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# The Swiss Observer

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## HOME NEWS

After legal arguments and heated discussions, lasting for several months, with reference to the exact interpretation of the popular vote of 1920 for closing the gaming houses throughout Switzerland, the latter were supposed to be definitely closed last Saturday, March 21st, in pursuance of a division in the National Council last Friday, when the 91 "a yes" equalled the 91 "noes," the presiding vice-president Hofmann recording his casting vote with the latter.

\*\*\*

A sensational victory was secured by the Socialists in the elections for the Zurich Grosser Rat last Sunday; together with their friends, the Democrats, they captured 64 of the 125 seats. Since 1922 the two great parties held an equal number of seats; the chief losers last Sunday were the Communists, who reduced their mandates from 13 to 9.

\*\*\*

In the elections last Sunday for the Grosser Rat of Argau the Socialists increased their representation by 10 seats, chiefly at the expense of the Liberal party; they are numerically the largest party in the council, holding about a third of the seats.

\*\*\*

An initiative, launched by the Communist party, was voted upon last Sunday by the citizens of Basle, and rejected by a majority of 12 to 9; the proposal intended, for the purpose of financing social institutions, to levy for the next three years a super-tax on all incomes of Frs. 15,000 and over.

\*\*\*

The fact that several large manufacturing concerns have, during the last few years, transferred their activities to other cantons, led to an animated discussion in the Bernese Town Council; it is asserted that trade and industry and those engaged in these pursuits had to bear an excessive proportion of the cantonal taxes to the advantage of the agricultural interests.

\*\*\*

A shelter in a stone quarry near Lengnau (Baden) was completely buried on Tuesday evening (March 17th) by a mass of rock and earth which suddenly disengaged itself. The quarry was leased by Mr. E. Schmid-Etter, from Schönholzerswil (Thurgau), and at the time of the accident his wife and six children were partaking of the evening meal which they had brought along; they were all entombed and were dead when extricated after a few hours' clearing. On hearing some rumblings, the father left the shelter to discover the cause, but his shouts of warning were too late to prevent the calamity.

\*\*\*

The steamer "Bonnivard," plying on the Lake of Geneva, was entirely destroyed by fire, due to some unknown cause, in the harbour of Ouchy; her value is said to be Frs. 212,000.

\*\*\*

One of the best guides of the Grisons, Gufer, from Klosters, lost his life in an endeavour to save a member of a ski party which was overwhelmed by an avalanche on the Jocipass.

## BASLE FAIR PARTY.

A large number of enquiries from prospective participants in our conducted party have been received and replied to. Most of those interested state that they intend to join if weather conditions are more encouraging. We fully recognise this and other difficulties which prevent our friends from making up their minds two or three weeks beforehand, all the more as the party leaves the Saturday after Easter, a somewhat early date to embark upon another trip. It is, however, most important that we should now, without further delay, receive the definite bookings, so as to enable us to make the necessary arrangements. We do not wish to have a recurrence of last year's experience, when the party had to be abandoned, as applications were not received by the date fixed, although soon afterwards we had sufficient entries to make up the required minimum number.

## EXTRACTS FROM SWISS PAPERS.

**Zum Brand bei Madame Tussaud.** — Madame Tussaud war eine geborene Bernerin und hiess Marie Gresholtz. Ihr Onkel, Christoph Kurtz, der sich Curtius nannte und sich in Frankreich als Elsässer ausgab, brachte sein Nichtenfrüchtig nach Paris, um sie die Modellierkunst lernen zu lassen. Sie hatte ausserdem in Paris drei Brüder und zwei Onkel, die alle in der Schweizergarde dienten und beim Tuileriensturm am 10. August 1792 den Tod fanden.

Marie Gresholtz zeigte im Modellieren so grosses Geschick, dass sie die Schwester Ludwigs XVI., Madame Elisabeth, unterrichten durfte, und 1780 richtete der Onkel Kurtz im königlichen Palast ein "Cabinet de Cire" ein. Drei Jahre später eröffnete er am Boulevard du Temple ein ähnliches Institut, die "Caverne des Grands Voleurs." Marie Gresholtz verkehrte in dieser Zeit mit berühmten Persönlichkeiten, wie Condorcet, Rousseau, Voltaire, Diderot und Benjamin Franklin.

Als die Revolution ausbrach, beteiligte sich Curtius am Bastillesturm und erhielt später von den Terroristen ab und zu den Auftrag, die guillotinierten Hälften ihrer Opfer durch seine Nichte modellieren zu lassen. Dies hinderte aber nicht, dass die Künstlerin selbst eine zeitlang im Gefängnis schmachten musste, und zwar in Gesellschaft von Josephine Beauharnais, der späteren Gemahlin Napoleons. Nachdem Marie Gresholtz sechs Jahre lang mit dem Weinhandler Tussaud aus Macon verheiratet gewesen war, trennte sie sich von ihm und stiedelte mit ihren zwei Kindern und einer Sammlung von 300 Figuren nach England über. Dort erfuhr ihr Museum ein wechselvolles Schicksal und war schon einmal, 1831, nahe daran, abzubrechen. Die betriebsame Schweizerin starb erst 1850, 90-jährig, und hinterließ ihr Geschäft zwei Söhnen; der Sohn des einen, John Theodore Tussaud, lebte heute noch als Sechzehnjähriger. Er hat die Familientradition aufrecht erhalten, indem er schon als 14-jähriger Knabe zu modellieren anfing. Sein erstes Werk war die Figur von Milan, dem König von Serbien. In der Folge hat er dann hunderte von Zeitgenossen modelliert. Auch verdankt man ihm einige literarische Arbeiten über die französische Revolution. Das von seiner Grossmutter gegründete Museum war aber längst in den Besitz einer Aktiengesellschaft übergegangen. Seit Jahren schon war vor dem Museum die Büste seiner Gründerin zu sehen, und da dieses Werk nicht in Wachs, sondern in Marmor modelliert war, wird es der Nachwelt erhalten bleiben. (Nat. Ztg.)

**Uri.** — Als Kuriosum registrieren die Urner Zeitungen, dass vergangene Woche im Amtsblatt das Eheversprechen eines Chinesen mit einer Erstfelderin publiziert war. Es soll der erste Vertreter der gelben Rasse sein, der als Ehekandidat im ururischen Amtsblatt figuriert. (Sarganserland, Volkszg.)

**Ergebnisches über Personen- und Viehtransporte.** — Zwischen dem jüngst verstorbene Herrn Caslisch und Bundesrat Haab fand vor einiger Zeit im Nationalrat die nachfolgende heitere Auseinandersetzung statt: Herr Caslisch beklagte sich humorvoll darüber, dass für einen Stier, der von Chur nach Zürich transportiert werde, mehr zu bezahlen sei als für einen Fremden, der die nämliche Strecke in einem Coupé erster Klasse fahre. Der Eisenbahnaminister gab dies zu. Er machte aber darauf aufmerksam, dass der reisende Fremde nur einen Sitzplatz beanspruche, während dem Stier ein "eigener Saloonwagen" zur Verfügung gestellt werden müsse. Sodann steige der gewöhnliche Passagier selbst ein und aus, während den Stier jeweilen eine Anzahl von Angestellten in und aus dem Wagen zu komplimentieren hätten. Ferner müsse der Wagen, den der Stier benutzt habe, nacher ausgewaschen und desinfiziert werden, was bei einem andern Reisenden gewöhnlich nicht nötig sei. Endlich, wenn der Fremde von seiner Frau begleitet werde, zahlen beide die volle Taxe, während die Gemahlin und die weiteren Familienmitglieder des Stiers, die mit ihm in nämlichen Wagen reisen, zu bedeutend reduzierten Tarifen befördert würden. (Neue Zürcher Ztg.)

**Ein Hundertjähriger.** — In diesem Monat feierte in Kuhnen-Boden, Gemeinde Grabs, Mathäus Vetsch den hundertsten Geburtstag. Wie letztes Jahr, bei der Feier eines ebenfalls hundertjährigen Oierländers, liess der st. gallische Regierungsrat auch in diesem Falle dem betagten Jubilar aus seiner Vorratskammer St. Pirmisberg Flaschen edlen Wein zugetheilt, die dem biedern Werdenberger gut gemendet haben mögen. (Neue Zürcher Ztg.)

**Alte Zürcher Kunst für Amerika.** — Die alte Solitude an der Höschgasse, jenes halbverfallene schmucklose Häuschen, das nach mehr als 300-jährigem Bestande einem modernen Häuserblock weichen musste, lebt in Amerika wieder auf. Und zwar ist es das Zürcherstäubchen, das wenigen nur bekannt, in der Neuen Welt Zeugnis abgeben soll von dem grossen handwerklichen Können der alten Zürcher Meister. Es ist interessant zu hören, dass von den vielen Sammlern und Liebhabern, denen das Zimmer in Zürich zum Kaufe angeboten wurde, keiner dafür Interesse hatte, bis die bekannten Luzerner Antiquare C. Hirzbrunner und Th. Fischer den Raum erwarben. Zusammen mit Architekt Furger in Luzern, einem Fachmann auf diesem Gebiete, hat Herr Hirzbrunner den Raum im alten Geiste restauriert, und für das Toledo Museum in Ohio, U.S.A., neu zusammengestellt. Als seltenes Schauspiel wird das traute Zürcherstäubchen für einige Zeit in den Geschäftsräumen des Herrn Hirzbrunner zum letztemal in seiner alten Heimat gezeigt. Es ist bedauerlich, dass damit ein wirkliches Kunstwerk dem Lande verloren geht. — doppelt bedauerlich, wenn man erfährt, dass sich in der Schweiz kein Liebhaber für dieses Zimmer fand. Als einziger Trost bleibt uns die Gewissheit, dass das Zürcherstäubchen zum Denkmal alter schweizerischer Raumkunst in Amerika wird. (Neue Zürcher Ztg.)

## NOTES AND GLEANINGS.

By "KYBURG."

### To-day's Great Thought.

"Rebellion is the Mother of Progress."

### To-day's Doubt.

Are our readers too apathetic to protest occasionally against "Kyburg's" teachings, or are they merely bored by them?

### To-day's Great Burden.

These "Notes and Gleanings" have to be finished to-night!

### Switzerland really part of Africa?

*Nature* (14th March):—

In 1905 Prof. E. Argand determined in the Pennine Alps the existence of six great recumbent folds or nappes. On the base of Argand's results, Dr. R. Staub found in the north-eastern part of the Swiss Alps the same tectonic elements, covered by six higher nappes belonging more to the type of the "thrust-masses" of the North-Western Highlands of Scotland than to the type of the recumbent folds of the Pennine Alps. This new series of nappes has been named by Staub the Austrides, for they form the main part of the Austrian Alps. Prof. L. Kober's discovery of a window or horizontal cut, due to erosion, in the nappes of the Austrides, revealing deeper nappes belonging to the Pennine series, shows that the nappes of the Austrides have been thrust over the Pennine nappes in the Austrian Alps, just as in the north-eastern part of Switzerland. Co-ordination of the work by Austrian and Swiss geologists was accomplished at the end of last year by Dr. Staub. Wegener's ideas on the drifting of continental masses are employed to explain the movement of the hinterland towards the foreland of the geosyncline. Foreland and hinterland constitute the boundaries of the great Alpine geosyncline: together they recall the two jaws of a vice. Prof. Argand has shown that the nappes of the Austrides belong to the hinterland; that is, to Africa or Gondwanaland. Therefore the Austrides, with the Préalpes, represent a small part of Africa resting on Europe or Eurasia.

And reading the above, I now understand also the remark, which seemed cryptic to me at the time, of a cousin of mine who told me, *à propos* a verdict given by some court at Urnaesch or thereabouts, that that was exactly what one could expect to happen "i dem dunkle Erdteil"!

### Swiss Electric Power Scheme.

*Leicester Daily Mercury* (12th March):—

In Switzerland the big Waggital Power Station is practically completed, and the armies of workmen are now being demobilised. It is said that a mere handful of men will be able to control the production of hundreds of thousands of kilowatts, and that the export of electrical power will become one of the foremost industries of the country.

After this, the famous tasks of Hercules are mere child's play.

### Relativity made simple.

A very neat explanation of Relativity, and one that will be understood by a good many of my

Swiss compatriots, is published in the *New Leader* by Bertrand Russell:—

We are apt to think that, for careful measurements, it is better to use a steel rod than a live eel. This is a mistake. To an observer in a suitable state of motion the eel would appear as rigid as the rod does to us, while the rod would appear to be constantly wriggling.

**New Tunnel through the Alps.**

*The Times* (10th March):—

Shortly before the war the possibility of boring a tunnel under the Eastern Alps to establish a railway connection between Italy and Eastern Switzerland and Bavaria was widely discussed both in Switzerland and Italy. Two schemes had been drawn up, the one providing for a tunnel under the Greina Pass, linking the Grisons with the St. Gotthard line, the other for a tunnel under the Splügen Pass, linking the Grisons with Chiavenna and Lake Como.

The Greina tunnel, which would have been entirely on Swiss territory, had no interest for the Italians. The idea of the Splügen tunnel, with its northern entrance in Switzerland and its southern entrance in Italy, did not appeal to the Italian Nationalists, while it was not viewed with much sympathy by those in Switzerland who thought that Italy was aiming at the conquest of the Swiss cantons, Grisons and Ticino. The war put an end to all conversations on this subject between Switzerland and Italy. The question is now coming up again, but the Italians are planning a new railway line which would run on Italian territory and pass under the Stelvio Pass, so as to link the Valtellina with Northern Tirol. Should that scheme be completed, the railway traffic from Southern Germany to Italy might be diverted to the Italian Stelvio line instead of passing by the St. Gotthard line. It is with the idea of retaining at least a part of that traffic that the Ticino and Grisons cantons are again contemplating the possibility of boring a tunnel which would link up Bavaria and the Vorarlberg with Grisons, and Ticino with Milan on the other.

The Splügen scheme, which would connect Thusis, on the Rhaetian Railways, with Chiavenna, calls for the construction of 55 miles of railroad ascending to a height of 3,398 feet, and for the boring of several tunnels, the aggregate length of which would be 29 miles, the longest—the Splügen tunnel—measuring over 15 miles. On both sides the maximum gradient would be 1 in 4, and the total cost would reach at least £12,000,000, and would necessitate the expenditure by Switzerland of an additional sum of £1,200,000 on fortification works.

The Greina scheme provides for the construction of 64 miles of railroad connecting Ilanz, on the Rhaetian Railways, with Biasca, on the St. Gotthard line. The construction of this line, which would reach a height of 2,700 feet, with 11 gradients of 1 in 20 on the northern side and maximum gradients of 1 in 5 on the southern side, would involve the boring of many tunnels totalling 17 miles, the longest of which, the Greina tunnel, would be 13 miles long. The total cost would be £11,200,000.

As Italy does not seem to take any interest in the construction of the Splügen line, and as the Greina scheme is too expensive, a new scheme has been drawn up for the construction of a tunnel under the San Bernardino Pass, linking Thusis with Bellinzona by means of a narrow-gauge railway which already exists between Bellinzona and Mesocco. This scheme, which would only involve an expenditure of £1,000,000, would involve the construction of a line from Thusis to Mesocco (38 miles), with a tunnel of 3 1-6 miles under the San Bernardino. The Swiss Federal Council granted a concession for the construction of this line in 1922, and it is obvious that this new railroad would establish good and rapid communication between Grisons and Ticino and further south with Milan. It is considered that the necessary funds could easily be raised, as it is already certain that the Swiss Federal Government and the Cantonal Governments of Grisons and Ticino would subsidize the undertaking to the extent of nearly £400,000. This scheme has strong supporters both in Grisons and Ticino, and it is likely that a decision will shortly be taken to put it into execution.

I seldom turn to the *Economist* without finding some comfort, on the same principle as led me to get my hunger satisfied, in my early meagrely-salaried London days, by standing outside a sausage-and-mashed shop in Bishopsgate watching the brown fellows and the nicely cut onions sizzle just inside the window, and envying the carmen and other "humble folk not wearing black coats" who could enter the magic door and, presumably, do themselves rather well. Even to-day I never pass that way without glancing towards that shop, and even thinking of it makes me feel hungry! Well, talking of the comfort I find in the *Economist*, there are reports of fat dividends, assets, etc., and this week (14th March) an article dealing with the—

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### Swiss Monetary System.

Although the unification of the Swiss monetary system goes back more than three-quarters of a century, there has hitherto been a conspicuous lack of documentary matter dealing with the subject. The decision of the National Bank of Switzerland to publish a complete and authoritative description of the system, its history, and its ramifications will therefore be welcomed. The Federal Constitution of 1848 laid down the principle of unification in the national currency system, which was partially put into practice two years later. The year 1865 was the next important landmark, Switzerland then signing the first Convention of the so-called Latin Union, which also included Belgium, France, and Italy. Although the principle of a sole note-issuing authority was laid down after a period of controversy by a constitution article in 1891, the National Bank of Switzerland was not, in fact, constituted before October, 1905. The present treatise will be found an invaluable work of reference for all students of European monetary systems.

### A Swiss Nurses' Society.

*Nursing Mirror* (7th March):—

The vogue of forming nursing societies is extending—and rightly so—all over the world. Switzerland is, we learn, one of the latest countries to found a new nurses' association. This is called the "Alliance Suisse des Gardes Mâlades," and it has a committee of eleven members, two of whom are doctors, five female nurses, and a male nurse, and one a hospital director. Nurses of either sex are eligible for membership, provided that they have completed a course of three years' general training.

And everybody who knows anything about the difficult and arduous duties of nurses, the great sacrifices they bear almost without exception in the course of their work, and the cheerful, wonderful spirit which animates most of them, will wish that organisation great success.

### The Glories of the Alps.

Memories of the late Mr. Georges Dimier's wonderful lectures are awakened by the following from the *Catford, Lee and Lewisham Journal* of March 13th:—

A lecture, brimful of information and illustrated by a wonderful series of lantern slides, was given by the well-known principal of Christ's College, Blackheath, Mr. Arthur C. Wire, B.A. (London), F.R.G.S., at the college. The subject was: "Five Weeks in the High Alps." The photographs, as was explained by Dr. Peter Cooper, who presided, were all taken by Mr. and Mrs. Wire during a tour in Switzerland. The lecture, which took nearly two hours to deliver, had not progressed far before it was recognised that the photographs, many of which have been coloured, form a wonderful and unique collection. Many are productions of great beauty. In the use of the camera, Mr. Wire betrayed no less skill than he showed throughout in his word pictures of the wonderful scenery of Switzerland. Confessing that the photographs were taken rather as reminiscences of a holiday than for the purposes of a lecture, he remarked at the outset that Switzerland was now only seven hours by air and 24 by rail and boat from this country. Explaining that they made Basle, with its tomb to Erasmus, their starting point, he related that they went on to Murren, the highest village, a delightful spot for a restful holiday. It consisted of one street, along which are hotels, shops, and the dark-brown wooden houses so characteristic of Switzerland. He gave the whole itinerary of their tour.

Mr. Wire told his audience that he did not propose to remain long in the towns. His descriptions of the mountains, valleys, gorges and glaciers were full of fascination. His keen eye for the wonderful things in nature made them all the more interesting. The beauty of the alpine glow tinging the mountain tops, the 31 different species of wild flowers found in one given locality, the valleys and the waterfalls, how the water acted as a saw on the great rock surfaces, and some geological changes that had played their part in the wonderful economy of nature are typical of the points with which he dealt.

The Swiss, he declared, are an industrious and hard-working race. It was seldom that they saw

a boy or girl idle. Even tiny children made lace. It was quite a common thing to see a grandmother, her daughter and grandchild all sitting outside their cottage home making lace.

In the economy of nature, too, he showed that the avalanches, often occurring with disastrous results to life and property, were necessary to Switzerland. A keen observer of the moods of nature, Mr. Wire had a great deal to say regarding the weather on the mountains and in the valleys and in relation to the obscuring mists. One of his most striking photographs was taken amid the peaks with the mist filling the valley and, as it were, lashing like a sea the mountain sides. He observed that, as Manfred said—

The mists boil up around the glaciers; clouds rise curling fast beneath me, white and sulphur,

Like foam from the roused ocean of deep hell.

"We come to the conclusion," said Mr. Wire, "that the mists still rise as they did in Byron's day." And there were other literary references from Goethe, Ruskin, and so on. He described the cows as being most friendly, and provided a little amusement by a slide showing Mrs. Wire attempting to induce one of these affable animals, met at a high altitude, to eat a chocolate. The pictures taken beyond the snowline—two in a snowstorm and others on the glaciers—and some in the mountain passes, were delightful. There was one of the Matterhorn, "flying its flag," as it was called, or banner cloud—a wonderful cloud effect, and in dealing with the Matterhorn, Mr. Wire showed how the apparent steepness of a mountain peak is largely accounted for by perspective. It was not only the phenomena of the mountains and of the valleys with which he dealt, but also with that of the lakes, and the tremendous depth of these. For instance, he showed that the Lake of Lucerne is ten times as deep as the North Sea at its deepest point. He referred little to the better known parts, but for tourists generally advised that the Swiss mountains should never be attempted without a guide, a connection in which he spoke of some of the perils of mountaineering.

At the conclusion thanks were expressed to Mr. Wire on behalf of the audience by the Chairman, who complimented him upon the lecture and the most magnificent photographs that he had ever seen.

### A Swiss to preside over the Port of Danzig.

*The Star* (14th March):—

The Council of the League of Nations chose General de Loes (Switzerland) as president of the port of Danzig.

Danzig was taken from Germany in favour of the Allies, who undertook to set up a free city under the protection of the League.

What price the Swiss Navy now?

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