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# The Swiss Observer

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## HOME NEWS

In the course of a debate on the Zones controversy in the States Council, Federal Councillor Motta urged the exercise of further patience, whilst fully recognising the serious economic difficulties suffered by Geneva; he had received from the French Prime Minister the most categorical assurances that no further time would be lost in getting the compromise ratified by the French Parliament.

In reply to a Socialist interpellation in the National Council, to the effect that expulsions should be a matter for juridical procedure instead of administrative orders, Federal President Häberlin stated that the following orders for expulsion from Swiss soil had been made:—8 in 1920 (5 of whom were profiteers), 30 in 1921 (19 of them court officials of the late Emperor Karl), 1 each in 1922 and 1923, 6 in 1924 (2 of them spies), and none in 1925.

Naturalisation applications to the number of 2,387 were lodged with the Political Department in Berne during 1925; of these, 1,536 have been definitely granted.

In the course of last year the total indebtedness of the Swiss Confederation has been reduced by just over 49 million francs, and amounts now to about 2,255 million francs.

In the elections for the Grosse Rat in the canton of Thurgau the Socialists gained seven seats, holding now 25 out of a total of 140.

During last week-end in the elections for the Regierungsrat of the canton of Zurich all the seven previous members retained their seats with increased majorities, the two new Socialist candidates being unsuccessful.

In the canton Basel-Stadt both the Regierungsrat and the Grosse Rat came up for re-election. In the former, with the exception of the two Socialists, who were short of the required majority, the whole of the outgoing members were re-elected. The composition of the Grosse Rat, as far as the strength of the two great opposing blocks is concerned, remains practically the same, that is to say, the parties of the Right control 70 out of a total of 130 seats. The feature of the elections is a victory of the Communists, who captured six seats from their former friends, the Socialists, and who now hold 22 mandates.

The Lucerne municipality proposes to grant a loan of Frs. 130,000 to the local cremation society for extensions; it is stated that during 1925 the society has made a loss of Frs. 10,000 on the 65 incinerations carried out.

Arising out of the interference of the police in the present carpenters' strike, the combined syndicates of woodworkers have decided to insist on a reduction of 50% of the amount allocated in the Zurich budget for police service.

During the last year 57 Swiss nationals joined the French Foreign Legion, nearly twice as many as in 1924. The Federal Council has succeeded to cancel the engagement of five youths who at the time of their enrolment had not reached the age of 18.

The expenses borne by the municipality of Locarno in connection with the international conference recently held there amount to Frs. 52,300.

The oldest resident of the canton Neuchâtel, Mme. Victorine L'Éplattenier, died last week in Locle; she would have been 103 next month.

Mr. Lindegger, an embroidery manufacturer of Diepoldsau, lost his life through his motor-car colliding with a tramway standard in St. Gall.

Through slipping and falling in front of a passing tramcar, Mr. Hermann Pfister (71), in business at Schaffhausen and a former member of the Stadtrat, was killed on the spot.

## NOTES AND GLEANINGS.

By "KYBURG."

Some people do not go to church because they know that it would be bad form to argue with the preacher. Not being able to do so, however, affects their liver very seriously—and so, in order to preserve their health, they stay away.

Others regret often that they cannot have an argument with the writer of their newspaper, especially when they know how utterly silly and false that writer's contentions are.

During the last few weeks I have, of course, been reading a lot of newspapers, including *The Swiss Observer*. I am glad I am back at work again and have once again a chance of commenting, when I feel moved or inclined, on topical matters. Of course, I am aware that a number of our readers will probably call for my blood pretty soon again, but to those I would say, "Please remember, 'Kyburg' has no personal animus, and if, perchance and unwittingly, he should offend one or the other, let him know, and if your argument is convincing, he will gladly apologise. Only do not sulk!"

"Qui va piano, va sano"—and the old adage holds good to-day. I think, therefore, that I will first of all try to recapture the good-will of our readers by giving them uncontentious matters to peruse, perhaps even win their indulgent smiles, and only when they have got thoroughly used again to my style of presenting news, will I let myself go in the old and, I hope, now reinvigorated manner.

Going through the accumulated "Notes and Gleanings" from the British press, I find the following in the *Leicester Daily Mercury* of the 8th inst. The matter is somewhat "early," but then, they hardly know up in Leicestershire when the grapes are gathered, or, perhaps, they know their Empire and that they can obtain grapes at any time of the year. Anyhow, gouty and rheumatically readers, here you are:—

### The Grape Cure.

The efficacy of fresh grapes as a cure for gout, rheumatism and kindred troubles is not very widely known in this country. This cure, which is already well recognised in Switzerland, is receiving increasing notice here. Many sufferers who have heard about it are now planning their summer holidays so as to include a visit to the Swiss wine-growing districts. To be on the actual spot is an advantage, as the grapes are most effective when eaten within a few hours of being plucked. At first a pound of grapes per day is prescribed, increasing to three or four pounds, and the fruit is consumed whole, the skin and seeds containing tannin, albumen and other valuable medicinal properties.

From grapes to Bears is not such a far cry as you might think, and the second item in our menu for this week is, therefore, entitled—

### A Bear for Berne.

*Observer* (11th inst.):—

When the hundredth children's train leaves Budapest for Switzerland on April 12th, in addition to the usual passengers it will carry "Master Nicholas," an eighteen-months-old bear, which the Children's League is presenting to the town of Berne.

The Children's League was inaugurated after the Armistice, when various European countries offered to adopt starving and ailing Hungarian children for periods varying from six months to several years. Nearly ten thousand children have been received into Switzerland alone, and Dr. Carl Irlet (the Swiss president of the League) has interested them in the historical associations of the bear with the town of Bern (or Bären), which was named after the first animal killed on a hunting expedition by Prince Berchtold the Fifth, of Zähringen.

Live bears have been kept in the town since the end of the fifteenth century. In 1913 there were twenty-four bears in the *Bärengraben*, where history records that an Englishman, Capt. Lorch, was torn to pieces in 1861 after making a wager at four o'clock in the morning (after a party) that he would walk along the rounded top of the wall which divides the pit. Since the war, however, evil days have fallen on the famous *Bärengraben*; its few inhabitants are growing old, and the Children's League hope that their gift of a young Transylvanian bear will be a welcome reinforcement.

After the recent capture of "Master Nicholas" there arose the important question of how to transport the bear to Budapest, where it was

to be lodged at the Zoo to await the departure of the children's train; the journey would last twenty-four hours, and the frontier between Roumania and Hungary would have to be crossed. Eventually a lady member of the League volunteered to accompany "Master Nicholas" to the capital, and sustain him with apples and sugar during the changes. So the bear was packed up and registered as an "express packet," and at the frontier his protectress received an invoice describing "goods and packing" as weighing 80 kilos, and "cost of transport" as 86,000 crowns (approximately five shillings).

And let us hope that our friends at Berne will make the "Bärengrabe" somewhat less sad-looking than it was when last I saw it.

We seem to get among all sorts of animals now. The *Daily News*, on the 25th March, had the following Dog-and-Chamois stories:—

### Dogs by Post.

While we are discussing the possibilities of C.O.D. a reader tells me that over 50 years ago, when staying at a country house on Lake Léman, in Switzerland, he saw a St. Bernard dog led up by the local postman and delivered without comment. It had been posted C.O.D. from Grindelwald, and must have had four railway changes en route. I suspect that if it had bitten porter or postman it might have become a dead-letter.

My correspondent also tells me that he once sent a dead chamois by post to a Swiss friend who was about to be married. The address was tied to its tail, and it arrived in time to play a passive part in the wedding feast. It was shot by a man who said he had a special license. This special license the sender afterwards found to consist of mistaking growling gendarmes for chamois and pointing a gun at them till they faded away.

Swiss postal facilities are also the foundation of another story. Two young Englishmen were examining a huge parcel slot in the chief post office at Berne, when one of them playfully tipped up his friend's head first into it. By some accident of the struggle, however, his friend disappeared! For some time nothing happened except muffled shouts and imprecations, so the joker went inside and confessed. The official was very polite. "Was your friend fully stamped and addressed?" he asked. "N—no, I fear not." "Then he will be sent to the stray parcels office and, if not claimed, will be opened in search of information as to ownership."

But the choicest bit of Swiss news appeared in the *Glasgow Herald* on April 5th, as follows:—

### Curious Customs in Switzerland.

One of the most curious of egg customs is still observed in Switzerland on Easter Monday. One hundred eggs are distributed over a level space, covered with sand, on a slope of the Alps, and the young men and women from far and near gather to perform a dance around them. If a couple are expert or fortunate enough to finish the dance without breaking an egg, they become affianced, and sometimes marry before the evening. This strange custom has been observed for centuries, and no one seems able to explain its origin.

I have never heard of that "egg-custom" in Switzerland, although it may be a custom in some of our valleys. In my home-town we used to try and win eggs from each other by "tütsche," i.e., knocking them against each other (the eggs I mean), and the one that broke became the property of the holder of the stronger egg. All sorts of means, fair and otherwise, were pressed into service to obtain really strong eggs—no joke! Talking of eggs reminds me of that Irishism when an Irishman endeavoured to describe his native town and said that "the strangest sight of my town is the smell thereof. To come back to our eggs, however, the greatest sport used to be the throwing of five-centimes nickels into an egg held tightly in one hand, so that only its head protruded and was visible, and at this game our *fratelli* from the other side of the Alps were especially good.

To come now to more serious matters. The *Daily Herald* of April 7th has the following on—

### An Oasis of Peace and Good Order.

The recent intrigues in Geneva give evidence of such bitter nationalism that it may not be amiss to enquire how and why Switzerland itself has managed to maintain its balance so securely, despite its French, German and Italian populations, and despite the abominable way in which all the belligerents misused its hospitality during the war.

It cannot, of course, be that all the tolerance, all the courtesy and all the wisdom in the world belong exclusively to the Swiss. There is nothing in their blood which sets them apart from all other peoples, and the secret of their political sobriety can only be the fact that they have had the courage to put into practice some of the social measures our own politicians promise us so glibly and withhold from us so stubbornly.

The Legislature consists of a Council of States and a National Council, the first having two members from each of the twenty-two Cantons of the Confederation, and the second having some two hundred deputies elected in the ordinary way. The Government itself consists of seven Federal Councillors, of whom one acts as President of the Confederation, with the not excessive salary of a little over £1,000 a year.

This principle of sacrificing one's self for the community is to be found in every branch of Swiss life. In all property disputes, for example, the wish of the community is put before the wish of the individual. One-fifth of a person's private property may be disposed of in any way by will; half of the rest goes to the husband or wife, and the other half to the children, who share it equally. Public banks may not pay their shareholders more than six per cent., and the surplus goes in part to the capital of the bank and in part to the State. Although there is a very mild form of compulsory military service, the country must settle its disputes by arbitration and never by war.

The twenty-two Cantons enjoy a very great measure of autonomy, and, indeed, until the war they were responsible for the collection of all taxation. The regulations in these Cantons vary very greatly, but they have all one point in common—the principle of service for the benefit of the community.

In what other country, for example, would one find roads closed to motor traffic on Sundays on account of the number of pedestrians who are on the road on that day? The jumble of architecture in our new Regent-street would, of course, have been impossible in Switzerland, where plans of new houses must be approved by the local authorities.

In Zurich, for example, scaffolding must be put up at least a fortnight before the foundations of the house are laid, in order to show the size of the proposed building, so that any complaints as to the blocking out of light or air can be made in good time. Landlords nearer town may be obliged to sell land if required for building purposes, and speculative building is not allowed. The State insures all property, and railways, trams, busses, etc., are public property, run entirely for the public benefit.

This careful study of the general welfare extends even to the apartment houses, which have strict regulations, some of them a little annoying to the individual, but all of them welcomed by the community. What would we not give, for example, for a prohibition of all musical instruments after ten o'clock at night, except on rare occasions at carnival time?

Switzerland is an oasis of peace and good order in a chaotic desert of national rivalries and intrigues. Few people are prouder than the Swiss of their traditions, but few have so fully realised that patriotism does not consist of taking someone else's territory as soon as you have the opportunity to do so.

Immediately after the war the Austrian province of Vorarlberg wanted to become the twenty-third Canton of Switzerland. It is a province rich in timber and water power, such as would have been coveted by any of the Signatories of the Peace Treaty, but the Swiss, in their quiet wisdom, refused the request.

One does not only learn from the Great Powers, and our legislators would be well advised to study the Swiss Confederation, for here they have democracy in fact, rather than the fictional democracy with which most of us have to be content.

I trust that Communists living in Switzerland, or trying to go there in order to stir up ill-feeling, will have read or will read what the *Daily Herald* says. After all, when everything is said and done, our wonderfully beautiful country does manage things economical and political rather well, and in many respects merits the praise bestowed upon it not infrequently by qualified observers.

Dr. Adolf Keller.

A very interesting article around Dr. Adolf Keller, whom a number of my readers will remember in connection with the *Wissen und Leben* publications, appears in the *British Weekly* of March 25th, and is, I think, well worth reading.

Unwanted Gold.

*Daily Express* (30th March):—

The Swiss Government intend shortly to launch a loan of £2,000,000. American bankers who learned of this proposal immediately offered the amount at moderate interest. The Swiss authorities, however, informed Wall-street that the loan would be an internal one.

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franc have caused American financiers to place their surplus gold in large quantities in Swiss industries and commerce. Swiss banks, on the other hand, have just lent £1,800,000 to the Grand Duchy of Baden.

"Le Démocrate" strongly opposes the American offer. "The financial imperialism of Wall-street," it says, "menaces us with a slavery greater than the pointed helmets of the late Kaiser's generals."

The moral of the above is the world-old truth that too much of anything is not good. The accumulation of wealth tokens is as calamitous in the long run as their artificial depreciation, and I think it extremely likely that, in spite of quite different conditions and circumstances, the United States will by and by experience a crisis similar to that which now manifests itself in Germany, where unemployment figures indicate nearly 2,000,000 unemployed, following upon contraction of exports, i.e., following upon the deflation which has set in. In the U.S.A. the same result—only, of course, not in such proportions—is bound to come by the opposite process.

The *Daily Express* of 29th March had the following re—

Dr. Nansen as Mediator.

Dr. Nansen, the famous explorer and former Minister for Norway in London, intends to intervene unofficially in order to straighten out the present diplomatic deadlock between the Swiss and the Soviet, so that the Soviet may attend the preparatory Disarmament Conference to be held in Geneva in May, states the "National-Ztg." of Basle. Dr. Nansen knows Tchitcherin, and might succeed, it is added.

I have not seen this bit of news anywhere else, but hope it is true, and that mediation efforts will finally succeed, as they ought to.

Ex-Kaiser's Residence.

The widely circulated news of the ex-Kaiser's intention to settle on the shores of Lake Lugano are contradicted by the *Daily Telegraph's* following item, which appeared on the 24th March:—

A telegram received in the London office of the Swiss Federal Railways from their headquarters in Switzerland states semi-officially that there is no truth in the rumour that the ex-Kaiser is likely to settle in Switzerland, or that negotiations are proceeding for the purchase on his behalf of an estate near Lugano.

It is now stated that the estate in question, the Villa Roccabella, has been rented by the ex-Crown Prince, who has taken it for his own personal residence and intends to stay there for some months at least.

The Villa Roccabella is situated on a rugged rock at the northern extremity of Lake Maggiore, among surroundings of great beauty. It is about half-a-mile from the station of Gordola, on the line from Bellinzona to Locarno, and abounds in sub-tropical flora. A considerable colony of Germans have already settled in the area.

Not that it would seem to be so very important whether the ex-Kaiser really does settle finally in Switzerland or stays in Holland. He is anyhow finished as a politically potential power, I should think, and I doubt whether modern thought would like to allow a St. Helena again!

Kaiserism, in any shape or form, is possible only where economic principles are trampled underfoot, and to blame the Kaiser, or Tsar, or Mussolini, or tyrant, or whatever his description may be in each separate and individual case, is probably not quite right nor just, seeing that he is only the casual figure-head of a vicious and wrong economical principle which allows of such political excrescence.

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