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# The Swiss Observer

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## HOME NEWS

The initiative launched in the canton of Thurgau against proportional representation in the Grosse Rat, has been successful, and the matter will be submitted in the near future to the decision of the electorate, which as recently as August, 1924, refused to make this change in the constitution.

In order to wipe off the accumulated deficits of the municipal theatre of Berne, the State Treasury is contributing an amount of Frs. 2000,000; it is stated that if the theatre is to carry on, an annual subsidy of Frs. 150,000 is required.

The ecclesiastical authorities of St. Gall are issuing a public appeal for funds for the purpose of renovating the exterior of the local cathedral, the cost of which is estimated to exceed a million francs.

The rumour is being given publicity in the Swiss dailies that the ex-emperor William intends to settle down in the Ticino, considerable purchases of land having recently been affected by German interests in the vicinity of Monte Verità, nr. Ascona.

The strike on the frontier district railways of the Ticino has been settled, the Company agreeing to make sundry payments amounting to Frs. 38,000 for the benefit of staff funds.

The whole of the management—four in number—of the Vereinsbank, in Zurich, which closed its doors a few weeks ago, has been placed under arrest.

Samuel Zurlinden, the Secretary of the Swiss League of Nations Union, died in Zurich at the age of 66. By profession a schoolmaster—he was teaching for four years at a college in Beirut (Turkey)—he was for some time county clerk in Solothurn, but made himself a name as editor of the now defunct "Zürcher Freitagzeitung," a publication very much appreciated by Swiss residing abroad. He was the author of several books with reference to the last war and the formation of the League of Nations, to popularize the ideas of which in Switzerland, he was one of the foremost writers.

The damage caused in the canton of Solothurn by the inundations of last June, has been assessed at 2.3 million francs, of which Frs. 268,000 has been raised by public subscription in the canton.

A fire, due to a defective chimney, destroyed the upper part of the "Hotel du Midi," in the centre of the town of Sion (Valais), the damage amounting to about Frs. 100,000.

The well-known Kurhaus Tannenbergr, near Schwanden (Glaris), belonging to Mr. P. Zoppi-Stüssi, was reduced to ashes, due, it is surmised, to a defective chimney.

During the absence of the proprietor the residence and the best part of the factory belonging to Mr. Ed. Heid, timber merchant in Altendorf (Schwyz), became a prey to the flames, the fire having emanated from a chimney-fire.

## NOTES AND GLEANINGS.

Looking through my cuttings this week there is scarcely anything which is of even passing interest to readers of the S.O. It is on such occasions that it is difficult and verily invidious to make a selection which will satisfy the quest for information "as others see us."

Alluring articles extolling the manifold attractions of a Swiss winter holiday are already making their appearance in the English Press. Winter has, in fact, descended rather early and suddenly in Switzerland, the lower Alps down to a height of 3,000 feet being already covered with snow, and severe cold being reported from resorts in the Ticino. The prospects of a hard winter are of course welcomed by our hotel industry, which fared none too well last year in consequence of the exceptionally mild winter season. I reprint from the "Morning Post" (October 21st) a typical article which should go a long way towards whetting the appetite of would-be holiday-makers.

## Winter Among the High Alps.

People flock to Switzerland each year from all over the world, and in ever-increasing numbers, for four principal reasons—climate, scenery, comfort, and sport. Let us take these four major attractions in turn.

First of all, climate. Here rid your mind at once of all associations and memories of winters at home; forget the fogs, the damp, the grey monotony, the cold east winds, and driving rain. You simply cannot realise winters out here in terms of the winters at home. Instead of sombre greyness, damp, and monotony, the dominant note of the Swiss winters is brightness, crispness and exhilaration.

You will remark at once the perfect stillness of the atmosphere and the heat of the sun. The air is so clear, dry, and rarefied that the sun's rays strike through it with an extraordinary intensity and warming power even on the shortest days, while the radiation of these rays reflected from the whiteness of the snow all round gives that wonderful brilliant light of the winter day in the Alps.

I have often skated out here without a coat, and continually sit out in the sunshine without an overcoat. Mr. Neville Lytton tells of making a sketch at an altitude of 6,000ft. "when the cold was sufficiently great to cause my water-colour washes to freeze when I laid them on the paper; but although the sketch took an hour and a half to complete, I never once felt a shiver, and my hands were as warm as could be."

The wonder and delight of a winter's morning directly after a heavy fall of snow! The flakes have been falling silently all day and all night, but on looking out next morning you notice they have stopped. Slowly, the heavy grey clouds lift up along the mountain sides, and the pine woods, all white, begin to appear. Patches of blue begin to show overhead, and gradually the sun bursts through the remnants of cloud, and you begin to see the peaks emerging sunlit out of the clouds, till one by one all the great mountains stand out around the valley, dazzling white and pure.

But I am breaking into the second great attraction of a Swiss winter, the scenery, and here I must protest. You cannot expect me to emulate Mr. Belloc's, "just but anxious fellow, that sat down dutifully to paint the soul of Switzerland on a fan." After all the Alps are . . . well, the Alps, and you must take my word for it, or else come out and see for yourself.

One of the first Englishmen who wintered in the Alps, John Addington Symonds, writing from Davos in 1878, before wintering in the Alps had become the fashion, said, "It is true that the Alps in their winter robe of snow offer a spectacle which for novelty and splendour cannot be surpassed." They do.

Now we come to the great point of comfort. Any tourist agency will give you full particulars of the journey, engage seats and sleepers for you, but I do advise you to make up your mind soon, because there is going to be a bigger crowd than ever coming to Switzerland this year. As regards the comfort and accommodation at the sports centres themselves, there is a wide range, and consequently also of price, from the big Palace Hotels (the last word in modern comfort and luxury) to the smaller hotels and small pensions.

Here, again, it is enough to say that these hotels and pensions are run by the Swiss, which means that they are well run, carefully attended to, personally supervised by the management, and cleverly adapted to the tastes of their clients, with invariably good food, well served. Scrupulous cleanliness may always be taken for granted. There are bath-rooms in the humblest pensions.

## AVIS.

La Légation de Suisse, 32, Queen Anne Street, London, W.1, invite toute personne qui a connu

M. Bernhard-Friedrich SPYRI,

de Bissegg-Amlikon et Bussnang (Thurgovie), décédé le 5 juillet 1901 à Londres, à bien vouloir se mettre en rapport avec elle.

Then there is sport and exercise for youth, middle age, and the period that comes after middle age, because no one likes to hear of old age. Imagine a vast rink of perfect ice, carefully renewed each night. Often these rinks belong to and are at the very door of your hotel. You put on your skates in a comfortable lounge, and then walk on the matting out on to the ice. How gay, bright, and lively the scene! An orchestra will be playing, and while some are practising figures, others are waltzing, or sitting about on benches, or curling.

Denis, of course, will not be content with the rinks. He will want something more strenuous for those long legs and eighteen years of his; and so will Joan. They will be bitten by skiing, and I don't wonder. There is nothing in the world like skiing. When you have plugged uphill for some hours, through woods, and along steep slopes, your ski on your shoulder and your rucksack on your back, you will suddenly emerge from the wood and reach the top of the col . . . and there, stretched out before you, will be the vast white spaces, the great winter world, and the dazzling white peaks, silent and calm and austere against a sky of Tyrrhenian blue.

Below you will be the valley, and when you have started off you begin to feel the swish of the ski through the powdery snow. And if you fall head-over-heels into the snow, as has been known to happen, you will not be so bird-like, but will get up again, none the worse, and consider it all in the day's work. If you wish to curl you will have to learn the language, but it really is not necessary nowadays to engage a professor, or spend a year or so north of the Tweed, for the purpose. At almost all winter sport centres in Switzerland the curlers are bilingual, and will translate for you. When you have "scoped" hard in an exciting match, you will have no doubt whether curling is exercise or not. Lugeing, bobbing, ice hockey, and skijoring will be going on during the winter, and you will have opportunities of seeing skijumping, which is really thrilling.

But let me say a word of days when you may feel inclined to give the winter sports crowds a miss and wander off by yourself to see something of the country. You will find wonderful walks through the white fairyland of the woods, with the great pines all bent down with snow, and the smaller trees all traced out in white filigree. The old brown chalets, with their great eaves covered with a foot or so of snow, and all fringed with icicles, are a constant delight. They look so warm and comfortable, sunk in the snow, with the blue smoke rising out of their roofs through the quaintest of chimneys.

Talking of holidays, here is an invitation to parents broadcast in the "Christian" (October 21st) to send their youngsters into what is called **Swiss Camps** where they may enjoy a short stay under proper supervision and guidance.

In past years, a fruitful work among young people has been done through the medium of the 'Varsities and Public Schools' Camps. Arrangements have again been made for separate parties of girls and boys to spend thirteen days (December 29—January 13) at Engelberg, Switzerland. Mr. Everard G. Derry writes: "Will those who are interested in the young pray that definite conversions and real blessing may result; and if friends know of any young people who might be able to go, would they put them in touch with The Secretary, 'Varsities and Public Schools' Camps, C.S.S.M. House, 3 and 5, Wigmore Street, W.1."

## Cheap Electricity.

Instructive comparisons are quoted from a recent public utterance in the "Daily Express" (October 22nd).

"The British output of electricity per head is only 190 units, as compared with 1,190 in Canada, 1,070 in Switzerland, 623 in the United States, 248 in France, and 197 in Italy," said Dr. William Eccles in his presidential address at the Institution of Electrical Engineers last evening.

He considered that the slow rate of progress in Britain was due to the high price of electricity, the average price per unit obtained in this country being 1.9d., against .72d. in Canada, .60d. in Switzerland, and .4d. in Northern Italy.

"We are only getting six hours' work per day out of our machinery," added the speaker, "and this may be attributed to the shrinkage of demand from our basic industries."

Centralisation and interconnection are the