISS PAPERS.

Das leichte Maschinengewehr. — In unserer Armee wird das leichte Maschinengewehr eingeführt. Die kriegstechnische Abteilung des eidgen. Militärdepartements liess es sich angelegen sein, die neue Waffe der Presse vorzuführen. Nachdem die Durchkonstruktion des Pistolen-gewehrs, das bei einem Gewicht von etwa 5½ bis 6 Kilogramm die normale Pistolenmunition verschießt, erkennen liess, dass es bei entsprechender Erhöhung des Wallengewichtes möglich sein werde, auch für die Ordonnanzmunition eine ähnliche Maschinewaffe herzustellen, ist im Frühjahr 1922 die Ausführung dieser Waffe in die Hand genommen worden. Die hergestellten Versuchswaffen liessen die Richtigkeit des von Oberst Furrer, Direktor der Waffenfabrik, konstruierten Versuchsprinzips erkennen. Die Versuche wurden daher fortgesetzt und hatten Erfolg. Die neue Waffe besitzt ein Gewicht von 8,5 Kilo, eine Anfangsgeschwindigkeit von 740 Meter pro Sekunde, eine mechanische Schussgeschwindigkeit im Serienfeuer von 450 Schuss in der Minute, und eine Schussgeschwindigkeit im Einzelfeuer von 50 bis 60 Schuss im gleichen Zeitraum. Das leichte Maschinengewehr ist luftgekühlt. Zum Auswechseln ist ein sogenannter Wechsellauf mitgegeben. Das Auswechseln kann in einer halben Minute vorgenommen werden, und zwar in der Regel nach 180 Schüssen. Zu jedem Gewehr gehören zirka 30 Magazine. Das Wechseln der Magazine im Feuer braucht nur wenige Sekunden Zeit. Der Waffe ist für den präzisen Einzelschuss eine abnehm- und verstellbare, nahe der Mündung anzubringende, zweistufige Stütze unter dem Kolben beigelegt. Präzision und Schussweite der Waffe sind mindestens gleich gross wie diejenige unseres Ordonnanzkarabiners, mit dem die Kavallerie und verschiedene Spezialtruppen ausgerüstet sind. Die praktische Vorführung der Waffe ergab, dass jeder mittelmässige Schütze genaue Schussfelder erzielt. Man kann mit der Waffe auch stehend und ohne Stütze genau schiessen. Ohne dass eine Reinigung nötig ist, können bis zu 15,000 Schuss abgegeben werden. Unter dem Kommando von Oberst Otter wurden feldmässige Schiessübungen durchgeführt, die die gewaltige Wirksamkeit der neuen Waffe dartaten.

(National-Zeitung.)

NOTES AND GLEANINGS.

By "KYBURG."

To-day's Great Thought.

For the last three-quarters of an hour I have been wandering up and down the room. A fierce battle of ideas has been raging in my mind. Great Thoughts by the dozen have been struggling for supremacy, for the honour of adorning to-day's "Notes and Gleanings." Decision as to which would carry off the palm of victory seemed most difficult, if not altogether impossible. Fiercer and fiercer grew the struggle, quicker and quicker my paces, until, at last, she could endure it no longer, and with a peremptory "do sit down, please," assailing my ears, I came back to Earth, as it were, sighed and bade my Great Thoughts to be quiet. And that is why, dear reader, you will have to think of a Great Thought for to-day yourself!

Dean Inge and Mr. Garvin.

Dean Inge considers the British Empire and the United States the two countries to which the future belongs, but states that the race is far more important than the nation, and that a high-minded and idealistic patriotism is far better than cosmopolitanism.

He further states, without calling it by name, that "we still have to reckon with the ceaseless intrigue of a powerful Church as a disruptive agency."

Mr. Garvin, who, thinks the "Daily News," ought to have been a purely literary writer and ought not to have gone into Politics, makes our flesh creep by depicting in wonderfully effective passages the alarming state of Europe, the growing armaments, the growing feeling of unrest—in short, the approach of another Armageddon.

I had not recovered from the effect of the writings of the two aforesaid eminent publicists when, on reaching my office on Monday morning, I found a friendly, albeit vehement, letter from my old friend, whom I called the Nestor of the Colony in our last issue. He utterly disclaims my calling him an inveterate Conservative, and states that he had been, all through his long life, a Liberal, nay, an advanced Radical. Well, well, "there is more joy in heaven over a converted brother, etc." And, my very dear correspondent,

you know that we all wish that you may live many, many years, enjoying splendid health and gracing our London Swiss Colony by your vivacious presence. And, if you really have become an advanced Radical, there will be none better pleased than "Kyburg," as you know!

And now, I suppose, I ought to attend to the 'Gleanings' proper. Well, I wrote a note to the Editor last week to inform him that the British Press seems to be uniformly of the idea that Switzerland consists of frozen lakes, snowy slopes, sunlit mountain tops, all liberally sprinkled with ski-enthusiasts in as many various attitudes as there are stars in the night sky, and that besides articles dealing with these subjects, there appears practically nothing concerning Switzerland. This week's crop is no better. It is true there are quite a number of paragraphs in British newspapers giving me the prices of the Geneva Bourse. I am not a bit interested—for obvious reasons. Besides, the Editor stifles any attempt on my part to get our readers to present me with the wherewithal to become interested in monetary values! Then there are several articles dealing with Swiss commercial news. These are dealt with by another and better qualified collaborator. There is a short paragraph in the *Daily Express* (7th Feb.) on a—

New German-Swiss Air Line.

The Swiss expulsion order against the German aviator Zimmermann, who flew with the late ex-Emperor Karl from Zurich to Hungary in an unsuccessful attempt to regain the throne, has been withdrawn in order to allow him to participate in the establishment of a new aerial service between Switzerland and Germany.

Zimmermann will pilot the largest aeroplane in the service. It has three powerful motors, and is able to carry ten passengers, with mails and luggage.

And then there are pictures of the Jungfrau-Joch-Hotel, of Pic Bernina, of ski-jumpers and skiers holding on to a cord and whirled along by an aeroplane. Happily, there is one really good article in the *Daily Telegraph* (7th Feb.):—

Sunny Sea to Sunny Snow.

This is a typically perfect mid-winter day in the Engadine. Finer could not be. The sky is clear, the sun shines hotly—so hotly that I can sit at my open window writing in complete comfort. All the mountains are sharply outlined against the light-blue heaven, but a transparent gossamer mist drifts lightly about the lower slopes. At my feet the skaters are gracefully performing their complicated evolutions on a large ice rink, that reflects the sunshine as from burnished silver. Ski-runners are disporting themselves on the snow-slopes. A band plays tinkling tunes far enough away to be agreeable and yet unobtrusive. The snow carpet spreads abroad over the fields and among the dark trees. Thickening as it rises, it reaches up the deep valley that leads away to the high mountains, most of which I climbed within a few months of half a century ago. There are the rocks up which I clambered; there is the narrow arête along which I delicately advanced behind the step-cutting guide, who to my inexperience seemed a miracle of skill. Surely, it is not longer ago than yesterday, but where are the companions of those wonderful times? They have vanished, but the mountains are unchanged.

Two or three days ago I was sitting in summer warmth beside the Italian shore of the Mediterranean. Here the sun is no less warm, but the air is by no means the same. This mountain air seems to fill the lungs with life and the body with energy. I know that I cannot now climb to the glittering heights that look so tempting. I know it, but I don't feel it. In this radiant world the spirit of everlasting youth revives. The years fall away; the old days return; for a moment one rejoices in a phantom adolescence.

The Engadine is a long, straight trough of a valley, with a succession of lakes in its floor between an avenue of peaks. It is the nursery of the River Inn. The names of the places along it are pure music—Silvaplana, Maloja, Suvretta, Celerina, and so forth, shaped in that Romansch tongue which the Roman legionaries left behind in these mountain-fortressed valleys. The sleigh-bells jingled when we started on again; ice-crystals sparkled on every twig. Nature had arisen from her night's sleep new-clothed in a robe of brilliant samite. The lakes were spotless sheets of white. Dark forests embraced them and pushed headlands out into them, shaping their shores into capes and bays,