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# The Swiss Observer

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## HOME NEWS

In common with other parts of Europe, catastrophic inundations are reported from Switzerland, particularly from the valleys of the Ticino and the Upper Rhine. Railway traffic in the districts concerned has been brought to a standstill, and some of the mountain hamlets are cut off, the roads having partly disappeared. In Tavanasa three houses were engulfed by the torrential waters of the overflowing Rhine, seven persons perishing, being unable to take refuge in time. They were husband, wife and son named Alig. Two lads, Caduff, a woodworker, named Sortea, and a Mrs. Parpan, the latter having just signalled the "all clear" to a local train.—The village of Ringgenberg (Zigau) was swamped by the otherwise picturesque Zavravia descending from the Piz Nadels, but the inhabitants were able to retreat into safety.—While participating in rescue work near Wälsburg the local game-keeper, Florian Pfister, lost his life, and another, Melchior Cadonau, a well-known chamois hunter, was severely wounded by a fall.—In the canton Ticino the worst affected district is the Blenio valley, where the track of the electric railway to Acquarossa has been washed away in several places; a large number of houses and some factories have collapsed but no loss of life is reported. \* \* \*

A new electoral reform bill, tending to eliminate corrupt practices, has been read for the first time in the Grand Council of the Ticino; for cantonal and communal elections two voting cards are necessary, the first one indicating the political party and the second one the particular candidates favoured. \* \* \*

In the elections last Sunday for the Stadt-amann of Baden, the Socialist scored a notable victory by securing the highest municipal honour for their candidate, National Councillor Karl Killer, a preparatory school teacher by profession; the present Liberal Vice-amann Moser, was unseated. \* \* \*

In reply to an interpellation in the Lucerne Grosse Rat asking for an explanation as to the reason for ordering a new passenger steamer for the lake traffic from abroad, it was officially stated that the foreign tender accepted was Frs. 200,000 below the prices submitted by Swiss firms. \* \* \*

At the annual Swiss Trade Union Congress (Gewerkschaftskongress) held at Interlaken, the Basle group of unions was expelled from the central council as its Communist tendencies and propaganda were against party discipline. \* \* \*

In connection with the forthcoming Tir Féderal at Bellinzona in 1929, the local Council has voted an amount of Frs. 30,000 in favour of the organising committee. \* \* \*

It is announced that the well-known French firm of Peugeot Frères has leased for a short period the old bell foundry works Robert in Porrentruy in order to construct motor-car coaches in Switzerland. \* \* \*

The large flour mill in Chavornay, near Orbe, was destroyed by a fire caused through the ignition of a transmission belt; the undertaking was insured for Frs. 200,000. \* \* \*

Charged with defalcations to the tune of Frs. 56,000, which he spent in speculations, Fritz Reinmann, a clerk formerly employed by the Eidgen. Bank in Berne was sentenced to 2½ years' imprisonment. \* \* \*

## NOTES AND GLEANINGS.

### Smallest State in Europe.

The *Evening Standard* (Sept. 19th) seems to be very much concerned about the future of the principality of Liechtenstein. As far as Switzerland is concerned we do not cultivate imperialism, and there is no great desire for increasing our happy family, but we are very surprised to be informed by our contemporary that if the existing economic agreements with that state evolve into a political union "all the treaties and conventions guaranteeing our eternal neutrality become null and void." We admire the perfect picture drawn of the good old Prince, but are afraid that the majority of his handful of subjects could tell a different tale.

What will become of Europe's smallest State, the Principality of Liechtenstein, when its present ruler, Prince Johann II. Placidus, now 87 years of age, is no more?

His nephew and heir, Prince Andreas Ferdinand, married Miss Shelagh Brunner in 1925 at the Oratory, and she was called the "golden bride."

Since 1858 he has been monarch of this little principality of 65 square miles, and for nearly 70 years, states the Vienna correspondent of the British United Press, he has been the best Prince his 11,000 subjects could desire. He has never exacted any taxes; he has given them free pasture for their cows, free logs for their fires; a few silver pieces to every inhabitant for Christmas, and even a Constitution when they wanted to keep up with the big countries.

This idyll has been going on for centuries. The inhabitants of the Baronies of Schellenberg and Vaduz, the two provinces forming the Principality, even got their name from the reigning family.

There is now some talk of Liechtenstein joining Switzerland after the death of Prince Johann. A treaty is already in existence with Switzerland providing for common customs, postal service and currency, while Swiss diplomats represent Liechtenstein abroad. Switzerland and Austria are the only two countries where the Principality is diplomatically represented, as these are the only countries where any matters affecting it are likely to arise.

It has always been the fate of Liechtenstein to be "off the map." In 1866, when Prussia fought Austria and the German Bund, Liechtenstein, in accordance with its Federal duties, mobilised its army of nineteen men! History does not record whether this army fought, but it is known that in the peace treaty the country was forgotten.

The Prince does not trouble his subjects. In fact, he only visited Liechtenstein for the first time in 1908, having "ruled" the country for fifty years without ever putting his foot on its ground.

The crux of the matter lies in the fact that should Liechtenstein apply to Switzerland for complete union, and should Switzerland grant the demand, all the treaties and conventions guaranteeing Switzerland's eternal neutrality would become null and void. The same applies to the case of Liechtenstein joining Austria, the frontiers of which have also been fixed and guaranteed.

### Efficiency.

Wide publicity has been given in the English Press to the success of Messrs. Escher Wyss & Co. in securing, against all competitors, the contract for supplying a turbine plant to the Newport (Mon.) Electrical and Tramways undertaking. Considering that not quite 30% of the order is executed at their home works, necessitating the inclusion of heavy freight charges, it seems to indicate a most careful and close calculation on the part of the Swiss firm in being able to leave behind those English manufacturers who put in direct tenders. The following is reproduced from the *South Wales News* (Sept. 20th):—

"The Newport Electrical and Tramways Committee decided yesterday to accept the tender of Messrs. Escher Wyss and Co., S.A., a Swiss firm, for a 10,000 kilowatt turbo-alternator and condensing plant at a price of £34,095.

There were eight British and four foreign tenderers, who, between them, submitted 24 alternative offers. In every instance the British tenders were for all-British goods. The successful firm, however, in their 16 alternative tenders, suggested different combinations of Swiss and British machinery. One of the lowest offers was that of a German firm, whose price for an all-German plant was £27,507. The lowest British tender was £34,702, but in this case the alternator and condenser were not in accordance with the specifications.

In a report to the Committee, the Borough Electrical Engineer mentions that in respect to the British tenders, he had examined at the makers' works the design and construction of the plants offered, and found there had been some improvements in design since the last 10,000 kilowatt set was purchased by the Corporation. In certain cases it had not been possible to give any consideration to the proposals owing to the design of the plant being such as to make it impossible to accommodate it satisfactorily in the limited space available. The Committee were aware that it was necessary to take into consideration the relative steam-consumption values of the plants offered, for it was quite possible that the plant with the higher initial price might

## ANNIVERSARIES OF SWISS EVENTS.

October 1st, 1872.—Excavations commencing of the St. Gotthard Tunnel.

October 3rd, 1910.—Opening of the Bodensee-Toggenburg Railway.

October 4th, 1797.—Albert Bitzios (Jeremias Gott-helf) born at Murtlen. One of the most popular pastors with a rare knowledge of mankind. In his stories he describes the life of the Bernese peasants with pitiless veracity and unmistakable genius.

October 7th, 1799.—Russian army marches through Schaffhausen.

October 6th, 1874.—Opening of the International Postal Congress at Berne; on the 9th of October the Universal Postal Union was established.

October 8th, 1846.—Fall of the Aristocratic régime at Geneva.

be, in practice, the more economical proposition. It so happened, however, that in the case of Messrs. Escher Wyss and Co., they offered the lowest steam consumption and therefore their price was strictly comparable with the best. British offers without adjustment. In the case of their tender for £34,095, approximately 71 per cent. of the work and financial payments would remain in this country.

### The Pit Boys' Holiday.

We reprint the following official report from the *Yorkshire Herald* (Sept. 24th) merely to show the striking improvement in physical fitness which a short holiday under changed conditions can bring about. The pit boys have, of course, been sent from one extreme to the other as far as health conditions are concerned, and although we do not wish to underrate a cure in the Alps we believe a short stay at the English seaside would have produced similar results.

A report on the physical effect of the recent visit to the Alps of five pitboys from the Sherwood Colliery, Mansfield, Notts., has been made by the Mansfield Medical Officer. The results may be summarised as follows:

Reginald Owen, 14, a screen worker, gained 8lbs. in weight, ½ in. in chest measurement (unexpanded), 1 in. in chest measurement (expanded), 1½ in. in the waist, 1½ in. in the thigh, and from ¼ in. to ½ in. in the calf.

Eric Barker, 15, a screen worker, gained 2lbs. in weight, ½ in. in chest measurement (unexpanded), 1 in. in the waist, ½ in. in height.

Alfred Downs, 15, a trimmer, gained 2½ lbs. in weight, 1½ in. in the waist, 1 in. in the thigh, ½ in. in the calf.

Christopher Shiel, 17, a pony driver, gained 7lbs. in weight, ½ in. in chest measurement (unexpanded) and 1 in. in height.

Wilfred Foster, 16, a pony driver, gained 17½ lbs. in weight, 1½ ins. in chest measurement (unexpanded), 1 in. in chest measurement (expanded), 1½ in. in the thigh, ½ in. in the calf.

"I did not wish," says Lieut.-Col. G. S. Hutchinson, who was in charge of the party, "myself to obtain the measurements and other data in respect to the health of the five pitboys who went to Switzerland with me, because I preferred that these observations and results should be obtained by the Sherwood Colliery officials. This makes them entirely free from any kind of prejudice.

"My previous experience in having taken quite a number of lads about a similar age to Switzerland in similar conditions has demonstrated a marked increase in weight, height, chest expansion and leg development. I do not suppose that such developments are due alone or in major portion to exposure to the actinic rays of the sun. Other factors such as high altitude quickening the blood rate, the stimulation obtained from cold, change of diet, and this to that of the best character living in an atmosphere entirely free from bacteria and carbonisation, and of course a holiday in the best sense of the term, with active exercises stretching all the limbs, contribute very considerably to any results which can be seen.

"The fact remains, however, that beneficial results can be perceived, and there appears to be a wealth of evidence that it is the Alpine sun's actinic rays which are in a large degree responsible for the results, both directly and indirectly."

The test, which lasted fully a fortnight, was undertaken at Griesalp Kinental, Switzer-