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# The Swiss Observer

FOUNDED BY MR. P. F. BOEHRINGER.

The Official Organ of the Swiss Colony in Great Britain.

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## HOME NEWS

### FEDERAL.

#### A SWISS HOUSE AT THE PARIS UNIVERSITY.

After seven or eight years of perseverance on the part of a special committee constituted in Zurich and also thanks to the assistance of the Federal Council, the foundation of a Swiss House in the Cité university has now been laid. This is an institution, the need of which has been felt by the numerous Swiss students in Paris, and it will no doubt become a rallying point of our young intelligentsia. Unfortunately this institution has, so far, no working capital, and an appeal will be made in all the Swiss colonies in France to provide the necessary funds.

#### THE C.F.F. AND BIRDS.

At the request of the Swiss Society for the Study and Protection of Birds, the General Manager of the C.F.F. has invited all the District Managers to proceed with the installation of artificial nests for swifts and swallows on the new buildings erected, as long as same are adaptable and this installation does not entail too great an expense. We can but admire our authorities for this thoughtful step, which shows that even with a huge administration like the C.F.F. the smallest detail is not lost from view.

#### FEVER OUTBREAK.

A case of typhus was notified in Basle in September and has been followed by six others. In spite of the efforts of the municipal authorities to isolate this epidemic, other cases have occurred in Bienne and Basle and in the cantons of Neuchâtel and Vaud. No great anxiety is felt as rigorous measures are being taken to prevent the spread of the disease.

### LOCAL.

#### ZURICH.

Dr. W. C. Escher, President of the Schweizerische Kreditanstalt, has died. N.

#### BERN.

Prof. Dr. Wilhelm Hadorn died at the Salem hospital in Bern, aged 61. He was professor of theology at the Bern university. N.

#### LUZERN.

Councillor Albert Züst was elected Federal State Councillor in place of the late Mr. Winiger, and Judge Renggli replaces Mr. Züst as Councillor. N.

\*\*\*  
The coming election of two Federal Councillors, and the question whether Socialists should be in the Federal Council or not, is an apparently never-ending cause for discussion in newspapers. The "Vaterland" contains a leader signed Br. in a very vigorous strain, as shown by the following extracts:—

"Genosse Bundesrat," how does that sound? Until further news we are still Eidgenossen, not Moskauer Genossen, and our Federal Councillors should be the same. This is the real difference and the whole matter under discussion. It is all so terribly simple and clear, so why all this worry? Such worrying is the result of political considerations, as political reasoning makes people look in every direction but straight forward, or only very rarely so. This is a curious period: Zurich is on the lookout for a new Federal Councillor and cannot find him, and our other Confederates are debating, if they should abolish the oath of office for one of the new Councillors (this refers to a possible Socialist candidate being elected), and the comrades of Moscow do not know, whether to try to get in or stay out. So why not wait until the comrades themselves know their own mind? We must, first of all, know what the comrades want in the Federal Council. Are they willing to work for the existence and the benefit of the State in an honest and straightforward way, or do they want to bring discord into our highest authority? There is also no law, that a Federal Councillorship is reserved to members of the Bundesversammlung. It is of course agreed, that all members of Parliament are ex officio clever men; but it does not follow that all clever men are members of Parliament. V.

#### BASEL.

For a number of days the populace of Basle has been intrigued by what is supposed to be a haunted house at the Utengasse, and hundreds of people stand every day in front of these premises.

For some little time a boy of ten has been so terrified that there is a danger of his losing his reason, by sounds which he states he hears in the wall against which his bed is placed. What is so strange is the fact that the noise in question can only be heard when the boy is present. At first it was believed that it was a hoax on the part of the boy, but the police who had been called in, watched him very carefully. He was put in bed with legs and arms tied and placed near the wall. The noises could still be heard! The people living in the house itself and their neighbours are terrified and matters have reached such a pitch that the house will probably have to be evacuated. The police have searched the place from top to bottom but have found nothing, and as soon as the boy gets near the wall the noises, which are like the drumming of a skeleton's fingers, are again heard. The lad states moreover, that he has seen on several occasions an old woman with grey hair, clad in red who slowly crosses the room. This while other members of the family were present but saw nothing, but were horrified to see the child grow suddenly white and fall in a swoon.

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Mr. A. Kreis, Director of the Bâle branch of the Schweizerische Kreditanstalt has died suddenly.

\*\*\*

Dr. Eritz Sarasin took part, as an invited guest, at the 60th anniversary festival of the Berlin Society of Anthropology and Ethnology. He was presented with the Society's Gold Medal in recognition of his great merits as a scientist.

\*\*\*

An unusual accident occurred at the Strassburgerallee. The wheel of a passing lorry glanced off a stone, flinging it aside with such force that the stone hit a woman in the face and smashed her nose. N.

#### AARGAU.

Mr. Stettler, proprietor of a wireless shop in Basle, was crossing the railway line between Frick and Elken in his new car, when the car stuck in the gravel of the permanent way, at the very moment when the woman guarding the crossing wanted to shut the gates. Mr. Stettler and his wife had barely time to jump out of the car, before the onrushing express train had reduced the car to a shapeless heap of twisted metal. N.

#### ST. GALLEN.

From Marbach comes the news of a disastrous fire, which destroyed three dwelling houses and three stables situated in the centre of the village. S. G. T.

#### APPENZELL.

Considerable apprehension is felt in the embroidery industry over Chinese competition. It was decided to request the Federal Council to insist on a most favourable treatment clause of hand embroidery in the new commercial treaty with China. As a safeguarding measure it was also decided to introduce a distinctive sign which, when embroidered on the goods, denotes their Appenzell origin, and efforts are to be made to prevent the affixing of this mark on goods of other origin. An association of embroidery manufacturers has been formed as the outcome of a meeting of interested parties. N. Z. Z.

#### GENEVE.

A young doctor, Mr. Albert Thévenod, has just succumbed, after a fortnight's illness, to bronchial pneumonia, contracted from one of his patients. Dr. Thévenod was a medical man of great promise, and his death is a real loss to the town of Geneva where he was very popular and had a large circle of friends. He had taken charge amongst other things of the laboratory at the children's clinic at the Cantonal hospital.

#### VAUD.

A serious avalanche of stones and rocks has descended on the village of Morcles, so well-known to alpinists and to those numerous countrymen of ours who have done their military service in the fortifications of Dailly and the Aiguille. This is no doubt due to the snow which fell recently and which melted rapidly in the heat of the sun. A considerable mass of earth and rocks came down from the top of the Aiguille, which towers above the village, and the Riondaz road has been cut off for a distance of about a hundred yards. The school and an adjoining house have been overwhelmed but fortunately there were no casualties.

## NOTES AND GLEANINGS.

By KYBURG.

### New Explosive Discovery:

Daily Express, 18th Nov.

Professor A. Stettbacher, of Zurich, after many years experimenting, has discovered a substitute for nitro-glycerine, which, as is known, is dangerous to handle on account of its liability to explode on the slightest knock or friction.

The Swiss inventor has invented a new chemical mixture of which nitro-glycerine forms 20 per cent. The new explosive is much safer to handle, and possesses greater explosive force. It is also much cheaper to manufacture.

I wished the Daily Express had been able to add "and can be used for peace-purposes only."

### Out-Fording Ford:

We all know how Henry Ford is said to make even the sick in his Hospital do some sort of work, partly in order to keep their mind occupied and partly in order to make them feel that although bedridden, they can still be of some use. I now read in Nottingham Evening News of 13th inst. of a similar attempt to make the sick and suffering do some work to be made in Switzerland.

British victims of consumption are to be admitted to the astonishing factory, 4,500 feet above sea level, which Dr. Rollier, the famous sunlight specialist, is opening at Leysin early next year.

On the flat roof of this factory clinic knitting, watch-making, pottery work and so on will be done in full exposure to the sun. On one floor is a school of commerce; on others are open verandah workshops glazed with vitaglass.

Each bed in the factory is being equipped with a work table with special apparatus to allow the patient to work in any position demanded by his particular "cure."

I fancy that illness will yield better if the mind is satisfactorily occupied and doing some useful work, however slight it might be, surely is one of the finest means towards that end. So good luck! to the enterprise.

Writing about illness, makes me think of preserving health. We have, of course, every wish to keep our readers in good health, because most of the subscriptions will soon be due again and, a cold Season is on us, the following article may not come amiss:

### Warmth in Winter:

Dr. C. W. SALEEBY in the Daily News, 20th Nov.

Undoubtedly winter is the deadly season. Every doctor in general practice knows that, and every vital statistician. The respiratory diseases run amok, killing hosts at all ages, but especially the very young and the very old. I believe, however, that more than the cold as such, we should blame the darkness, the foulness of the air, and the confinement at close quarters, favouring nose-and-mouth infections at short range.

However that may be, we must maintain the temperature of the blood. And, in the first place, whatever we do about the external temperature, we must take personal steps to provide fuel, to burn that fuel, and to conserve enough of the resulting heat.

The principal fuel foods, we know, are fats and the carbo-hydrates (starch and sugar) proteins and maintain our warmth thereby, but this is a stupid way of doing so, for proteins are expensive in money, and expensive in terms of what they cost in the body for safe handling. Instead, therefore, of eating more lean meat in winter, we shall turn to the true fuel foods, of which the most productive are the fats.

If we eat an excessive proportion of fats we suffer from poison-symptoms due to the presence in the blood of substances called

## NOTA BENE!

On December 14th, another Special Issue of the Swiss Observer will be broadcast so as to reach the whole Swiss Colony in Great Britain. This will be a unique opportunity for advertisers to secure the Christmas trade. Please communicate in good time if you wish to secure space, which can be booked at the ordinary rates for serial advertisements.

ketones. This condition is called *ketosis*; an accurate name as against the old one, which is *biliousness*, and quite misleading.

In order to avoid *ketosis* (and also to save our purses, for fats are relatively costly) we must always balance our fat intake with enough carbo-hydrates.

But there are two orders of fatty foods: those which contain vitamins and those which do not. The latter are henceforth to be regarded as very inferior. Not that they fail to furnish heat, for they do. The fuel value of, for instance, margarine wholly of vegetable origin, is about 99 per cent. of that of butter. But butter contains vitamins A and D, of which the former serves to protect us against the winter infections and the latter compensates us for the poverty of winter sunlight.

Some will choose butter (hoping that it may be fairly rich in vitamins, though unfortunately we cannot expect too much from the products of winter milk); and, if enough butter is too costly we shall look out for one of those admirable new margarines which cost very much less than butter and still have much of its merits, the much-to-be-commended manufacturers having carefully added to them a suitable proportion of fat of animal origin having a high and standardised proportion of at least one vitamin.

That is a tiresome fact about winter milk, to which I have just alluded. We are short of sunlight, and so is the cow and so is the cow's food: but there is no vitamin D without sunlight somewhere or other, and so we are caught short. Cows in the Antipodes get sunshine all the year round, and their products may help us during the winter; and do, indeed, help many infants.

I should like to say the same about Swiss cows, which might profit by Alpine winter sunlight, like Professor Rollier's patients, and might thereby help us. But, alas! the Swiss shut their cows up in darkness all the winter, believing that thus they yield more milk. Perhaps they do yield more milk, but what is that, if quality fails, as it does?

Concerning Dr. Saleeby's last sentence, I would point out that if the Swiss peasants did not shut up their cattle in their stables during the winter, they would lose most of their beasts and the Doctor seems to overlook the fact that cattle do not like to seek their food through feet and feet of snow!

#### Drilling in West-Switzerland:

It is extraordinary how a simple head line like this one can make one think. First of all, when my eyes spotted this "drilling in West-Switzerland" line, I thought, are they referring to Cadet-Corps or is there any illegal drilling going on and why?

However my thoughts were entirely incorrect, for the Drilling in question refers to drilling for oil and this is what *The Oil News*, 15th Nov. writes:

Contrary to the reports that drilling for oil in the Orbe-Ebene area of Western Switzerland has been abandoned as being without result, the engineer in charge of the test boring operations, Mr. F. Blanquet, states that the stoppage is only of a temporary nature. It is necessary, in view of the considerable depth to which the test borehole must be taken, to replace the present light outfit by a heavier one. Indications of various kinds are of a favourable character and the continuation of drilling next spring has been decided upon.

#### Brahms in Thun:

*Music Teacher*, November 1929.

My summer holiday this year took me to Switzerland where I spent some weeks in the little village of Merligen, situated on Lake Thun, one of Switzerland's most beautiful lakes. The charming old-world town of Thun was within easy distance of my hotel and there I came on the house where Brahms spent three summers, 1886-1888. The house is closed, and on my first visit I could not find anyone who would allow me to enter. "No Madame, you cannot get in." Determination, however, conquered, and on my next visit I was fortunate. After talking with several of the kindly Swiss peasants, a key was produced and the door was opened. "My husband's mother attended to Brahms," said the woman who conducted me up the wooden stairs which led to the three apartments once occupied by the great composer.

I had expected to find some of the furniture, possibly pictures, or at least relics of some kind, which had belonged to Brahms. Nothing reminiscent, however, was there. I asked for letters. "No letters, Madame, the piano too is in Vienna." The windows of the living-room, three in number, overlook the river Aar and I could easily realise the great man sitting composing songs, intermezzi, etc., whilst occasionally looking out on one of the most beautiful views I have ever seen. Even a genius would find inspiration from such a view. The swiftly-flowing broad river with its wooded banks, and

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in the distance, the quaint roofs of the old buildings, for Thun is an old town, all combine to make a most poetic and charming picture.

When my visit was over I went to the Information Bureau at the station and asked the official why the house of Brahms was always closed, and if it could not be made into a Museum. "No, no, the house is to be pulled down, there is no room for it," was the rather gruff reply. I came away sadly thinking that "A prophet has no honour," but in a moment dismissed the thought.

An inscription under one of the windows reads as follows:—

IN DIESEM HAUSE LEBTE

DER MEISTER DEUTSCHER TONKUNST

JOHANNES BRAHMS.

1886-1888.

UND SCHUF HIER MEHRERE SEINER

SCHÖNSTEN WERKE.

"DU HAST DIESLAND SANGPROH IN ALTAR ZEIT  
MIT DEINIM LIEB ZU NEUEM RUHM GEWEIHT."  
THUN, 1899.

#### What to do with used Razor Blades?

The question is a very old one and one beloved by the red-nosed Comedian. That there is a more serious side to this question too, you will find by reading the following article from "*The Times*" 12th Nov.

#### ABSTRACT ART.

An Art Exhibition has just been held in Zurich to make known the merits of a new school of abstract artists. Their name is ill-chosen, for their methods are highly concrete, and consist in using paint very largely as glue, sticking all manner of real objects, particularly pieces of straw and tram tickets, on to the canvas. Such objects evoke emotions and memories in the looker, and what picture can do more than that? The tram ticket in particular is brimful of meaning. The deep, slightly sad note of life as a journey is struck at once and the tram *motif* is charged with the sense that the voyagers have much less freedom than they imagine, that the routes and the stopping places have all been arranged. Tram tickets are, in fact, profound documents, redolent with the fate of man, and it is surprising that it has taken nearly half a century before the artists have claimed them. They have been amassed by the young, but chiefly for their mechanical associations and for the prestige that attaches to all numbered and collectable things in the eyes of youth. But now they are promoted to higher uses and placed at a variety of angles on canvases otherwise decorated only by dots. They are placed erect, to symbolize innocence and the clear conscience of those who are entitled to all they are claiming. They are placed at angles which suggest indifference as few painters have ever managed to suggest indifference. They are placed at angles which suggest demoralization and utter lassitude, and they are placed flat, just as they lie in the road when all is over and a man and his tramride are parted for ever.

It does not need a great brain to see that the abstract artists have enriched the world with a new and noble art which should go far to supersede the dustbin and the city incinerator. Painting on flat canvases is one art and working in stone or wood is another; but no one has hitherto developed the picture model which achieves its effect by using actual objects. There have been model makers, of course, who have sought depth by putting real moss and pieces of stone on to their pictures, particularly when their picture is being used as the lid of a chocolate box; but there has been no use of familiar objects for their symbolic value. If aesthetic education could only be hurried along, the walls of every home might have deep picture frames containing canvases whose sticky surfaces would hold up for symbolic contemplation a whole host of things which otherwise cumber the ground. Nothing is more symbolical, in all sorts of ways, than used razor blades. Art may have something to say where science seems powerless, and may offer a partial remedy for the problem of what to do with them. Those people whose instinct is never to throw anything away are provided now with a final justification. If an object is so trivial that they cannot plausibly say some poor man might like

*Continued on page 1991.*

#### GESCHÄFTS-ANZEIGE

Anstatt durch Zirkular, gestatte ich mir auf diesem Wege meinen verehrten Landsleuten anzuzeigen, dass ich das von Herrn F. W. Rühmann anno 1887 gegründete, sich eines sehr guten Rufes erfreuende,

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So mues mer zu üsem Landsma Störj geh."

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