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# The Swiss Observer

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## HOME NEWS

Storms accompanied by torrential rain are responsible for heavy damage in the eastern part of Switzerland, especially in the canton of St. Gall; in the Tannenbergl district the heavy downpour has flooded houses, demolished roads and torn up part of the railway track.

In order to afford some protection to Swiss farmers and dairies, especially those in the districts around Geneva against the ruinous competition of the exchange-aided French producers across the frontier, the Federal Council proposes to levy an import duty on milk; fifty centimes per 100 kilo will be charged on the normal (pre-inflation) imports and considerably higher rates on consignments beyond.

For allowing a nuisance to continue on one of its roads the canton of Valais has, by decision of the Federal Tribunal, become liable for damages caused to road users. A local timber merchant had constructed, in May, 1923, a "Seillahn" near the Grengiola bridge across the Furka Road; at times, the cable would actually touch the road and it was not long before a motor cyclist came to grief on account of this obstruction. Legal proceedings taken in the first instance against the timber merchant were in so far abortive that he was unable to pay the heavy damages awarded by the cantonal court to the cyclist; hence the action against the cantonal authorities.

The Federal Council has appointed Mr. Richard Kuhn of Vienna, at present lecturing at the university of Munich, professor of chemistry at the Federal Polytechnic in Zurich; Mr. Kuhn is only 26 years old.

In spite of subsidies to the amount of francs 320,000 received during last year the theatre of the town of Berne will have to close its doors on account of heavy deficits.

Through an explosion in the bronze dye factory, Kempten, near Wetzikon, one workman was killed outright, whilst two others succumbed to their injuries in hospital.

## EXTRACTS FROM SWISS PAPERS.

**Polen und Schweizer.**—Die polnische Republik scheint darauf zu halten, bei der Wahl ihrer Präsidenten Persönlichkeiten zu suchen, die sich in der Schweiz umgesehen haben. Wir sind ja die älteste Republik der Welt und die Drehscheibe Europas, und nirgends besser als bei uns können die Vorteile und die Mängel der Demokratie studiert und republikanische Staatskunst erlernt werden. Die Schweiz spielt sich auch nicht ungern als die Gouvrenante Europas auf, so altmodisch die Rolle auch ist.

Es ist gemeldet worden, dass der neue Präsident der Republik Polen, Moscicki, ein regelrechter Bürger der Stadt Freiburg sei; er sei Assistent an der Freiburger Universität gewesen und habe die Kondensatorenfabrik in Freiburg gegründet. Man weiss auch, dass ein früherer Staatspräsident von Polen, Narutowicz, Schweizer gewesen ist; er war zuerst Ingenieur in St. Gallen, dann Professor an der eidgenössischen Technischen Hochschule in Zürich. Und schliesslich erinnert heute die "Revue" daran, dass der erste Präsident der Republik Polen, Paderewski, Ehrenbürger von Morges in der Waadt gewesen sei.

Vielleicht stehen der Republik Polen noch weitere Staatsmänner mit schweizerischem Bürgerrecht zur Verfügung; der Verbrauch ist allerdings stark und der Vorrat könnte schliesslich ausgehen.

**Postalischer Tierschutz.**—Drohen im Ziel-Kornberg haben bekanntlich muntere Spiegelmeisen in einen Briefkasten ihr Nest gebaut und ihre Eier ausgebrütet. Die Jungen sind nun bald flügge. Die Postverwaltung hat den Vögeln in tieferfreundlicher Absicht ihre ersten Lebenstage erheblich erleichtert, indem sie einen Reservebriefkasten zur Verfügung stellte um die junge Brut nicht stören zu müssen.

**Une "poche d'eau" en Valais.**—De Chable; A quelques heures de la station hôtelière de Fionnay

vient de surgir un lac alpestre, constitué par une poche glaciaire du glacier de Crête Sèche, situé à l'altitude de 2,500 mètres. Le niveau du lac s'élevant de trente centimètres par jour, atteint la hauteur de 40 mètres sur une longueur de 400 mètres et une largeur de 80 mètres. L'action de la chaleur, la pression menaçant d'emporter, l'un jour à l'autre, le barrage où flottent, tel sur un lac polaire, de petites banquises. La population attend avec calme les événements, tandis que les vieux racontent avec émotion les souvenirs de l'inondation de 1898, provoquée par la même cause, et de l'inondation de 1818 où périrent 35 personnes.

Une commission communale accompagnée de l'ingénieur cantonal était jeudi sur les lieux.

(Feuille d'Avis, Locle).

**Le "Jeu commémoratif" de la Victoire de Morat.**—Les quatre premières représentations du *Jeu commémoratif de Morat*, de M. Gonzague de Reynold et M. l'abbé Boveri, ont rencontré un accueil enthousiaste de la part du public. De toutes les parties du canton de Fribourg et des cantons confédérés on est venu en foule au théâtre Livio. Après chaque acte, des applaudissements nourris ont salué la magnifique prose de M. de Reynold, dite par d'excellents acteurs. La musique de M. l'abbé Boveri, ample comme il convient à un jeu qui prend les allures d'une épopée, rallie tous les suffrages. Le souffle patriotique qui l'anime enlève l'auditoire saisi et subjugué.

Toute la presse a loué le charme épique des dialogues, la richesse des costumes et la splendeur des décors. Elle a salué la musique de M. l'abbé Boveri comme un chef-d'œuvre tant par son inspiration que par sa composition.

Enfin, le public est unanime à dire que l'interprétation est excellente.

(Journal de Genève).

## NOTES AND GLEANINGS.

By "KYBURG."

### Prologue.

#### DER TANZ.

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Die Blitze zucken und der Donner rollt,  
Im roten Saale steht auf der Konsole  
Ein Meissnerpärchen, schöner Herr und Dame.  
Schon lange sahn sie sich von weitem an,  
Nun nähern sie sich jäh mit kleinen Schritten,  
Und Liebe glüht wie Regenbogenfarben  
Durch zarter Formen fein gedämpfte Sitten.  
Der Herr verneigt sich, legt die Hand aufs Herz,  
Die Dame schürzt errötend die Gipfen,  
Und lächelnd wagen sie den ersten Pas,  
Vorwärts, zurück, in zierlichen Allüren.  
"Nun einen Walzer, meine schöne Dame."  
Sie zaudert leicht, zu spät, kein Halten mehr,  
Die Spitzen klirren leis, sie atmet schwer.  
Aus puderweisser Haare hoher Glocke  
Fällt auf die Schulter eine lange Locke.  
Rundum, rundum, es schwinden Zeit und Raum,  
Die Lippen glühn und stammeln wie im Traum,  
Und immer tiefer dringt das süsse Werben.  
Ein Blitz, ein Donnerschlag, ein kleiner Schrei.  
Erschrocken stürzt des Hauses Magd herbei.  
O weh, am Boden liegen weisse Scherben.

MARIE BRETSCHER.

While we are well in with the MUSES, we will turn to sweet Dame Musica and read about the **Zurich Festival**, *Daily Telegraph*, June 26th:—

Here in Zürich during the last few days music has been made in abundance, but no history worth the relating. The creative minds of Europe continue to achieve and achieve, but beyond the achievement there is no shining light to show the way we must take. We listen to work after work, and a twilight slowly descends upon the mind; and after the twilight, Schönberg's Wind Quartet, and a sudden great darkness. This work, which was played last Saturday evening, caused quite a little storm in the teacup of the International Festival for Contemporary Music. So much so that those who earnestly opposed the work and made signs of dissent at the end were inclined to hail the very indifferent work which followed (a String Quartet by Jacobi) as a stroke of genius. There lies the danger of performing Schönberg's music alongside other contemporary works. It destroys all sense of values. Schönberg's publisher has told me that the composer is rewriting this same work for strings; this is an obvious attempt to gild the gilded nettle.

At the beginning of the Festival two examples of modern oratorio-writing were performed. Kodaly's "Hungarian Psalm" impressed me deeply because of its clarity, intensity and live

force. His Psalm is at once personal and prophetic. Honegger's "King David" is personal only; but because of the ingenuity of the personality the music continually intrigues. The setting (of Rene Morax's words) is full of "effects," which are overwhelmingly persuasive at times, as, for instance, in the chorus, "God, the Lord shall be my light" and in "The Dance before the Ark" (for all its obvious relation to "Le Sacre de Printemps"). Because of the excellent stage-management of "King David," Honegger can now be included in the genealogical table which converges upon and emerges from Handel. He may yet be fated for a Triennial Festival at the Crystal Palace.

For me the most completely satisfying event of the Festival has been the performance of Manuel de Falla's "Master Peter's Puppet-Show," which was given twice on Sunday morning in the Marionetten-Theater. The skill of the puppets and of the musical score combined together to yield a perfect delight. In other performances Don Quixote and Sancho Panza and Pedro were played by living actors, here they were puppets of mind and gesture like unto the others; the unity was thereby more fully realized. And what gestures! What human actor could move with such jointed elegance or repose with such significance? De Falla's score is a masterpiece of miniature art. At the second concert I listened to a work which discovered a serious flaw in my temperamental ensemble. Clearly the scoring of André Caplet's "Le Miroir de Jésus" (for women's voices, strings, and harps) is deliberately intended as an assault upon the weaker side of human sensitiveness. I was so far fortified on that side as to resist to the point of irreverence. This music rarifies with its own atmosphere to such a degree that it expires long before the actual end.

The only English work was given on Tuesday evening. This was W. T. Walton's overture for orchestra, "Portsmouth Point," music inspired by a pencil sketch by Thomas Rowlandson. It came like a Channel breeze just at the moment when we were all suffering from musical claustrophobia. We were more than thankful, therefore, for its unpretentious manner, its frankness, its jollity, and its fund of ideas. The themes play freely with the dangerous fire of synecopation, but they are always individual in form and treatment, and in the end emerge through the fluent orchestration, full of spirit and bonhomie. This was the first performance of the work. Dr. Andreae and his orchestra revealed a quick sympathy, and played as if they were intent upon giving the English a good show. At the end the composer was called and acclaimed with great enthusiasm.

And, to wind up our lighter thoughts this morning, what could be more appropriate than the following from the *Newcastle Daily Journal and North Star*, June 24th:—

### A Holiday for Bird Lovers.

To the bird-lover seeking a holiday abroad, Switzerland offers fascinating opportunities. Bird-life in Switzerland provides interesting contrasts with the bird-life of this country and also many special characteristics of its own.

Nearly 370 species are found, many of them, like the tiny wall-creeper, of beautiful colouring. They are at their best in the spring and early summer, when the deep valleys and wooded uplands echo and re-echo with their songs and calls. But as a rule they are less sociable than English birds, and prefer to keep their own company in the wild Alpine solitudes, or to secrete themselves in the deep recesses of the woods. This elusiveness is a challenge that bird-lovers cannot be slow to accept. Subtly to track down these hermits of the mountain valleys and to observe their unsuspecting movements has a joy that easier game does not offer.

It is here that the robin proves its sylvan origin, for it clings like a hermit to the loneliest parts of the woods. Its low sweet song may be heard at all times of the year, but the shy singer itself is rarely seen. It shuns the haunts of men strangely, and if on rare occasions it visits gardens it does so furtively, not in the gay and friendly way of the English robin.

The real robin of Switzerland is the black redstart, which exercises over Swiss gardens and lanes the conscious mastery which the robin exercises in ours. It is always irrepressibly gay and its lively little song gives the most characteristic note to the early Swiss dawn. This perky fellow is found at all altitudes and in all places where man has built.

The Alpine Chough with its black plumage, red legs, and yellow beak, is another friendly native; but for preference it seeks the upper Alpine regions and the mountain resorts, leaving the plains to birds with less nerve for dizzy heights than it possesses. In bands of a hundred or more it swoops whistling about the hotels on the heights, and snatches with all the greediness of gulls the crumbs and scraps that are thrown to it by tourists. It loves the steep heights of precipices and crags for their own sake.

But though some Swiss birds, like these, are friendly enough to man, the great majority are retiring and shy. The great solitudes of the mountains seem to affect them.

The golden oriole and the king-fisher, the swift hawks and the preying kites, the Alpine Accentor and the tameless eagle owl may be seen, but rarely heard. The raven, it is true, croaks dismally at all times and in all places; but the crossbills, osels, blackcock, capercaillie, and many other birds look with shocked disapproval on the behaviour of that irreverent fellow.

I wonder how many of my readers, even good bird lovers as they no doubt are, have ever seen a Capercaillie, otherwise known as Auerhahn, outside the Zoo or Museum? In these Islands one would have to go to the extreme north of Scotland to see one, and in Switzerland I have never seen one myself. On the other hand, a mighty hunter friend of mine has met them often in the Bavarian Forests and, when in the mood, he knows how to tell good stories of bird-life in that part of the world. Gäll?

#### Switzerland-on-Sea.

The *Graphic*, June 26th, has the following:—

Basle, the Golden Gate to Switzerland, famed alike for its beauty and its commerce, is shortly to be the scene of a novel but appropriate exhibition in celebration of the opening of the city's new Rhine harbour. By July 1st, when many of the great nations of the world are taking part in the International Exhibition for Inland Navigation and Utilisation of Hydraulic Power, the three Basle harbours will have been completed.

This is no ordinary event in the history of world commerce, and it has peculiar importance for Britain. It means that hereafter Basle, to all intents and purposes a mid-European city, is a port capable of discharging cargoes loaded at London Bridge. How great will be the boon to European commerce time alone will tell, but it is already evident that Rhine developments will be swift. It is now practical politics to visualise the Rhine of the future, with a port at Lake Constance navigable for all river traffic and connected with the Danube by canal. Thus will the Rhine become one of the greatest, if not the greatest, commercial arteries in the world.

This Wembley of water power comes at an appropriate time to celebrate the development of Rhine shipping, in which the Swiss nation is playing so prominent a part. By the opening of its Rhine harbour Basle at one step becomes a clearing centre for trade and traffic between the outer world and the heart of Europe. Already the leaders of Swiss and German enterprise are at work developing the river with all possible speed. This summer will see direct passenger, tugboat, and barge service between Basle and Rotterdam, and a Swiss navigation firm is designing Rhine boats which will be placed in the cross-Channel trade.

The Swiss could have celebrated their entry into international water power in no better way than by the forthcoming exhibition, at which river power plant of varied description will take an important place. Germany will be the most pretentious contributor. Her exhibits will include all manner of wharf installations, dredges and excavators, hydraulic cranes, derricks and steam shovels. France has the second largest space allotment, and other exhibiting countries are Austria, Belgium, Czechoslovakia, Holland, Italy, Spain, while the League of Nations will also be represented. Several federal departments of the United States of America have applied for space.

It is singularly unfortunate that Great Britain is the one great nation that is not officially represented. The failure of the Government and of great industrial firms to show an interest in the exhibition is causing concern to British Consular officials and members of the British Chamber of Commerce in Switzerland. The hope is still expressed that before July 1st, the home Government will be represented.

The exhibition continues until September 15th. It covers an area of 750,000 sq. ft., on which five big permanent buildings have been erected, while ships and other floating objects will be shown at points on the Rhine.

Apart from showing all that is necessary for modern harbour, dock, river, and canal works, the Basle Exhibition is true to modern traditions, and follows the lead of Wembley in providing a great Amusements Park. But its main object is strictly business and propaganda, and the impor-

tance of the occasion is emphasised by the fact that the World Power Conference holds its first sectional meeting in Basle from August 31st until September 12th.

To those of my readers who prefer, occasionally, a more serious form of reading, I recommend the following, with an especial appeal to think over and inwardly digest the concluding sentence:—

#### International Economic Conference.

*Bristol Times and Mirror*, June 16th:—

The forthcoming International Economic Conference forms the subject of an interesting article in the monthly Bulletin of the Swiss Bank Corporation. Since the conferences of Brussels in 1920 and Genoa in 1922, Europe has moved a long way towards financial and economic reconstruction, but the position is still far from normal. Many countries seem unable permanently to overcome the difficulties which stand in the way of a reorganisation of their currency. The resultant instability of the exchange has a most damaging effect on economic conditions throughout the world. A greater and more general effort is required, but the International Conference will be building its house upon the sands should it adopt measures, or make recommendations relating to industrial and agricultural production and the distribution of goods, while neglecting the problem of currency. Until all the principal countries of Europe have stabilised their currency, any such resolutions and recommendations will remain inoperative. The conference can only be a success if it is realised everywhere that nations are interdependent, and if it is generally understood that the material prosperity of the world can only be obtained as the sum total of the prosperity of the individual nations.

#### Swiss Church has Great Organ.

*Catholic Herald* (5th June):—

The conventual church of Engelburg has just had one of the largest organs in the world installed.

Posse sing 135 stops, it was inaugurated recently with special religious celebrations in the presence of such experts as Fr. G. Gisler, of Einsiedeln, and Frs. Sursetta and Dobler.

#### La Fête des Narcisses à Montreux.

*Daily Chronicle* (5th June):—

More than a suspicion of paganism is to be found in the quaint Fête des Narcisses of Montreux, with which the sedate little lakeside town will to-day celebrate the approach of summer. For two days—this year to-day and to-morrow—the cult of the narcissus, now in full bloom by the hundred thousand on every slope around the Lake of Geneva, takes possession of the people, and is made the occasion for the sudden outburst of gaiety and revelry.

The festivities begin with an open-air ceremonial ballet performed by a famous troupe of dancers. This year the performers will be the Ballet Corps of the Théâtre Royal de la Monnaie of Brussels, supported by the Royal Belgian Band of the 1st Guide Regiment. Flower-decked coaches and citizens in gay costumes then move in procession through the streets, and when this is over everybody joins in a spectacular flower and confetti battle.

Each night the bay of Montreux, a lovely corner of one of the loveliest lakes in the world, is illuminated by fairy lanterns and fireworks. The majority of the revellers spend the evening floating lazily in decorated boats on the lake, watching the illuminations and listening to the music.

Dominating all, in spite of its low situation at the water's edge, is that storied monument of the feudal-picturesque where Bonivard languished and Byron dreamed, the Castle of Chillon, which at this season is thrown into vivid relief by powerful reflectors set behind it. By day of sombre and even sinister appearance, the famous castle is by night of arresting fascination, more like the figment of a dream than a solid construction of massive stone.

The profusion in which narcissi are found in every field and meadow round about Montreux is the marvel of all flower-lovers who visit the district at the end of May or the beginning of June. Complete hillsides are covered with the white flower, and in the distance have the appearance of being covered with a fall of snow.

#### Epilogue.

It is not very often that I am fortunate in finding such a goodly number of really interesting articles among my "Gleanings" and am thereby absolved from making a show of my own comments. When it does happen, however, I feel very pleased, because it leaves me more time for other things, as, for instance, studying the prospects of the Test Matches and the weather charts. I also find that writing these "Notes" early in the morning as I have done recently and to-day, is not productive of good ideas, probably because my brain is still sluggish and not at all up to "the-early-bird-catches-the-worm" business.

Anyhow, this morning I have had an easy time of it, and believe me, I am going to enjoy my breakfast all the more.

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