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# The Swiss Observer

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## THE STRIKE.

We have, for obvious reasons, abstained from publishing any strike news in our last week's issue, but as the struggle is now happily terminated, we wish to give, on behalf of our many compatriots, expression of the great admiration for the truly British doggedness and traditional good humour which have enabled the country whose hospitality we so liberally enjoy to successfully emerge from a grave crisis.

## HOME NEWS

The personnel employed by the Confederation on the 31st of March last amounted to 65,749, a decrease as compared with twelve months previously of 388, chiefly due to retrenchments in the military, postal and telegraph services. The major part, i.e., 35,225, constitute the staff of the Swiss Federal Railways.

\*\*\*  
The Federal Tribunal in Lausanne has just awarded an indemnity of Frs. 15,000 to the widow of a 57-year-old newsvendor in Menziken (Aargau), who in October, 1924, was run over and killed by a motorist.

\*\*\*  
Elections and a number of far-reaching proposals were placed before the electors of the canton of Berne during last week-end. About two-thirds of the 120,000 voters on the register recorded their wishes. A bill subsidising liberally communal unemployment funds was accepted by a two to one majority. A slightly larger majority passed a cantonal Shops Act—the first of its kind in Switzerland—under which the business hours of shops are regulated, the working hours of assistants limited to 52 per week, and a compulsory week's holiday at full pay is introduced. A third measure, a Fishery Act, was rejected. In the elections for the Regierungsrat the former office holders were confirmed, whilst the constitution of the Grosse Rat was slightly changed in favour of the Liberals, who captured five seats from the farmers, though the latter with 104 mandates out of a total of 224 are still the strongest party in the council; the Socialists, the second strongest party (62), also lost one seat.

\*\*\*  
With a view of curbing the present craze for dancing, the authorities of the canton Ticino are enacting a new bill. In future dancing is only allowed at certain times of the year; juveniles under 16 are barred from attending public dances altogether, and girls between 16 and 20 must be accompanied by their parents.

\*\*\*  
For libelling a Winterthur advocate and stating in a leaflet that his professional charges were those of an usurer, Kantonstrat Ackeret has been mulcted by the local assizes into the payment of an indemnity of Frs. 1,600, besides heavy costs.

\*\*\*  
The Zindelspitze (Glaris) was the scene of a fatal accident last week, when two young tourists, Frieda Müller and Bernhard Thut, both from Engstringen (Zurich), lost their lives.

\*\*\*  
The discovery of the corpses of two young women in Sonceboz and on the Zürichberg has led to the arrest of one Max Kaufmann in Zurich, who has now admitted one of the crimes. He is stated to have sought the acquaintance of young ladies with the help of matrimonial advertisements for the purpose of robbing them of their savings.

\*\*\*  
Through the bolting of his horses a farmer, Christian Schaller, of Küttingen, near Arau, lost his seat and fell underneath the front axle of his wagon, in which position he was dragged on for about 100 yards; he succumbed to his injuries the same day in hospital.

\*\*\*  
Wild boars are said to cause considerable damage in the canton of Thurgau. In order to rid the forest between the Thun and the Thunbach valleys of these animals, a party of 50 huntsmen, with over 120 beaters, has been organised.

\*\*\*  
The late Mr. Karl Häfelin, of Walchwil (St. Gall), a former flour-mill owner, has bequeathed Frs. 300,000 to charitable institutions of several communes of his canton and to home and foreign missionary societies.

\*\*\*  
Dr. J. Wyrsch died in Zurich at the age of 64 from the after-effects of an operation; he was Landesstatthalter in Stans, which office he occupied alternately with that of Landammann since 1911.

## NOTES AND GLEANINGS.

By "KYBURG."

### Peace in Sight.

Just as I was going to start writing these "Notes and Gleanings," I heard a news-vendor calling out the above blessed words, and, buying the single-page sheet which now does duty down here as a newspaper, I find that there is a rumour, a well-founded one, I hope, that peace moves are taking place beneath the surface. I fervently hope that Peace will have become a fact by the time my readers read these lines, and that Old England will be at work again—and work with a will to make up for the lost time—early next week. Amen.

Of the Strike I will not write at this moment, the being, as one might rightly say, "sub judice," but I hope to make a few comments on various thoughts which occurred to me recently in one of our next issues.

A dear friend of mine, writing from Switzerland, mentions the awful weather they have been having over there of late, and opines that if we are enjoying similar weather conditions, it may have a sobering effect on excited spirits. M'yes. But, as he says, the bad weather we have been having, especially during the first week of the Strike, is bad for outdoor sports, golf especially, and what is the use of enforced holidays if you cannot enjoy outdoor sports?

If anyone could find the beautiful weather, and let us have a sample of it, we should all feel very much happier, I am sure.

But do not despair! Prepare now for your summer holidays among Alpine scenery, buy your tickets at the Federal Railways' London office—they ought to give me a free ticket anyhow for this advertisement; if they don't I shall recommend Cooks next time!—and meanwhile read about the beauties of Switzerland and get your mouth into a thoroughly watery state in doing so. You'll then only want "one neat," and so save a bit off the water bill!

The *Queen* (28th April) publishes an illustrated article concerning the—

**Narcissus Festival in Montreux,**  
that "Queen of the upper Lake Léman." Here goes:—

When the famous prisoner was languishing in the Castle of Chillon, near Montreux, the heights which protect this resort from the north wind were not covered as they are to-day with a vast white blanket of fragrant narcissus. In those times there were forests where now there are meadows, but even then the terraced vineyards which cover the lower slopes were producing the wine which is the main industry of this part of Switzerland. When did the narcissus rear its dainty head for the first time in this region, and how has it come that the firstlings have propagated themselves so prolifically that the whole country is inundated with them? I have been told that the soul of Narcissus, that disagreeable lad who lived an died in Greek mythology, came finally in its unhappy wanderings to Lake Léman, where, directed by Echo, it once more saw itself mirrored in these clear waters. Affrighted at the ugliness of its self-centred picture, the soul began to weep, and the narcissi of Montreux are the tears of repentance of this poor, vain, foolish, idle boy of long ago!

Be this as it may, the little Swiss town of Montreux has evolved a kind of a cult for the narcissus, which has resulted in an annual festival that serves as a herald of summer and partakes not a little of the old pagan worship of the return of the season of warmth.

The festivities in Montreux last two days. They begin with an open-air ballet danced by celebrated troupes from some great city, before a grand stand containing thousands of people. Then comes a cortège of decorated carriages and costumed groups on foot. The first time that the cortège passes the judges' stand these artistic creations are received with sedate admiration and much applause. The second time bedlam breaks loose, and then begins the confetti battle which rages for hours.

The Bay of Montreux is always illuminated on the two evenings of the fête. Little decorated boats float back and forth; fireworks are set off; the houses and chalets on the hillside are outlined in electric lights; the trains of the various funiculars, blazing in festival glory, crawl up and down and across the surrounding hills like great glow-worms, while hoary old Chillon, closing the scene to the right, stands

out in bold relief against the light of powerful reflectors. The Casino of Montreux stages a wonderful ball as its offering to the festivities, and the special excursions to the narcissus fields the following day are just what is needed to refresh the jaded reveller and fill him with wonder and delight.

And the illustration showing "A Narcissus Hill-side above Montreux" is enough to make you wonder next time you pay 1s. 6d. for a dozen narcissi bought locally over here. Ah, well, perhaps they have not got Daffodils in such profusion at Montreux, or Southdown Lamb!

And while some of us might have been seen carrying small or large parcels of Blue Bells—I was not one of them, knowing how quickly the poor things fade away at home, and preferring to admire them in their natural surroundings—and others looking out for the first blossoms of the May Tree, not to take them home, because, according to a widespread superstition, this would bring bad luck—probably the baby might prick his tiny fingers or toes on the thorns!—but to gaze upon the beauty of those May Trees, sure harbingers of Spring and even early Summer, over there in the home-land, Nature was busy preparing for the Feast of Flowers which happens every June in Switzerland. What a joy it is to wander among the Alps at that time, when the meadows, the rocks, the cliffs and ravines are lit up by a host of multi-coloured small flowers. Small they are, smaller, most of them, than their kin down in the lowlands, but what they lack in stature, they make up, and more, in beauty of colour, and, above all, in the wonder of their scent. Cyclamen, Gentian, Rhododendron, Männertreu (Joke: Where is the Weibertreu?), all the numerous Saxifrage, the Ranunculus, etc., etc. One of the best times, surely, to see the beauties of Switzerland is June, and having had that wonderful experience some years ago, when, on the Kleine Scheidegg, near the Eiger-Glacier, it was possible to stand with one foot on masses of tiny, beautifully-coloured flowers, and with the other on 90 feet deep ice—I hope that as many of my readers as possibly can arrange it will take this tip from me and go and see for themselves how wondrously beautiful Swiss Alps can be in June. They will thank me for this tip, I know.

Meanwhile, further to whet their appetite in this direction, let them read what the *Graphic* (1st May) writes:—

### Sunshine in Snowland.

Summer in the Alps is a time of tremendous contrasts and furious haste. By May the snow has melted from the lower meadows, and the flowers are tumbling over one another in their race against early autumn frosts. First come myriads of crocuses, whitening the still barren meadows more than the islets of unmelting brownish snow, then soldanellas in the woods and heathy land. After that, mountain primroses, huge dandelions, campions, pansies, pale violets, and patches of gentian like constellations of lovely, lowly, profoundly blue stars; anemones, downy and lilac, sulphur yellow, and white; and then the pace quickens till only a botanist can keep abreast.

Summer is so short that most of the flowers have only a few days to live, but for those few days they hold possession of the green meadows, and dye them with their hue. The grass—a richer green than in England—is like a gorgeous pile carpet unrolled on the mountain side, and over it flush the changing colours. One day wave on wave of kingcups pour down a grassy slope like a headlong cataract of gold, and the next day they are gone, the slope dusted with the blue of wild forget-me-nots.

And though the flowers are fugitive, it is only necessary to go higher up the mountain to catch them again. There are little grassy bowls hidden away in the peaks, where the snow melts so late that crocuses bloom in August.

All through the summer crops of hay are being mown from the prolific land, and narrow conical haystacks cover the shorn meadows that roll down in great folds to the very edge of the forest-bordered lake. The rich scent of new-mown hay, fruitful and sweet, drifts over the mirror-waters, and the splashing and laughter of bathers 6,000 feet above the sea are the only sounds that break the ripening, midsummer hush.

In the thick of summer sports visitors hardly see summer beauty—silver torrents tumbling down bouldered gullies; placid streams flowing through meadows gorgeous with a thousand flowers; the close-cropped, sun-flooded grazing grounds—no unlike parts of our own South Downs—vibrating

under the vault of blue; the still, shadowed splendour of a towering pine-forest, the exquisite, swooning perfume of mountain lilac; and, above all crowning beauty of the Alps, the tender sunset rose that sometimes floods the peaks, till, looking at them outlined against the lovely greenish-yellow of the sky, you hold your breath in wonderment.

You can wander in cool pine-forests, where chequered sunlight filters through on to the yielding carpet of brown pine needles, or you can fish for trout in the Plessur racing over its rocky bed, or you can have a wonderful gallop on the roof of Europe, or you can play tennis in immaculate flannels, and take tea with pretty girls on a terrace overlooking a primitive valley.

Contrast is a charm of the Alps. You can go to the Kursaal, or up a rocky mountain path to the everlasting roar of a great waterfall plunging down a barren cliff. It seems as if nothing on earth could stop that spume-white column hurling itself through its titanic clefts, but winter has only to breathe on it, and it is not.

The cream mountain paths look like ribbons on the slopes. To climb in the terrific light of a summer day is to know crude heat. But it has its charm. There is something unfamiliar and fascinating about the stunning force of the sun that drives sweat out of every pore, and scorches the heather and Alpenrösli—rhododendrons a foot high—on the heathy mountain side where no meadow grass will grow. And all the time the Alpine breeze trickles freshly over the slopes—an elixir that banishes fatigue.

Still farther up the hot path comes an Alp. An Alp is a grazing ground high in the mountains where the dun-coloured Swiss cows stay throughout the summer. There is stabling for them in the sudden savage storms, and in the Alp huts girls make the famous Swiss cheeses. An Alp is a little world of its own: nobody leaves it till the cows go down in autumn, and communication with the village below is by messengers.

Looking downwards, cupped in its sheltered valley, one sees Arosa—the Swiss call it The Little Jewel of the Alps—and perhaps the instantaneous wink of a tiny white sail on the lake that looks like a green sixpence. Pebble streams are there, shady forests, and the fecund meadows with their flower symphony singing to the blue sky.

And then, beyond the hut, looking upwards, is the contrast: the heights of the mountain, naked and grim and hot under the inflexible sun. No more trees, no more grass, no more of anything but desolation and rock like the bare girders of the world, with here and there eternal snow—the Alps in summer.

#### Swiss Hawks Electrocuted.

*The Journal of Commerce* (1st May):—

After various experiments the Swiss Railways have now found a means of preventing hawks from interrupting the electric train service in the canton of Valais. The practice of the hawk was to perch on top of the high insulator poles, from which point of vantage he kept a lookout for his prey. At a favourable moment he swooped to attack his victim. If his wings came in contact with the wires he created a short-circuit, causing a temporary cessation of railway operations, and his own electrocution. Successful results have now been achieved by equipping the insulators with special protecting wires.

Future generations of Swiss hawks have arranged to be born with proper insulating apparatus, to prevent further accidents and to render costly installations, as mentioned in the above article, unnecessary.

#### Berne's Naughty Bear.

*Shields Daily News* (29th April):—

I referred to the Hungarian bear which has been given to Berne in recognition of the adoption by Switzerland of nearly ten thousand starving Hungarian children since the war. Well, somebody seems to have omitted to treat Master Bear kindly, or to give him Mothersill Pills against train sickness. Anyhow, this is what the above-cited newspaper knows about Master Bear's adventures so far:—

"Master Nicholas," the bear cub which the Children's League of Hungary is presenting to Berne in recognition of the adoption by Switzerland of nearly ten thousand starving Hungarian children since the war, is at present in custody at the Budapest Zoo. On his journey to Budapest, travelling as an "express packet," the cub became sullen and intractable, and his aversion to train travel proved so great that it was decided to take him to the Zoo there for friendly association with other bears before resuming his journey by train to the Swiss capital.

#### Harbour Extensions in Switzerland.

*The Journal of Commerce* on 29th April says as follows:—

The following information, regarding harbour extensions in Switzerland, is supplied by the Department of Overseas Trade:—

Work on harbour extensions was carried out in

1925 in accordance with the programme prepared some years ago by the Basle Cantonal Shipping Board. The second stage of those extensions is nearing completion, and the new harbour works at Klein Hueningen will be inaugurated at the opening of the International Exhibition of Inland Navigation and Water Power Development at Basle next June. The bulk of the work done in 1925 consisted in the erection of the concrete walls along the South and West Quays of the Klein Hueningen harbour, and in the dredging of its entrance and basin.

Moreover, the erection of two steel bridges over the river Wiese, which are to carry tracks acceding to the West Quay and to the station of the Badische Bahn, as well as the laying of the wire and cable system in connection with the power equipment of the harbour, were taken in hand. Several cranes were added to those already in use at Klein Hueningen. The various shipping concerns established in the harbour area have erected a number of warehouses, workshops and administrative buildings. The "Société suisse de remorquage" completed the construction of a wheat silo of a total capacity of 10,000 tons, at a cost of 1.8 million francs.

The projected works of extension of the North Quay are being held back until the question of the creation of a second harbour basin at Klein Hueningen has been settled. In the St. Johann harbour, various minor improvements have been made, which tend towards a smoother working of its installations. The Klybeck Quay, alongside the Rhine, which will offer mooring accommodation for vessels unable to enter the Klein Hueningen harbour, is practically finished.

The bed of the river along the quay has been dredged, while the quay itself has been made ready to receive a travelling crane. The laying of the railway track for the harbour station is proceeding satisfactorily, although some months will yet elapse before the installations are completed. A newspaper cutting with views of the Basle harbour may be consulted at the Shipping and Transport Section of the Department of Overseas Trade.

A rumour to the effect that a well-known firm of Indian merchants has bought up the Schützenwiese at Winterthur, with a view to starting dredging operations in the Eulach to provide the necessary anchorage and dock facilities for steamers running from Winterthur direct to Bombay and a few other Indian suburbs of Winterthur, is not to be credited. "Kyburg" has been informed by the Football Club Winterthur that they were not prepared to sacrifice their famous ground and especially their comparatively new grand stand for such merely commercial and therefore not really uplifting ventures. Wow-wow. "Uplifting" is rather good, however. They seem to be keen on "headplay" in my old club.

#### Verzeichnis Schweizerischer Bühnenwerke in Hoch-deutscher Sprache.

*The Times* (29th April):—

Herausgegeben von der Gesellschaft schweizerischer Dramatiker. (Zürich: Orell Füssli.)—Great efforts are being put forward by Swiss writers to impress on the world that their country has a distinct literature, and more especially a drama, of its own, although it is written in German. Dr. Paul Lang's book, "Bühne und Drama der deutschen Schweiz im 19. Jahrhundert," which was reviewed in these columns last year, was one of the most interesting examples of this literary patriotism, and to that volume this little pamphlet may be recommended as a useful appendix. It is published by the leading society of Swiss dramatists, with the strictly practical object of providing Swiss theatre managers with a convenient annotated list of all the contemporary German-Swiss plays that are available for the stage. Over forty Swiss playwrights are mentioned, and under each name is given a short biographical notice, the title of each play, with date of publication, synopsis of plot, length of action and similar particulars. This does not provide any criterion of the literary value of the dramas, but those who have met with a name that particularly interested them in any account of the modern Swiss stage will now be enabled to obtain a fuller account of the individual writers than has hitherto been available.

Politics are on holiday this week, as far as the S.O. is concerned. It would ill become us, who enjoy the generous hospitality of Great Britain, to remark on anything bearing on the present crisis while this crisis lasts.

On the other hand, it gives me pleasure to be able to refer to the following appreciation, by an English student of politics, of an eminent Swiss whose worth needs no words of commendation from me. *Foreign Affairs* (May) states:—

#### Swiss Publicist on the Assembly.

Miss C. E. Playne, who heard Mr. William Martin (known by his initials to readers of the "Journal de Genève") lecture on the Extraordinary Assembly in Geneva, writes as follows: It was the closest analysis of a tangled situation I have ever heard. Coming just after the March

Extraordinary Assembly, its opening declarations, "We are not here to bury a corpse," was arresting. The general cause of the grave situation was discussed and traced to the circumstances of the birth of the League of Nations. Founded by statesmen who did not want it, as a concession to the cry "Never again" wrung from humanity by the sufferings of the Great War, it was not meant to be successful. Governments, not believing in the League, thought it could not be *trop méchant*, and fortunately left it alone during the earlier years of its existence. It was able to develop well, so well, indeed, that now statesmen come back to it and try to lay hands on it. Hence the present crisis.

Particular causes were entered into. Of these, the League's diplomacy, due greatly to the original sin in which it was conceived, is one. Instead of the open diplomacy Wilson dreamed of, its diplomacy is largely effected in secret. The chief actors feel themselves driven to seek shelter, sometimes round private tea-tables. A seat on the Council carries the privilege of a seat at these tea-tables, therefore the sudden urgency of various nations in clamouring for a permanent seat.

The result of this restricted "open" diplomacy is that many nations feel left outside. Then they exaggerate the mechanism of the Council. The fault of the work of the Council lies in the fact that it is too often improvised; there is not proper preparation, and therefore it does not succeed. The work of the permanent administration is carefully prepared and carried through; it is more often successful. Diplomats jealous of this success have tried to invade the secretariat. But statesmen do not possess the necessary collective quality for international administration. Their decisions are taken too often in Ministers' private rooms and are conceived in the spirit of capital cities. The general welfare of States associated together does not count. This is not the spirit of Geneva.

In other words, and as we Swiss know only too well, the spirit of capital cities, the "Kantönggeist," does not and cannot work for good, neither in our own Federal affairs, nor in the much larger and more important affairs of the League of Nations.

And so we will say, with Mr. Baldwin, "Give us Peace in our time, O Lord!"

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