

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: - (1928)

Heft: 328

Rubrik: Home news

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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. 8—No. 328

London, JANUARY 7, 1928.

PRICE 3d.

PREPAID SUBSCRIPTION RATES

UNITED KINGDOM	{ 3 Months (13 issues, post free)	36
AND COLONIES	{ 6 " " (24 " ")	66
SWITZERLAND	{ 6 Months (26 issues, post free)	Frs. 7.50
	{ 12 " " (52 " ")	14.—

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

HOME NEWS

States Councillor Dr. Jos. Räber has been appointed director of the International Telegraph Bureau at Berne in place of the late M. Henri Etienne. Dr. Räber, who is 56 and was born at Küssnacht, is the leader of the Catholic Party in his native canton, Schwyz.

No official support is extended to a proposal for the erection, somewhere in the Palais Fédéral, of a bust to commemorate the late Col. von Sprecher.

The question of replacing by motor bus services some of the municipal tramways, which for the last ten years have been operated with considerable deficits, is receiving the serious consideration of the St. Gall authorities.

A collision took place on New Year's Eve on the Rhaetian railways near Bergün station. Through some so far unexplained defect in the working of the points an express train ran head on into a passenger train, with the result that the locomotives and one or two carriages were telescoped. All the passengers had a miraculous escape, the only one hurt being the engine driver, Lüscher.

The workshops attached to the chemical laboratory of the boot and shoe factory Bally, in Schönenwerd, were destroyed by an explosion as a result of a fire; no lives were lost.

NOTES AND GLEANINGS.

Schoolgirls and Winter Sports.

The long school holidays are often a bore for both the parents and the children. There are several associations which arrange collective trips to Switzerland under proper supervision. One of these camps for girls is described in the *Manchester Guardian* (Dec. 27th) :—

"It is rather a large undertaking to arrange a winter sports camp for schoolgirls, but this has been successfully achieved by the Federation of University Women's Camps for Schoolgirls. This body has, for some years past, set itself the task of doing for the girl at school what the Student Christian Movement is doing for students. It was felt that in the free and happy atmosphere of camp life it would be easily possible to relate Christian ideals to the ordinary things of everyday life in the home and in the school. As a result, camps are held during the summer months in many parts of the British Isles and also abroad, and these camps are attended by secondary schoolgirls from all over the country. There are usually during thirty-five and forty of the camps held during the year, and to these go approximately twelve hundred girls."

A winter sports camp was held last December and January at Château d'Ex, Switzerland, and a similar camp has been arranged to be held at the same place again this year. The intending campers will set out to-morrow for a fortnight, arriving back in London on January 12th.

The cost of a holiday of this kind is extremely low, for the aim of the organisers is to include in the party those girls who would not otherwise have an opportunity for a treat of this kind. The inclusive charge is thirteen guineas for each camper, and this charge covers everything but pocket-money and excursions, for which only a small sum will be needed. The girls are all the time under the care of university women, who act as guides, philosophers and friends, as well as officers to the party. The number of the campers is about thirty-five, and of these thirty-five five are Manchester girls.

The days spent at the camp are filled with pleasant activity. The building in which the girls are housed is a school which overlooks the village. It has a south aspect, and behind it rise hills dotted with pines. Pine woods are to be seen to the right and to the left, and near at hand are good skiing-slopes, skating rinks, and many lugeing tracks.

At the camp the day begins at 7.30, when the girls are called. An hour later comes break-

fast, and an hour after this the whole party is expected to be out of doors. The mid-day dinner is served at one o'clock, and at 5.30 there is a dance or a concert. Supper is at a quarter to seven, and at half-past seven the girls have prayers and a study circle or address. Those who are responsible for arranging the camp prepare courses of Bible study. Discussions are encouraged amongst the girls and the officers, and this, the more serious side of the camp life, appears to be as much enjoyed as its lighter aspects. Bedtime for the campers is nine o'clock—not at all too soon for girls who are still in their teens, and who have spent a good part of their day in the open air engaged in vigorous exercise.

Intending campers are sent full particulars of the equipment which is needed for their fortnight's outing. Thick boots for walking and another pair for skiing or skating are needed, and waterproof knickers, a macintosh, and an extra short skirt are also required.

The purpose of the camp is to draw schoolgirls together for a holiday which shall be healthy and happy, and which shall be at the same time one that will give them something more lasting than a merely transient "good time" feeling. The ideals of Christian life and service, presented without sentimentality and with no denominational bias, are laid before the girls in a manner which cannot fail to make a deep and lasting impression on them."

The New League of Nations Building.

Though much time, money and a great variety of talents have combined to elaborate plans for the proposed new palace, fears are voiced here and in Switzerland that the "many cooks are likely to spoil the broth." Here is what the *Evening Standard* (Dec. 30th) says :—

"It appears that M. Nénot's design for the new building of the League of Nations at Geneva is to be altered much more than was at first supposed. A sort of committee of architects of very different tastes and tendencies is to overhaul it, and their joint efforts are likely to convert what is at present merely dull into a positive horror."

A better result would probably have been obtained had the League of Nations had the courage to choose some architect whose accomplished work showed him to possess talent and originality, and give him a free hand. That was what Louis XIV. did in the case of Versailles. Competitions are rarely satisfactory."

The Valais to be Opened to Motor Cars.

Some particulars are given in the *Times* (Dec. 27th) of the great road construction schemes which several councils in the canton Valais have decided upon.

"The Government of the Canton of Valais has decided to spend about £400,000 next year on the construction of several main roads in the Alpine valleys. One of these roads will lead to the village of Chandolin, at a height of 6,350ft., in the Val d'Anniviers, which claims to be the highest village in Europe that is permanently inhabited. Another road, 12ft. wide, is to be built between Stalden and Saas-Fee, in the Visp valley.

When this road is completed—probably at the end of next year—motor-cars will be able to climb as far as Saas-Fee (5,900ft.). A mule track is so far the only means of communication between Stalden—on the railway line from Visp to Zermatt—and Saas-Fee, and though the construction of the new road will be regretted by Alpinists and lovers of the picturesque, the new means of communication will no doubt contribute towards the economic development of that remote valley, one of the last in the Alps where vehicles could not penetrate.

The representatives of the Communes of the Visp district have decided to build a main road between Stalden and St. Niklaus, thus enabling motor-cars to go as far as the latter village, pending the construction of the St. Niklaus-Zermatt section, which may be completed within the next three years."

Engelberg.

There are few winter sports centres which can boast of historical associations, a fact which is dwelt upon in a short reference in the *Catholic Times* (Dec. 23rd) :—

"Of all the now numerous "winter sports" centres of Switzerland there is one that should have special attraction for Catholic holiday-makers. This is Engelberg—"The Mount of the Angels." It lies close to one of the main lines of comfortable travel from England. The first

long, but rapid, stage of the journey is to Lucerne. Then, a little more than twenty miles south of the lake, accessible by a mountain railway, stands the little hill town of Engelberg, in a high valley, amidst glorious Alpine scenery. It takes its name from the Benedictine monastery of Our Lady of the Angels.

The Monastery was founded in the later years of the eleventh century. It has had an unbroken religious life since then. In the Middle Ages its Abbots held princely rank, and their domain extended over a hundred villages. The Abbey has now some fifty monks and a school of about a hundred students. It has a library of twenty thousand volumes and about two hundred valuable manuscripts. Some few of these represent salvage from the far more valuable library that was pillaged and dispersed by the French Revolutionary invaders in 1798. This had a rich treasure of manuscripts accumulated during the medieval centuries and a splendid collection of early printed books."

Domestic Servants.

A correspondent in the *Glasgow Herald* (Dec. 28th) sings the praises of the domestic servants in Switzerland. Unfortunately, their angelic attributes seem to vanish as soon as they set foot on English soil.

"Many British travellers abroad cast covetous eyes on the capable, pleasant-looking maids who serve them in Swiss hotels, wishing they could import such girls to their own homes. What a boon it would be to have an experienced domestic who would be content to work for 14 or 15 hours a day for £30 a year, or an inexperienced girl for £7 a year! And those are the wages domestics receive in middle class families in Switzerland."

The Swiss domestic servant's hours are from 6 a.m. in summer, 7 a.m. in winter, till late evening, 9 or 10 o'clock, and she is fully occupied during that time. She is expected to turn out rooms, to cook, to do the washing and ironing, to weed the garden, and, in her spare time, help with the family mending. Her weekly holiday is on Sunday, when she is free for several hours in the afternoon. Though in many cases the maid-servant does the washing washerwomen are usually engaged by families who adhere to the good old custom of washing the household linen at intervals of three months. In former days in Switzerland the washing took place once in six months, but a monthly washing is becoming more general. The washerwoman requires to be paid 5s. a day; during that time she eats five times, and for some of her repasts wine is necessary, but she works a ten-hour day, and for a washing of three months' linen the remuneration is, perhaps, not excessive.

Experienced Swiss maids all speak at least two languages, usually French and German. The young girls of German Switzerland, to whom it is a necessity to know French, go to French Switzerland as volunteer domestics—that is, the girl, in exchange for her domestic services, has the opportunity of learning French in the course of her daily life. The young volunteer's duties are the same as those of other domestics, but she eats with the family and sits with the family. Her mistress is generally very kind to her, taking pains to teach her many things besides French, and at the end of the year for which she is engaged she has not only learned to speak French usefully, but is accomplished in cooking and domestic economy. The system of volunteer domestics is one which benefits both the mistresses and the maids, and parents who are sufficiently well-to-do sometimes take this method of training their daughters."

A Grave Statement.

The *Westminster Gazette* (Dec. 30th) is the only English daily that refers to the grave charges made in a Swiss daily in connection with the recent disaster to an Italian liner :—

"The *Bernese Bund*, generally regarded as the Swiss Government's paper, to-day contains grave accusations in regard to the sinking of the Italian liner *Princess Mafalda*, when six Swiss citizens were drowned.

The *Bund* declares that the ship's engines were defective when she left Genoa, and became completely out of order during the voyage.

The truth was hidden from the passengers (it goes on to declare), and no safety measures were taken. During the wreck the crew lost their heads and the officers did nothing to prevent their abandoning the ship. The rescue work was carried out by other ships which came up.

