

**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:** 197

**Rubrik:** Notes and gleanings

### **Nutzungsbedingungen**

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist die Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften auf E-Periodica. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Zeitschriften und ist nicht verantwortlich für deren Inhalte. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern beziehungsweise den externen Rechteinhabern. Das Veröffentlichen von Bildern in Print- und Online-Publikationen sowie auf Social Media-Kanälen oder Webseiten ist nur mit vorheriger Genehmigung der Rechteinhaber erlaubt. [Mehr erfahren](#)

### **Conditions d'utilisation**

L'ETH Library est le fournisseur des revues numérisées. Elle ne détient aucun droit d'auteur sur les revues et n'est pas responsable de leur contenu. En règle générale, les droits sont détenus par les éditeurs ou les détenteurs de droits externes. La reproduction d'images dans des publications imprimées ou en ligne ainsi que sur des canaux de médias sociaux ou des sites web n'est autorisée qu'avec l'accord préalable des détenteurs des droits. [En savoir plus](#)

### **Terms of use**

The ETH Library is the provider of the digitised journals. It does not own any copyrights to the journals and is not responsible for their content. The rights usually lie with the publishers or the external rights holders. Publishing images in print and online publications, as well as on social media channels or websites, is only permitted with the prior consent of the rights holders. [Find out more](#)

**Download PDF:** 12.01.2026

**ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, E-Periodica, <https://www.e-periodica.ch>**

"The Council accepts with great regret Dr. de Watteville's resignation of the Editorship of *Brain*, and desires to take this opportunity of recording the deep debt of gratitude that the Society owes him for the way in which he has conducted the Journal for the past twenty years. The Council feels that parting with Dr. de Watteville is an event of great moment to the Society, for he has not only brought *Brain* to a high standard of perfection and secured

for it a great European reputation, but even the existence of the Journal at the present time is due to his energetic action at a critical juncture in 1880. Moreover, the Council is mindful that the Society itself took origin on Dr. de Watteville's initiative at a meeting held at his house on November 14, 1885."

Soon after resigning the editorship of *Brain*, Dr. de Watteville left London and went to reside in Switzerland, and spent the remainder of his life in quiet study and contemplation among the beautiful surroundings of his native land. Dr. de Watteville was a man of wide culture and great force of character, charitable and self-sacrificing almost to a fault, and the outspoken foe of quackery and pretence of every description.

#### Interest and Capital Destruction.

The monthly bulletin of the Swiss Bank Corporation, to which I drew attention two weeks ago, still gives food for thought to many British newspapers. The following is interesting and incidentally hopeful! *Star* (25th March):—

Interesting comments on the relatively high levels of interest rates in various countries are made in the monthly bulletin of the Swiss Bank Corporation. It is pointed out that the great increase in rates since the war is due to the wholesale destruction of capital liabilities, incurred for entirely unproductive purposes. The wars of the French revolutionary periods led to a shortage of money, and from 1800 to 1815 rates on well-secured loans often exceeded ten per cent. Rates subsequently declined as savings accumulated, but the advent of the industrial era of railways and steamships, etc., between 1840 and 1850, again caused rates to rise. The funds sunk in these new enterprises led to a further accumulation of savings, and rates after 1870 again declined.

Another rise commenced to operate from the commencement of the twentieth century, and affected the market until the outbreak of the war. In the meantime, inflation has been followed by an increase in interest rates. Assuming that there are no more economic upheavals, the view is taken in this survey that the gradual formation of new capital, which is more rapid nowadays, will overtake demand and result in a steady decline in interest rates.

#### Swiss Wireless Laws.

*Glasgow Evening Citizen* (24th March):—

Sir,—I have been instructed to advise intending travellers to Switzerland, through the courtesy of your paper, of the existing regulations in regard to wireless apparatus for use during their stay in Switzerland. A request has to be submitted through the nearest Swiss Consulate, Name and Christian name, address of applicant, which should contain the following information: date of birth, town and country of residence, date of arrival in and leaving Switzerland, places of sojourn in Switzerland.—The Consul for Switzerland: Alfred Oswald.

Now, I confess, with all due respect to Mr. Oswald, that in the above form the information is rather bewildering. I presume it means those tourists who wish to take their own receiving sets, etc., with them. But why not say so, and why, if my explanation is correct, ask for their birth-date? Really, bureaucracy in Switzerland seems to be closely related to that in other countries, and I feel quite—oh, quite sure that our diplomatic representatives have no difficulty at all in keeping up pleasant relations between the bureaucrats of all the countries. Oh, Diplomacy, what absurdities are committed in thy name!

Writing about diplomacy and bureaucracy at Easter time is no light matter, believe me, and gives one quite a thirst. How refreshing after that to come across a paragraph dealing with Alps and Alpine Flora! I can almost breathe the pure air, feel the strong, cold winds—the latter, of course, is never difficult in this country!

#### Expedition to Everest.

*Daily Express* (26th March):—

Two famous Swiss guides, Lockmatter and Perren, have left Zermatt for Rotterdam in order to join and lead a Dutch research expedition to the Himalayas.

The expedition, which is bound for Karachi, will make Kashmir its base of ascent. It will collect Alpine fauna and flora unknown in the European Alps.

Lockmatter has been to the Himalayas on two previous occasions, the last in 1914, with an English Alpinist, Mr. Meade, when the couple climbed Mount Kamet (25,373 feet), which is one of the most difficult in the range.

The expedition will ascend the lower slopes of Mount Everest, but will not attempt its conquest.

English scientists in India may join the Dutch expedition.

Talking of Alps reminds me of Avalanches. My readers will perhaps remember a very interesting article on the subject not very long ago. This week I found another one, equally interesting, in *Popular Science* (17th March), entitled

## EUROPEAN & GENERAL EXPRESS CO. LTD.

(Managing Directors: H. Siegmund and E. Schneider-Hall)

The Oldest Swiss Forwarding Agency in England,

15, POLAND STREET, LONDON, W.1.

Forward through us to and from Switzerland your Household Furniture (in our own Lift Vans), Luggage, Private Effects, Merchandise.

UMZÜGE — GEPÄCK holen wir überall ab.  
Aufmerksame Bedienung. Mässige Preise.

DÉMÉNAGEMENTS — BAGGAGES enlevés et expédiés partout Service attentionné. Prix raisonnables.

#### The Awful Avalanche—Some Swiss Disasters.

The Swiss people call avalanches "lauwine," and they are sometimes so called in English. In one of his poems Lord Byron spoke of the mountains as places "where roar the thundering lauwine," though he probably meant no more than the snow avalanches which are frequently seen in summer by the traveller.

The word, according to Mr. John A. Cass, in a recent paper which is quoted, has a broader meaning, however, and includes those enormous masses of earth and rock which not infrequently become loosened from the cliffs and descend into the valleys, carrying death and destruction far and wide.

In some parts of the country avalanches of either sort are so likely to occur at any time that the people guard against them by planting extensive forests on the hillsides. In some cases strong bulwarks of masonry have been erected between the towns and the mountains.

Despite all precautions, however, it is not unusual for lives to be lost and single houses to be destroyed. There are several cases on record where entire villages have been buried beyond all possibility of excavation.

On the Bernina Pass, a great highway which leads from Switzerland to Italy, the traveller still has his attention directed to the spot where, many years ago, a village named Wille Morti was buried by an avalanche of earth and rock from the slope of a neighbouring mountain. Very little is known concerning the disaster, for it is one of those sad cases where neither man, woman nor child escaped to tell the story.

On the road from the Italian lakes into Switzerland, by the great Maloja Pass, one sees the site of a catastrophe even more appalling than that already mentioned: more appalling because more extensive.

The village of Plurs must have been very pleasant for situation, for in front of it a mountain torrent kept up its unceasing roar; while at a little distance in the background rose the huge cliffs of Monte Conto. It must have been a prosperous town, too, for early in the seventeenth century it sheltered a population of 2,430 souls. In the autumn of 1618 it was noticed that masses of earth and rock fell with unusual frequency, and a number of fissures were seen to form and widen in the mountain. But the people, disregarding these admonitions, continued their usual pursuits till one night a terrific landslide buried them and their possessions beneath a pile of debris more than sixty feet deep.

So utter was the destruction that no attempt has ever been made at excavation. The spot is now covered with a beautiful grove of chestnut trees, among whose branches the nimble squirrels play, and at the foot of which boys and girls now search for nuts.

Another example, not so destructive to life and property, but more striking, from its having twice happened in the same place, may be noticed in the valley which leads to the village of Zermatt. Here, in 1787, a little town of 140 houses was completely destroyed by an avalanche of snow from the Weishorn Mountain.

Years passed, and the snow had all melted, the debris had been cleared away, and another and larger village was built on the same spot. Here the people lived in peace and safety, and had perhaps quite forgotten the first disaster, when suddenly, one afternoon in 1819, another avalanche of ice and snow from the same mountain came down upon them, burying 118 houses, together with many people. The house of the village pastor stood a little apart from the others, and so escaped destruction; but such an enormous quantity of snow was lodged in his garden that it did not entirely disappear till two years later.

Returning now to the region of Eastern Switzerland, we find another case quite unlike any that have yet been mentioned.

Many years ago, on what was known as the Forcola Pass, the little town of Le Rovine stood at the foot of the towering mountain. It contained about 300 inhabitants, who were occupied as cattleherders and farmers. They also carried on quite a business in the way of entertaining people who were obliged to pass that way. They had, however, come to have a bad repu-

tation, and were supposed to be capable of almost any crime. Travellers who were obliged to spend the night there were provided with only the meanest food, but were compelled to pay for it the most exorbitant prices.

Indeed, the catalogue of evil deeds of which the people of the town were guilty was a long one, and it is said that they were frequently warned that some terrible judgment would be sent upon them unless they reformed. Be that as it may, it is certain that on June 13th, 1486, an earthquake shook the mountain violently, and a fearful avalanche buried the town, with all its inhabitants, in one common grave.

But the most remarkable instance of such disasters yet remains to be spoken of. In the very centre of Switzerland, not far from the famous city of Lucerne, is a tract of country bearing the general name of Goldau. It included several villages, whose situations were of extreme beauty, for in front of them lay the charming little Lake of Lowertz, and behind them rose the Rossberg Mountain to a height of more than 5,000 feet.

This mountain consists of layers of conglomerate rock, made up of rounded limestones mixed with flinty pebbles imbedded in a sort of calcareous cement, alternating with layers of sand three or four feet in thickness. Not infrequently these sand-beds become disintegrated by the action of water percolating through them, and masses of rock, deprived of their support in this way, are occasionally precipitated into the valley. It was this on a large scale that caused the disaster.

The summer of 1806 had been an exceptionally rainy one, and on September 2nd a stratum of rock measuring more than two miles in length, 3,000 feet in width and 100 feet in thickness, became loosened and fell upon the doomed villages from a height of 3,000 feet. Four villages were utterly destroyed, and upward of 500 people were buried beneath the ruins.

Nor did the destruction end there, for the avalanche swept resistingly on till it reached the lake, one-fourth of the bed of which was filled up by the debris, while the islands were totally submerged, and a wave eighty feet in height broke upon and destroyed all the buildings on the opposite shore.

These are but a few of the instances in which the mountains have sent down ruin upon the peaceful valleys of this lovely land. But, notwithstanding all this, the country is a prosperous one. The people possess an energy which does not quail readily in the face of difficulties.

And may the coming avalanche season deal gently with the dear folks on the homesteads!

Once more: *A Happy Eastertide to you all!*

### OSCAR WEIDELI,

*Hairdressing Saloon,*

6, Old Compton St. (2 doors from Charing Cross Rd.)

Best Brands of Cigars and Cigarettes.

### G. CUSI,

Commission Agent.

52, SHAFESBURY AVENUE,

PICCADILLY, LONDON, W.1.

Member of the Turf Guardian Society and National Sporting League.

Telegrams: Nostril, Piccy, London. Telephone: Gerrard 815-816.

Trunk: Gerrard 2191.

*Drink delicious "Ovaltine" at every meal—for Health!*

#### MISCELLANEOUS ADVERTISEMENTS

Not exceeding 3 lines.—Per insertion, 2/6; three insertions, 5/—  
Postage extra on replies addressed to *Swiss Observer*

BOARD - RESIDENCE. superior English family; assistance in learning English, if required; near Warwick Avenue Tube, No. 6 bus.—44, Sutherland Avenue, Maida Vale, W.9.

FINSBURY PARK, 13, Alexandra Rd.—Homely Board-Residence; good, liberal table; breakfast, late dinner, full Sundays; easy access all parts.