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# The Swiss Observer

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## HOME NEWS

### ZURICH.

The inhabitants of the town of Zurich are complaining bitterly about the increasing traffic noise; particularly is this the case at the Kinkelstrasse where applicants for driving licenses are undergoing the official examinations.

Although the town authorities have decreed by law against unnecessary noise, they are themselves also guilty, as far as the tramway loop terminus at the Schaffhauserstrasse is concerned, where from 5.30 a.m. until midnight human ears are tortured by the screeching wheels, and all this because nobody ensures that the lines are greased enough. *N.Z.Z.*

Early in the morning of Sunday, August 18, a nine-year-old elephant from the Zurich Zoo escaped from its cage and entered neighbouring gardens, where it broke and uprooted several trees. It then wandered on to the Kloten railway line, was overtaken by a train, dragged for a distance of 60 yards, and thrown down the embankment. The animal was killed and the electric engine of the train slightly damaged.

### BERN.

The population of Berne has reached the appreciable total of 111,317 inhabitants. *N.Z.*

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The appeal lodged by two peasants who were convicted for an attack, last April, on Mr. Leche, secretary of the British Legation at Berne, has been dismissed, and the sentences of 20 days' imprisonment with a fine of 250fr. have been allowed to stand.

### BASEL.

After an interruption of 5 years the anniversary of the Battle of St. Jakob an der Birs was this year again officially celebrated. The whole arrangements took the form of an imposing patriotic manifestation and it is said that this was Basel's unmistakable reply to the recent activities of its communistic fraternity. *N.Z.*

### THURGAU.

The town clerk and treasurer of Diessenhofen, U. Haag, has been arrested. Although investigations are not yet completed it appears that there is a considerable sum of the town's money missing. *N.Z.Z.*

### AARGAU.

An interesting test case has just been decided in Switzerland concerning the obligation of a bank to divulge to the authorities, if requested, the transactions it has had with its clients. In this particular instance the authorities charged with making a public inventory of deceased person's fortune came to the conclusion that the sole heir had not declared the whole amount that he was receiving as bequest. Failing to obtain satisfaction from the heir, the authorities decided to request numerous banks in Switzerland for information concerning transactions that the deceased person had had with them. The heir strongly opposed this step, but eventually consented under pressure.

All of the banks that were interrogated gave the desired information, with the exception of the Gewerbekasse (Industrial Fund Bank) of Baden. In spite of being twice summoned before the district tribunal, the Gewerbekasse persisted in maintaining its view that the Court had no right to demand such information, which the bank should keep secret. The Court refused to accept the bank's argument, and inflicted a fine of 30 francs. The Gewerbekasse appealed against this judgment, and the case came before the supreme Tribunal of the Canton of Argovie. This Court unhesitatingly declared that the Gewerbekasse had acted rightly in thus guarding the interests of its client. The original sentence was annulled and final judgment given in favour of the bank.

### TICINO.

The death is announced from Canton Ticino of the Swiss sculptor Dismas Pelli at the age of

91, a pupil of the artist Vincenzo Vela. During the difference between the Pope and the Italian Government in 1870, Pelli enlisted in the Papal army and took part in a fight at the Porta Pia, where he was wounded and lost a leg. The Pope made him a knight and granted him a pension.

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On August 26, a big 16-seater Handley Page Napier air liner flew from Switzerland to London in the remarkable flying time of only 4½ hours.

The pilot of another Handley Page Napier air liner, flying from Brussels to London reported that during the whole of his flight he did not see a single cloud, the sky being unbroken blue for the entire 200 miles.

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The Editor of the French Home News regrets very much that he has, in spite of hard work, not been able to find anything of interest.

### THE PRAGEL PASS.

The building of a new road anywhere in England is in most cases a matter of utility and convenience, an extra route being required either to relieve the congestion of existing roads or to provide a shorter line between two points. In alpine regions on the other hand, a new road scheme embodies the factors of utility and picturesqueness alike. High mountain areas cannot be intersected by roads in every direction as readily as a lowland area, and there are many quarters in which long detours have to be made necessarily; hence any additional highway is, *ipso facto*, bound to be a convenience by affording a direct route across a tract of territory that has hitherto been inaccessible to the motoring tourist and at the same time will open up new scenes of Alpine beauty.

It is earnestly to be hoped, therefore, that a project that has been set afoot in Switzerland will be carried into effect—namely, the construction of a new road over the Pragel Pass. This lies between the towns of Schwyz and Glaris, and to drive from one to the other under present conditions one must either go northwards and work round by the main road from Zurich, or else follow the St. Gotthard route to Altdorf and then cross the Klausen Pass.

There is already an approach road along the valley on the Schwyz side through the Muota-Tal, and on the other side a road runs from Glaris to Richisau, but the Pragel Pass itself has only a path across its summit. This is over 1,300 ft. lower than the alternative Klausen Pass, and a new road would offer not only an easier but a shorter journey, and would be particularly convenient for anyone travelling from Lucerne to Tirol, the Dolomites, or the Grisons.

The Pragel Pass, it may be added, was once the scene of one of the most famous marches in history. In 1799 the Russian general Suvaroff, only second in ability and daring to Napoleon himself, had fought his way over the St. Gotthard and reached the end of Lake Lucerne, only to find that he could get no farther as the French had seized all the boats and there was no road either to Lucerne or Zurich, where his second army was in occupation. Hence he had to retreat under immense difficulties to Muota and over the Pragel Pass, after which he crossed the Panixer Pass to Ilanz. With wireless or aeroplane communication he could have been in touch with the other army on the north, but as it was he could neither direct the operations of the latter nor be himself forewarned as to the impossibility of joining forces by the St. Gotthard route. There is a cross hewed in the rock to his memory near the well-known Devil's bridge, while a bronze tablet is also to be seen at the summit of the Pragel Pass.

(Reproduced from the "Motor.")

### Swiss Attempt to Swim the Channel.

M. Doria, the Swiss champion swimmer, entered the water at Boulogne at 12.7 on the 3rd inst., in an attempt to swim the Channel. The sea was calm and conditions were very favourable. He was convoyed by the tug La Morinie, which carried among other passengers, Miss Rahman and Hilmy Bey, who are both aspirants to Channel honours.

M. Doria abandoned his attempt after having been in the water for eight hours and 35 minutes. He was suffering from stomach trouble and was seven miles from Folkestone when he was taken aboard his tug.

### EUROPEAN ELECTRIFICATION PROGRESS.

The progress made in railway electrification in Switzerland since the war is common knowledge, but less has been heard of the electrification work which has, at the same time, been carried out in the neighbouring countries. During a recent journey to Austria we were not a little impressed by the fact that for no less than 335 miles continuously—from the Swiss frontier at Basel through Zurich to Buchs, and then over the Austrian Federal system by way of the Arlberg, Innsbrück, Worgl and Kitzbühel to Saalfelden—the haulage was continuously electric. From Saalfelden onwards through Zell and Bischofshofen to Salzburg, a further 70 miles, the electrical equipment is practically complete, and very shortly, if a journey be taken through, say, from Geneva to Salzburg, it will be possible thus to travel unbrokenly for 529 miles (246 miles in Swiss territory and 283 miles in Austria) exclusively behind electric locomotives. This will be, by a wide margin, the longest continuous journey in the world over electrically equipped railways, the distance covered being roughly equal to that from London to Aberdeen. North and south of the Arlberg route the Austrian Federal Railways management has electrified the Worgl-Kufstein line, and the Innsbrück-Brenner route, between them forming the main line from Munich and South Germany into Italy and this is continued by the Italian electrification from Brennero to Bolzano. Another pending Austrian electrification—of the difficult Tauern route, through the popular watering place of Bad Gastein and the Tauern Tunnel down to Spittal—branches southwards from the Salzburg line, at Schwarzach St. Veit, and will complete the first instalment of the Federal Railway electrification scheme in Western Austria. The whole of the current employed in the working of these Alpine railways is, of course, generated from water-power.

While the attention of the railway officer concentrates mainly, and rightly so, on the ultimate economies in operation rendered possible by electrification, the advantages to the passenger of the change-over from steam to electricity are by no means to be overlooked. The contrast between the Alpine railway journey of yesterday and that of to-day, for example is striking. Gradual expedition of the train services goes on unceasingly. Three of the fastest runs in Europe are electrically hauled, the Midi Railway of France being responsible for working the "Sud Express" over the 91½ miles from Bordeaux to Dax in 89 minutes, start to stop, and two other expresses over the same course in 91 minutes each.

Current speeds of principal express trains through Switzerland, again, must be without parallel in any part of the world over gradients of such severity. Over the distance of 199½ miles from the Swiss frontier at Chiasso to Basel, via Lugano, the St. Gotthard Tunnel and Lucerne, the popular "St. Gotthard Pullman" express is allowed but one minute over five hours, the schedule calling for an overall speed, including stops, of almost precisely 40 m.p.h. Yet the train has first to be lifted through a difference in level of 795 ft. between Chiasso and Monte Ceneri Tunnel, before dropping into the Ticino Valley, and then through the far greater altitude of 3,025 ft. from Bellinzona to the St. Gotthard Tunnel, surmounted by means of many miles inclined at from 1 in 38½ to 1 in 40; not only so, but of the 35 miles from Chiasso to Bellinzona and the 32 miles from Fluelen to Lucerne the major part is single track. That this is no isolated case is proved by the fact that the heavy Milan-Ostend Express preceding the "Pullman" is booked to cover the same distance in 5½ hours, including stops totalling in duration 28 minutes. Elsewhere in Switzerland, on more level sections, timings closely approaching 50 m.p.h. from start to stop are in force—an astonishing figure in a country of such contours—and from our own recent observations the sustained speed of the electric locomotives, even on rising gradients of fair severity, is generally round about 53 or 54 m.p.h. A further material advantage is the complete abolition of all smoke and cinders—a change for the better only realised to the full by those who recollect what suffering was inflicted on the passenger by heavy gradients, frequent tunnels, inferior coal and hard-worked locomotives in earlier days. (Railway Gazette.)

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