

**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:** - (1927)

**Heft:** 279

**Rubrik:** Prepaid subscription rates

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**Download PDF:** 22.02.2026

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# The Swiss Observer

Telephone : CLERKENWELL 9595

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



VOL. 7—No. 279

PRICE 3d.

## PREPAID SUBSCRIPTION RATES

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## HOME NEWS

The Financial Commission of the National Council proposes to raise the salaries of Federal Councillors from Frs. 25,000 to Frs. 32,000, with an additional Frs. 3,000 for the President of the Confederation.

Director A. Schraffl, of the Swiss Federal Railways, has been made an honorary doctor of the Federal Polytechnic in Zurich in recognition of his services in the development of our railway system.

Biel is to have a new post office, for which purpose the Swiss Parliament is voting a credit of 18 million francs.

In order to afford the inhabitants of the canton Aargau undisturbed night's rest the police propose to forbid the traffic of mechanically-propelled vehicles between the hours of 10 p.m. and 6 a.m.

A new hospital—Bürgerspital—is to be constructed in Solothurn at a cost of nearly four million francs; it will be built on the "Schöngrün" to the south of the town and consist, apart from the hospital proper, of an isolation pavilion and a convalescent home.

In a law suit brought against the canton Valais for the return of a bequest made in 1903 for the purpose of erecting a cantonal hospital, the heirs-at-law were unsuccessful. It was asserted that the canton had failed to carry out the testator's wish and that there was little likelihood of its being able to do so in the future; the sum involved amounts to over Frs. 100,000.

A new independent Catholic daily, the *Giornale del Popolo*, has made its appearance at Lugano, and has for its objects the maintenance and defence of religious traditions and achievements in the canton.

A number of strikers who, during the recent carpenters' strike in Zurich, set fire to a local builder's yard, were sentenced to terms of imprisonment ranging from six months to one year. One of the accused was discharged and received an indemnity of Frs. 600 for having been kept under arrest for 165 days awaiting trial; of the other five accused, only the young Communist Sigg pleaded guilty.

For having, after a quarrel with her husband, set fire to their homestead in June last, Frau G. Röffler, of Valzalum (Grisons) was sentenced to 18 months' imprisonment; she had, in the first instance, accused a local tramp of the deed, but during confrontation with him betrayed herself by her contradictory statements.

The little inn on the "Hohen Kasten" (Appenzell) which is closed during the winter season, provided an unknown climber with an inexpensive Xmas treat, it having been discovered that a mysterious tourist had for some days been helping himself without stint to the contents of the larder and wine-cellars; needless to say, he omitted to inscribe his name and address in the official register of visitors.

Last Sunday a fire completely destroyed the farmstead, including most of the livestock, belonging to Mr. Hermann Koch, of Romoos (Lucerne). The inaccessibility of the locality prevented the neighbouring fire brigades from giving any assistance.

In a motor accident during the afternoon of Christmas day Mr. Hess, a gentleman of independent means living at Kempten-Wetzikon (Zurich) lost his life.

## Neujahrsglocken.

In den Lüften schwelendes Gedröhne,  
Leicht wie Halme beugt der Wind die Töne :  
Leis verhallen, die zum ersten riefen,  
Neu Geläute hebt sich aus den Tiefen.  
Grosse Heere, nicht ein einzler Rufer!  
Wohlaut flutet ohne Strand und Ufer.

—C. F. Meyer.

LONDON, JANUARY 1, 1927.

## NOTES AND GLEANINGS.

A correspondent writes to point out that the confusion in the English Press arose through literal translation; the proper equivalent for "president" of the National Council is, he thinks, "speaker." I am inclined to agree, though the Speaker of the House of Commons is chosen for the duration of Parliament, whilst the President of the National Council vacates his chair every twelve months. Perhaps the best rendering in English is "Chairman," which also implies mutation and carries less weight.

The results of the Spahlinger treatment, recently established beyond doubt, still occupy much space in the provincial papers, but there is no tangible sign as yet that this victory over tuberculosis is anything more than a paper victory as far as this country is concerned. On account of the time and cost of preparing the sera the treatment is at present open only to a few of the well-to-do and its general adoption is a question of finance.

### A New Electrical Project.

The *Electrical Review* (Dec. 24th) gives particulars of the scheme for utilising the water power of the Oberhasli :—

Engineers who have spent their all-too-short summer holidays climbing in Switzerland will be interested in hearing a little about the new hydro-electric works under construction by the Forces Motrices Bernoises. This go-ahead company, finding that its supply of electricity is insufficient to meet its ever-growing needs, has now adopted plans for utilising the water power of the Oberhasli, with the little glacier lake beds of the Grimsel and the Gelmer as reservoirs, feeding from the falls of the Aar. The rock tests have proved satisfactorily that the lake-beds are of pure granite, while the valley to be dammed by the barrage of the Spittalamm is equally the result of glacier-erosion, presenting absolutely no fissure whatever, so that geologically no finer position has ever been presented for a hydro-electric power station than that of the Oberhasli.

The waterfall of the Aar, available as far as Innerkirchen, is about 1,200 metres, and it will be divided into three consecutive stages or falls—one from the Grimsel to the power station of the Handeck, the second from the Handeck to Boden, and the third from Boden to Innerkirchen. The mean fall of the first section is 545 m., the machinery installed will be of 100,000 h.p., and the energy available annually will be 223,000,000 kWh., registered at Innerkirchen. For the second the figures are : 417 m. fall, 86,000 h.p. of machinery, and a permanent output of 190,000,000 kWh. per annum. The third stage has a mean fall of 248 m., machines capable of furnishing 60,000 h.p., and at the least is capable of an annual output of 125,000,000 kWh.

All the works for the first part of the Oberhasli plan will be founded upon and carried out in granite, but the principal barrage of the Spittalamm (100 m. high, 180 m. wide across the gorge, and with 340,000 cu. m. of masonry) as well as the auxiliary barrage of the Seefuregg, will naturally be built of reinforced concrete. The first barrage takes the form of a curved resistance wall, and the second a straight one; the construction of both will be much facilitated by the inexhaustible quantities of sand and granitic gravel lying handy in the bed of the Aar. The crown of the Seefuregg, 290 m. long, will be put into use as a short cut from the new Grimsel road to the hospice which is to be built on the Nollen, and to the hut of the caretaker of the barrage. The Grimsel lake will hold 100,000,000 cu. m. of water, and the Gelmer lake 13 million cu. m.; the barrage of the Gelmer is to be 385 metres long, and immediately after the water leaves the lake it descends by a series of falls to the plain of Handeck 400 metres below.

A pressure-pipe, 5,250 metres long, set entirely in the right-hand face of the granite rocks of the mountain, conveys the water from the Grimsel lake, and a high-pressure gallery 375 metres long, carries the water from the Gelmer lake to a reinforced iron-clad penscock, which vertically for 300 metres, and then obliquely, supplies the water to the turbines at a rate of 18 cu. metres per second. The power house is situated on the right bank of the Aar, above the zigzags of the Handeck; its foundations are hewn out of the granite rock, and it is protected from avalanches by a protruding

## ANNIVERSARIES OF SWISS EVENTS.

January 1st, 1484.—Ulrich Zwingli, born at Wildhaus (Toggenburg); he was not only a reformer but an ardent patriot and a splendid musician.

January 2nd, 1801.—Johann Kaspar Lavater died in Zurich. Goethe wrote of Lavater that he possessed the most beautiful yet simple character. Lavater was not only celebrated as a poet but more so as a physiognomist. His greatest work, "Physiognomy," Lavater declared to be an unerring science of reading the character of the mind and the future of any human being from the features of the face. He was on terms of intimate friendship with all the great men of his time. In his declining years he defended with great courage the cause of his country against the conquest by the French; at the plundering of Zurich by the French he received a gunshot wound from which he died.

January 3rd, 1752.—Johannes Müller, historian, died at Schaffhausen. He is the author of a great work "Geschichte der Schweiz. Eidgenossenschaft" (5 vols.). He was also a passionate defender of Swiss unity, and for some time was minister to Jérôme, the weak and shortlived King of Westphalia.

January 5th, 1477.—Battle of Nancy, when the Confederates defeated Charles the Bold of Burgundy, "the greatest warrior prince of his time."

January 6th, 1847.—Insurrection in the canton and town of Fribourg devised by dissatisfied Liberals.

January 7th, 1863.—Destruction of the village of Bedretto, in the Ticino.

January 8th, 1277.—Recognition of the independence of Uri.

mass of rock. This central station will have four vertical Pelton turbines, each developing 25,000 h.p. at 500 r.p.m. The alternators, with a normal capacity of 25,000 kVA, will generate three-phase current at 7,500 V, which will be transformed to 50,000 V for transmission.

Although the Handeck is not so very high, it is uninhabitable for part of the year, because the valley below as far as Guttannen is very narrow and sometimes obstructed by avalanches, so that overhead transmission cannot be used. To overcome this difficulty a gallery has been pierced in the rock on the left side of the valley, large enough to allow the men employed at the Handeck power house to go down to the village of Guttannen without running any risk of being overtaken by an avalanche. The electric cables are placed in this gallery, thus ensuring the regular transmission of energy in all seasons. Lower than Guttannen no further precautions are necessary, and overhead wires carry the current on to Innerkirchen.

Engineers, electrical or otherwise, visiting the Bernese Oberland or the Rhone Glacier could do worse than tramp a bit farther and see for themselves the work in course of construction in the Oberhasli. They may be sure of a hearty welcome from their Swiss *confrères*, who do not always find life very gay in that land of snow and ice so far above the plain.

### Alpine Wild Life.

A fascinating study appears in *Country Life* (Dec. 18th) from the pen of Dame Katharine Forster, D.B.E. —

Ski-running gives one a chance of realising a good deal of the wild life beyond human habitation, but even a silent runner seldom succeeds in surprising the animals whose tracks may be seen all over the snow. The commonest tracks are those of fox and hare, chamois and roe-deer.

Sometimes there is so much snow above tree level that the chamois are driven down into the forests, where they may be seen scraping the snow away under the trees in their search for dry grass or bilberry shoots, or stretching up to pull the beard-like lichen off the branches above their heads. The roe-deer may even wander along the railway line, unable to jump over the high banks of snow on either side, and are easily caught by the men working on the line as a train drives the deer from behind. They are then taken carefully down to the village and are housed in a stable until the snow conditions make it safe for them to be let loose again, able to provide for their own living. Hares are also remembered by the kindly Swiss peasant, who will hang a bunch of hay to a telephone pole