

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: - (1926)

Heft: 231

Rubrik: Notes and gleanings

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The Swiss Observer

Telephone: CLERKENWELL 9595

Published every Friday at 23, LEONARD STREET, LONDON, E.C.2.

Telegrams: FREPRINCO, LONDON.

VOL. 6—No. 231

LONDON, JANUARY 2, 1926.

PRICE 3d.

PREPAID SUBSCRIPTION RATES

UNITED KINGDOM AND COLONIES	{ 3 Months (13 issues, post free)	36
	{ 6 " " (26 ")	62
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SWITZERLAND	{ 6 Months (13 issues, post free)	7.50
	{ 12 " " (26 ")	14

(Swiss subscriptions may be paid into Postscheck-Konto:
Basle V 5718.)

HOME NEWS

1926

We desire to express to all our readers our heartiest good wishes for their continued and increased happiness and prosperity during the coming year.

The Grand Conseil of Basle has granted a loan of 500,000 frs. and taken shares for an amount of 600,000 frs. in the Société Suisse de Remorquage at Basle.

The town of Lausanne's budget for 1926 shows a deficit of 571,170 frs. on a total expenditure of 512,366,980 frs.

The Conseil d'Etat of Geneva has just received the report from the Commission of Enquiry into the police incidents, followed by Mr. Vettiner's suicide; and have decided that no action be taken against the Director of Police for failing in his professional duty.

Bad weather has been prevalent of late, with violent gales and storms, everywhere, especially in the Rhone valley and Lake of Lucerne, where a strong Föhn was blowing, causing widespread damage.

The first electric train ran from Lausanne to Geneva last week for the initial complete trial, which was quite successful. The electrified service will run completely on this section from January 5th next.

Colonel Alphonse Schué has been nominated Chief of the Cavalry, in place of Colonel Favre, who has been placed at the head of the 4th Division.

The Swiss chess champions, Paul Johner and Dr. W. Michel, have been invited to attend the international chess congress at Semmering next March.

The ice hockey matches started last week for the Spengler Cup at Davos.

National Councillor Maggini has sent in his resignation.

Several cases of smallpox have been notified in Obwald.

Dr. Louis Megevand, of Geneva, has just died at the age of 73. He was Professor of the Legal Section of Medicine of the Geneva University and Director of the Mortuary.

Mr. Gustave Helfenberger, ex-State Councillor and a prominent figure in the Christian Social party, has died at Zurich.

EXTRACTS FROM SWISS PAPERS.

L'Escalade en bonnets de coton. — A l'occasion de la fête de l'Escalade qui rappelle, comme on sait, l'échec de l'entreprise du duc de Savoie contre Genève, en 1602, les maîtres d'école avaient coutume de faire à leurs élèves le récit des événements militaires de cette nuit tragique et de faire chanter un chant en patois genevois, le "Cé qué l'aino," qui bénit le Dieu des batailles, protecteur de la ville. Cette année, les directeurs d'écoles ont reçu du département de l'instruction publique, dirigé par M. Oltramare, socialiste, une circulaire leur enjoignant de ne pas parler des faits de guerre et de rappeler seulement l'état social à Genève au 17e siècle et en outre leur recommandant de ne pas faire chanter de chants guerrriers.

(*La Revue.*)

M. Oltramare au Collège. — Les élèves des classes supérieures du Collège ont été priés de se rendre 15 décembre matin à 10 heures (pendant la récréation) dans les salles de gymnastique de la rue de Malagnou pour y entendre M. Oltramare, chef du Département de l'instruction publique.

M. Oltramare s'est adressé aux élèves en leur disant qu'il était toujours l'ami des collégiens et qu'il voulait le rester.

Parlant de la circulaire qu'il a adressée aux

directeurs d'écoles à l'occasion de l'Escalade, le chef du Département de l'instruction publique a dit qu'on en avait méconnu et transformé l'esprit et qu'il ne comprenait pas la manifestation de samedi après-midi. Bien qu'en ayant été averti le matin déjà il n'a rien fait pour l'empêcher, ce qu'il dit, m'aurait pourtant été très facile.

Au sujet de cette manifestation, M. Oltramare a dit avoir rencontré dans la rue, il y a deux ou trois jours, un groupe de trois élèves du collège qui, dès qu'ils l'eurent dépassé, entonnèrent le "Roulez tambours!" "C'était une insulte au magistrat chargé de faire régner l'ordre au collège; je ne prendrai pas de sanction contre ces élèves, mais qu'ils aient le courage de leur opinion et qu'ils se dénoncent." En réponse à ceci, il y eut non pas trois élèves qui levèrent la main, mais cinq et parmi eux des fils des familles les plus anciennes de Genève.

Revenant sur le sens de sa circulaire, M. Oltramare a déclaré qu'à Genève tout spécialement on était porté à l'exagération et qu'on transformait facilement toute chose. "Vous êtes des citoyens dit-il, aux collégiens (lundi dernier ces mêmes collégiens étaient encore des gosses!) vous devez savoir vous unir pour le bien de la patrie (murmures dans la foule des élèves) et vous devez être au-dessus des disputes qui se sont fait jour à propos de cette circulaire. Pour cette fois, je ne prendrai aucune sanction, mais si un événement semblable se reproduisait, je suis décidé à intervenir énergiquement." (Protestations.)

M. Oltramare entretint brièvement les élèves de ses idées politiques et leur déclara, que, s'il avait changé d'opinion bien qu'appartenant à une des plus anciennes familles genevoises, c'est que les circonstances elles-mêmes l'y avaient contraint. Et pour leur montrer qu'il n'était pas opposé à l'idée de patriotisme, M. Oltramare demanda aux élèves de chanter le dernier couplet (pourquoi le dernier) du "Cé qué l'aino." Aucun des élèves ne répondit à cet ordre; tous ceux qui samedi avaient chanté sous les fenêtres du Grand Conseil déclarèrent ne plus se souvenir de ce couplet du "Cé qué l'aino." Un peu déconfit, M. Oltramare n'insista pas, constata que les élèves avaient encore besoin d'étudier même les chants patriotes et se retira. A peine était-il sorti que tous les élèves entonnèrent "Ah! la belle Escalade, Oltramare, Oltramare!" (*Courrier de Genève.*)

Une montagne en mouvement. — On mande de Bellinzona que le service topographique fédéral vient de découvrir que le Monte Arbino (2000 mètres), à quatre kilomètres au nord-est de Bellinzona, se déplace dans la direction du val d'Arbedo. Ce mouvement de terrain qui s'opère sur une largeur de plus d'un kilomètre, n'était que de deux centimètres par an lors des derniers relevés faits il y a une trentaine d'années; il dépasse aujourd'hui 20 centimètres par an en moyenne. Les couches de terrain étant verticales au Monte Arbino, le mouvement n'est pas seulement superficiel, c'est la base même de la montagne qui s'ébranle. On n'a jamais constaté, jusqu'à présent, en Suisse, un glissement de terrain de cette importance. Toutes les mesures vont être prises pour parer au danger qui pourrait résulter de cet état de choses.

(*Feuille Commerciale.*)

Deux nouveaux journaux. — A partir du 1er janvier, deux nouveaux journaux paraîtront en Valais: le "Courrier de Sion," organe bi-hebdomadaire de publicité et d'information, et le "Travaileur," organe bi-mensuel des ouvriers chrétiens-sociaux de la partie française du Valais.

A la mémoire de Ferdinand Hodler. — La section des beaux-arts de l'Institut national genevois inaugura la plaque commémorative à la mémoire de Ferdinand Hodler, au numéro 35 de la Grand Rue, aujourd'hui samedi 19 décembre, à 15 heures. A l'issue de la cérémonie une couronne sera déposée sur la tombe du grand peintre.

(*Journal de Genève.*)

Un 100-jährigen Leuten. — Unter Hinweis auf die in der "Ostschweiz" erschienene Korrespondenz "Zwei Hundertjährige im St. Galler Oberland" dürfte eine kurze Zusammenstellung über hundertjährige Leute früherer Zeit an Hand der Aufzeichnungen in den verschiedensten Chroniken nicht ohne Interesse sein. Dabei ist zu bemerken, dass, trotzdem die einfache Lebensweise unserer Vorfahren ein hohes Alter naturgemäß begünstigen musste, dennoch verhältnismässig nicht allzu viele Beispiele gar alter Personen auf uns gekommen sind. Von jenen hatte eben das bekannte Wort des Psalmisten Geltung: "Unser Leben währet siebzig Jahre, und wenn es hoch kommt, so sind es achtzig Jahre, und wenn es kostlich war, so ist es Mühe und Arbeit gewesen."

Lassen wir nun diese hundertjährigen Leute von

ehemals Revue passieren: Zuerst mag der Heimatkanton des Niklaus Rohner und des "Wurzenbethli" folgen: Anstände über die Grenzen der hohen Gerichtsbarkeit zwischen den Herrschaften Gaster und Windegg und der Grafschaft Sargans machten 1517 eidliche Kundschaftseinvnahmen der ältesten unbeteiligten Ehrenmänner dieser Gegend nötig, worüber vor Gericht zu Wallenstadt und Flums u. a. ein 90, ein 99 und ein über 100 Jahre alter Mann aus gutem Gedächtnis "älteste Kundschaft" ablegten. 1587 starb Matthäus Osswald, Bürger und Apotheker zu St. Gallen, nach zurückgelegtem 105. Jahre. 1600 segnete in der gleichen Stadt der im Jahre 1500 geborene Hans Wettach, genannt Hirschberg, das Zeitliche. Barbara Kaufmann, verheilte Hartmann in Wildhaus, geb. 1750, gestorben 1851, erreichte, ohne jemals krank gewesen zu sein, das Alter von 101 Jahren 9 Monaten und 23 Tagen. 1920 starb in Schmerikon Paul Jakob Pfiffiger, bürgerlich von Mels, im Alter von 102 Jahren.

1577 heiratete der hundertjährige Heinrich Weigelin, Gastwirt "Zum Schwert" in Schaffhausen, seine sechste Ehefrau. 1578 starb, 100 Jahre alt, Verena Grüber, Priorin des Frauenklosters Schwyz.

Mehrere hundertjährige Personen entfallen auf das Gebiet der Stadt und Landschaft Zürich. 1592 kommt Konrad Hauser von Windlach, "ob der hundert Jar alt," als Zeuge in einem Streit zwischen dem Städtchen Bülach und dem Abtei von Wettingen vor. — Jakob Fries, der die Mailänder Feldzüge mitgemacht hatte, wurde in seinem hundertsten Jahre, als er auf einer Musterung im Greifensee Wache stand, vom Schlag geprägt. — 1822 starb in Zürich die noch mit Salomon Gessner und andern ausgezeichneten Männer der Limmatstadt befreundet gewesene und wegen ihres Charakters und ihrer Talente allgemein geachtete Jungfrau Marie Keller, 102 Jahre alt. Sie war die letzte jener Töchter Zürichs, die 1750 der berühmten, von Klopstock besungenen Fahrt auf dem Zürichsee beigewohnt hatten. Noch im letzten Lebensjahr konnte sie, obgleich mit zitternder Hand, die Federn führen.

1783 segnete zu Krienz (Lucern) Katharine Kretz im Alter von 104 Jahren das Zeitliche. Alle Sonntage ging sie bis an ihr Lebensende in die beinahe eine Stunde von ihrer Wohnung entfernte Kirche. Im 95. Jahre hatte sie, den Greisen zu gefallen und ihre Kraft zu beweisen, noch getanzt.

1895 verschied zu Obstalden (Glarus) Kasp. Britti, Tagmenvogt, im Alter von 104 Jahren. Er hatte 60 Jahre im Ehe- und 22 Jahre im Witwenschaft gelebt, nährte sich fast ganz von Milchspeisen, was nie krank und behielt seine Geisteskräft bis ans Ende.

1487 starb zu Schaffhausen Pfarrer Melchior Kirchhofer in seinem 101. Jahre, der bis in sein 98. Jahr seine seelsorgerischen Funktionen im Spital ausgeübt hatte.

1915 wurde in La Chaux-de-Fonds die älteste dortige Einwohnerin, Frau Rachel Nordmann, im Alter von 103 Jahren, zu Grabe getragen.

Sonntag, den 27. Juni 1920, konnte in Bussnhausen bei Pfäffikon (Zürich) die Wäscherin Frau Anna Gubler ihren 100. Geburtstag feiern. Am Samstagabend brachte ihr der Männerchor ein Ständchen, und am Sonntag vormittag 11 Uhr läuteten ihr zu Ehren die Kirchenglocken.

Der bekannte Bildhauer H. Würth hat vor einiger Zeit auch die älteste in Ganderia wohnhafte Tessinerin anlässlich ihres hundertsten Geburtstages durch eine prächtige Skulptur verehrt. Hundertjährige sind in allen Ländern Seltenheiten. Ob wohl der von dem Wiener Professor Steinach entdeckte "medizinische Jungbrunnen" ininstande ist, die Zahl der Hundertjährigen zu erhöhen?

NOTES AND GLEANINGS.

By "KYBURG."

Thanks to the anonymous reader who, after reading my Christmas Notes, sent £2 to the Swiss Churches! Thanks also to the Rev. R. Hoffmann de Visme, who kindly informed me of the above and thereby gave me an exquisite pleasure, because it is nice to find that one's appeal has met with some response and that one has been instrumental in furthering a good cause a little bit.

And now? Sir Hall Caine's 1925 Message, according to the *Evening Standard* of 31 Dec. 1925, ends with the following word from the Book:

"Behold, the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Whatever tree bringeth not forth good fruit, shall be hewn down and cast into the fire."

I think the above words contain all that is needed in the way of New Year resolutions; in other words, unless we strive with all our might

to bring forth good fruit during 1926, we shall merit to be cast into the fire. *Amen.*

Almost all the Gleanings from the British Press are about Winter Sports, the best article being found in *The Times* (30th Dec.) entitled—

Winter Sports.

"It's just an ordinary place"—such was the reply made by a schoolgirl who had been asked what sort of place Davos was; she had used two "toppings" and a "glorious" in one breathless sentence in description of her holiday there, and her elucidation of those adjectives was a set-back to the questioner.

Yet there was some sense in her disinclination to be more definite. It was not that it was the young lady's polite way of saying that you find in a place what you bring to it and that she had brought a capacity to enjoy sitting down abruptly; she was no "high-brow." What was at the back of her answer was that Davos does not proclaim its purpose to the first glance as do some places—Carcassonne, for instance, or Manchester. Sherlock Holmes would have known that it was both a sports centre and a health resort before Watson had staggered out of the railway carriage with the bags; but Watson would not, and there was a good deal of that stout fellow in the young lady, who, like all her breed, took steep places straight. There are snow-covered mountains, of course, but with the adaptability of youth she would have taken mountains for granted by the end of her holidays. People who know the Alps speak of Davos as a valley—leaving the mountains to be implied; it is not identified with some great peak, as are certain winter resorts in the Oberland that stand less high. One mountain is more impressive than many; and the long Davos valley is bounded by a succession of mountains so closely joined and so much of a height that their particularity is merged in the ridge in which they are set.

To appreciate them as mountains one must climb higher—say, to the Schatz Alp. From the floor of the valley they do not look as high as they are; and they do not look menacing—though they have given their proof by throwing an avalanche into the town below. And they look the tamer for the lines of defence drawn to prevent a repetition of the bombardment. Except for the Schiahorn, which stretches upwards into a crest as high as the base will allow, from below they do not profess themselves mountains by their bulk or structure. Deceived by the thin, clear air, a stranger from misty Devonshire might reckon to reach the crests 4,000 ft. and more above him in no more time than it would take him to reach the top of Great Hangman from the coast. The more so that travelling up, as he naturally would, from Landquart he would have seen cliffs and peaks and drops that made a lot more of themselves to the eye. So "ordinary" was not such a bad word.

Again, Davos, like the other winter sports centres, is a town—a real town. There are, it is true, shops which cater for the romantically minded with wooden bears, and with variants of a picture in which a richly moustachioed young man with a dead chamois on his shoulder is welcomed by a robust and handsomely caparisoned young woman; and with articles branded "souvenirs" which only a tourist buys and which no tourist can pack. And then there are shops, too, which serve the needs and fads of skiers—runners with knapsacks and caps and jumpers that make an agreeable splash of colour against snow. But shops which appeal to tourists and holiday makers are but a small proportion among ordinary shops—shops that expose for sale garments that could not by any stretch of the imagination be associated with sport or distraction; there are grocers grocery openly and unashamed; there are shops which sell tintacks and dishcloths and lard—ordinary things for which there is no demand among winter sportsmen. Certainly there are people on ski to be seen in the streets, but not many, for with Davosers skiing is not a progress towards a tea-room; most of the people to be met with look as if they were out on business, not pleasure—their clothes are subfusc.

The town is full of foreigners, but you may see soldiers in uniform, and you will certainly see swarms of Swiss children. Time was when the child encountered in the mountains was apt to put its finger in its mouth and gaze at the stranger with something in its expression that he might take for awe, or at any rate wonder or curiosity. There is nothing so flattering in the gaze of the Davos child of to-day. If it looks at all at the stranger is is to note something funny to pass on to its mate. It seldom has a glance for him as it goes about its business—with a satchel—or its pleasure—on ski. It is a town child; sure of itself like any other town child, especially—confound it—on ski.

Davos winter sports are not the pursuit of immigrants only, as they are on some of the mountain shelves. The language of the practice slopes is that of the country; and the crowds that make holiday on the great rink at Christmas are in colour much what they would be on the Round Pond if there were to be a frost in

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London, they are content with their ordinary clothes, whereas the visitors—and it is they who predominate elsewhere on mountain rinks—emphatically are not; for visitors half the fun of it is to sport hues that are not ordinary.

Yet Davos is no ordinary place: it is more a business town than a sports centre, but its business is not ordinary. The symmetrical buildings that climb up one above the other on the north side, contending like trees for sunlight, are too quiet for hotels, and they are equipped with covered balconies facing the sun too elaborate for amenity. These are hospitals for consumptives. The most careless of holiday makers cannot be unaware of their presence but they do not obtrude themselves on him. Indeed, whatever they may talk of among themselves, they talk sports with the sportsman, and console sympathetically with the ski-runner when he is laid up for a week with a strain. Their interest in the sports is inherited, for it was their predecessors who brought them to Davos.

To make rinks at Davos demands little of the spade work necessary in the "shelf" resorts; the sides of the main valley are broken by lateral valleys suitable for ski tours and are steep enough to keep off all but an enfolding wind, but not so steep as seriously to curtail the hours of sunshine. These natural advantages have been developed by long experience and by the resources of a community engaged in the established industry of a health resort. At Davos there are organized facilities for practising all the sports, and, compared with other resorts, its distinction is that it offers the greatest common measure of the attractions for which the young—and old—and active come to the mountains. That is not to say that except as a centre for ski tours it is supreme among the resorts in any one quality desired by Englishmen.

The Englishman does not call the tune even among the visitors, who are mostly German. Not but that the Swiss make concessions to the disorderliness of the Englishman; the railway men acquiesce in his flinging his skis unregistered into the luggage van, and nod amazed but tolerant heads when he jumps into it at his destination—or elsewhere—and flings out other people's skis in his frenzied search for his own. Nothing develops clannishness like being in a minority, and in Davos the English have combined formally together as if they were Scottish. There is an English church and an English library, and an English ski club and a rink for "English" skating.

The chief sporting events of the season before the war were "The Bowl" (for English skating), toboggan races, and bob races. These races were run on a road, for it is among the natural of Davos to be near—or what the unspoilt veterans thought near—to a road descending in its lower part sharply to Klosters, where the obliging railway could be used for the return journey. But in Switzerland there is a class corresponding to pedestrians in England—a class which persists in using public thoroughfares for purposes unconnected with racing. Artificial race tracks became the mode, and Davos turned another natural advantage to account by making as curly a course as could be desired on the steep Schatz Alp—up which a funicular railway runs a thousand feet to a sanatorium; this railway takes up toboggans and bobs, and it also puts the ski-er on its way to the Strela Pass. At the top of the funicular railway there is a restaurant, all windows, and from it one realizes—what is not revealed below—the nature of mountainous country. As far as sight can reach there is a tumbled sea of crags and peaks and great waves—their broken tops flashing white in the Davos sun . . .

Alas! My thoughts to-day are not of the most cheerful, because I have received the income-tax demand note, reminding me of the fact that, whereas the serfs of the old time had to yield up ten per cent. of their income to their masters, I have to give up some twenty per cent. In other words, and to be thoroughly pessimistic, as befits the occasion and as tending to make it easier to be optimistic again in the New Year, the more things change, the more they remain the same — only worse!

Let us turn to the more cheerful news—Swiss Budget—British Coal in the Swiss Market—Lower German Duty on Wool Textiles, etc.—to be found

among my Gleanings. Let us turn to them, I say, and let us turn them down, as of no interest just now, when my mind toys with to-night's New Year's Eve party! For, gentle reader, these Notes are written on New Year's Eve, before my New Year Resolutions become operative—oh, blessed interval, during which I may still indulge in all my numerous old errors and sins!—and so, as the printer's boy is waiting and clamouring for my copy, I will make my last bow of 1925 to you and wish you—not a Happy New Year, as I have done this already in our last issue, but an easy getting over the New Year's Resolutions.

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