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# The Swiss Observer

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## HOME NEWS

The Federal Council has granted the canton Ticino a contribution of Frs. 100,000 towards the establishment of an official testing office for the wine growing industry.

About 1,500 electors in the canton Uri have signed the petition asking for the abolition of the Landsgemeinde—a sufficient number to carry the proposal.

In the canton Unterwalden the Landsgemeinde is to be strengthened if a Government proposal is sanctioned by the electors. This proposal seeks to re-invest the plenary assembly with legislative powers which a few years ago were relegated to the Regierungsrat.

In order to encourage civil aviation the Zurich Grosser Rat has increased its subsidy for 1928 from Frs. 85,000 to Frs. 120,000.

The Winterthur municipality proposed to pay a bonus of one month's salary to those employees who have been in the service of the State for 25 years or more.

A civil police force (special constabulary) of 250 men is to be created in Geneva to assist the regular police in case of emergency.

A landslide—which it is feared will develop further as a consequence of the heavy rains—destroyed a dwelling in Bättwil in the Leimental, Solothurn, belonging to Eugen Gschwind; four other houses are said to be in danger.

Another landslide damaged the permanent way at Choinez, on the Delsberg-Berne line. Fortunately the dislocation of the rails was discovered in time by a railway worker, thus making it possible to stop the further progress of the Paris express, which had already been signalled. The direct trains from France to Berne are being temporarily diverted to Basle.

The guard in charge at the level crossing of Les Gonelles (Vaud) where last July three motorists lost their lives, has been convicted of negligence and sentenced to 15 days' imprisonment.

While crossing the road to enter her own house, Frau Dietrich-Neuenschwander, aged 74, of Bümpliz, Berne, was knocked down by a passing motor car; she subsequently succumbed to the injuries received.

## EXTRACTS FROM SWISS PAPERS.

**Hilfe für kriegsgeschädigte Auslandschweizer.**—Der Bundesrat hat seine Antwort auf die Kleine Anfrage von Nationalrat Baumberger betreffend die Entschädigung der in der französischen Kriegszone geschädigten Schweizer festgestellt. Der Bundesrat nimmt Bezug auf frühere Darlegungen in den eidgenössischen Räten und im Geschäftsbüro und erinnert daran, dass die Bundesversammlung für die in Not geratenen Landsleute in der Kriegszone seinerzeit gewisse Mittel zur Verfügung gestellt habe. Er hält es aber nicht für möglich, den Kriegsgeschädigten ausserhalb der Schweiz eine über den Rahmen dieser Hilfsaktion hinausgehende Unterstützung angeboten zu lassen. Die Hoffnung der schweizerischen Geschädigten scheine vielfach neue Nahrung zu erhalten durch die von Seiten der französischen Behörden vorgenommenen amtlichen Schadensschätzungen, denen aber in diesem Falle ausschliesslich Feststellungswert zukommt. Wenn die Interessierten an die französischen Behörden die Frage richten, ob sie nunmehr auf die Vergütung der Schäden rechnen können, so wird ihnen meistens erwidert, das hänge vom Abschluss eines diesbezüglichen Abkommens zwischen Frankreich und der Schweiz ab. Es wird aber unterlassen, hinzuzufügen, dass die französische Regierung es endgültig abgelehnt hat, ein solches Abkommen in Betracht zu ziehen.

*Neue Zürcher Zeitung.*

**Attaqués par des aigles.**—Par deux fois cet hiver, la direction des forêts du canton de Berne a été

avisé que des garde-chasse avaient été attaqués par des aigles. L'un des gardes fut surpris au cours d'une ascension périlleuse et ne put se défendre qu'avec peine contre l'agression inopinée du roi des airs. Il ne parvint à s'en débarrasser qu'en le frappant au moyen de la crosse de son fusil.

Son camarade se trouvait sur une pente raide lorsque l'attaque se produisit. Pour y parer, il fit tout d'abord usage de son bâton de ski. Cela ne suffisant pas, il se servit de son revolver. Ebrayé par la détonation le rapace s'éloigna à tire-d'aile.

*Feuille d'Avis de Lausanne.*

**Les diaconesses s'installeront.**—La Société des diaconesses de la "Wartburg" à Mannenbach (Thurgovie) a acheté la petite île romantique d'Iseltwald (lac de Brienz), avec le petit château, encore inachevé, dont la construction avait été ordonnée en 1907 par l'industriel Sigrist, de Madrid, qui voulait en faire une résidence d'été. L'industriel étant décédé, les travaux de construction furent interrompus. La maison sera transformée et achevée.

*La Suisse, Genève.*

**Une Zurichoise de cent cinq ans.**—Le recensement annuel, à Zurich, a permis de constater qu'il y avait dans la cité de la Limmat une femme âgée de 105 ans et qui doit être la doyenne des habitants de la Suisse. Il s'agit de Mme Anna-Barbara Kollhop, née à Brandenberger. Mme. Kollhop, hospitalisée à l'asile de Helfenstein, est née le 8 août 1823, à Phalsbourg.

Cette vieille dame, encore qu'ayant quelque peine à circuler, est fort active et lit chaque soir son journal. Avec des lunettes, il est vrai!

*La Revue Lausanne.*

## NOTES AND GLEANINGS.

### St. Cergues.

The more popular or fashionable an Alpine resort becomes, the less is it likely to fulfil its primary object, i.e., to offer a complete rest, thereby benefiting body and mind; a stay in one of the fashionable centres can hardly be termed a holiday in its strict sense. St. Cergues, which is comparatively little advertised, seems not to have completely surrendered to the modern craze for strenuous distraction and amusement but has retained its original charms of attraction. The following account appeared in the *Reforee* (Jan. 22nd):—

"For many years it has been our pleasant practice to spend part of every winter in the Oberland, and it seemed not only a sort of treason but an imprudence to yield to the persuasion of certain enthusiastic friends and pitch our camp on the foothills of the Dôle at St. Cergues. To desert the Alps for the Swiss Jura appeared to be a rash proceeding, and besides, none of our winter-sporting acquaintances, with the exception of the enthusiasts who had urged this temerarious resolve upon us, knew anything of the place save that it was about three hundred feet lower than that to which we have been accustomed to go.

Which only shows what sheep we English are. For this same Dôle was said by Ruskin to be one of the two mountains which had exercised the greatest influence upon his life; Lamartine, no mean judge, declared these slopes to be the most beautiful in the world; Goethe, Rousseau, George Eliot, and Cherbuliez have sung their praises; and even the late Mrs. Harriet Beecher-Stowe, gushing over them in the intervals of slopping over Uncle Tom, has not succeeded in banalising their exquisite loveliness. Far below lies the Lake of Geneva, like a jewel on a woman's breast, and beyond is such a panorama as has, I believe, no equal in Europe and perhaps none in the world.

Before you, seeming sometimes so close that it is as though you had only to stretch out your hand to caress them, lie the Alps on a front of two hundred miles, the most tremendous spectacle I have ever seen. In the near foreground Mont Blanc dominates the scene in gigantic majesty, but you can pick out every familiar peak—the Jungfrau, the Ogre, the Monk, the Weisshorn, and a hundred others, and even the Matterhorn, a hundred miles away and more, stands clearly out.

But I did not sit down to write guide-book rhapsodies, and indeed no pen could do justice to this incomparable view. I have only been betrayed into description by a very natural anger that nobody had the sense or the kindness to tell me of this place before. After all, one does not come to Switzerland in winter to look at views,

however grand, but to skate and ski and toboggan in that bewildering combination of keen frost, blazing sunshine and unsullied snow, which is the peculiar prerogative of this astonishing country. By the way, in this matter of the snow you folks in England have been treating us rather badly this year. It has come to us now in abundant measure, but for days even Davos, six thousand feet up, was longing and praying for it while you were wallowing in it at home. You didn't want it, you know you didn't; and yet you most inconsiderately kept it to yourselves.

However, when the Alps are blushing in the evening sun, one cannot have hard thoughts, even of Hampstead Heath, and, if one could, the friendliness of St. Cergues would very soon drive them away. For, next to its wonderful beauty and its facilities for winter sports, that is what strikes a stranger to this place the most. For the novice in skiing, particularly if he or she happens to be a little self-conscious and afraid of the ridicule of the expert—though that is a vice in which the expert never by any chance indulges—St. Cergues is the ideal place.

A human creature on skates for the first time is not exactly a model of grace, but he is a picture of dignity compared with a learner on skis. At the worst he can only fall, but when the skier sits down unexpectedly, which he does on the average once every ten seconds, he does it with one foot curled under the back of his head and the other raised in protest to high heaven, or else he goes head over heels into the powdery snow and the only visible tokens of his existence are his skis waving wildly in the air. Have you ever seen a goose trying to walk across a frozen pond? Well, that is what the embryo skier looks like when all is going well with him and he is still, for a few agonising moments, keeping right end up. Moreover when the inevitable catastrophe comes, he can by no mortal means get up again of his own motion. He can neither raise himself while his skis are on, nor get at the fastenings of the dreadful things to take them off. All that is within the compass of the novice is to remain in spread-eagled incompetence and howl for help.

Upright or prostrate, he is a spectacle to move the immortal gods to unquenchable laughter, and elsewhere he has to endure the even more poignant derision of men. But here nobody so much as smiles when he has done everything he was specially warned not to do and has made a perfect idiot of himself in consequence. One of the guides retained by the Dôle Ski Club—incidentally, you are not allowed to tip him, however grateful you may be—is always at hand with a face as grave as a judge to set him right side up again and to murmur a few words of sympathetic advice.

The Dôle provides plenty of runs for the satisfaction of the most expert. I have looked upon Plumb's Glory with feelings of the most devout thankfulness that I shall never be compelled to emulate Plumb and upon the Candidate's Nightmare and the Rabbit's Grave with the firmest possible resolve that wild horses should not drag me into those horrors. But there are plenty of other places in Switzerland to gratify the expert skier's curious desire to break himself into small fragments; the uniqueness of this place is that it is the novice's Paradise, a training-ground on which he may learn his craft with the minimum of danger and in an atmosphere so friendly and sympathetic that he is never wounded in his self-respect.

And that, indeed, is the note of St. Cergues in everything. Ski-ing is one of the safest of sports, and on the Nursery Slopes you would think it quite impossible to hurt yourself. But with care and skill—or, rather, the lack of both—it can be done in a mild way and a strained ligament or a sprained ankle may lay you up for a few days. Now I know few things more exasperating than to be obliged to keep your bed in the ordinary hotel. You are a nuisance to everybody, and they generally take care not only to let you know it but to see the matter is subsequently considered in the bill. That is not so here. We have had two or three of these minor accidents while I have been here, and I feel that it is only just to the genial host of the Observatory, M. Auberson, to say that every one of the sufferers is loud in praise of the kindness and the sympathy with which they have all been treated. They have never been allowed to think that anything was a trouble—though it very often must have been—and there has never been anything about it in the bill.