

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: - (1930)
Heft: 432

Rubrik: Notes and gleanings

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The Swiss Observer

FOUNDED BY MR. P. F. BOEHRINGER.

The Official Organ of the Swiss Colony in Great Britain.

EDITED BY DR. H. W. EGLI WITH THE CO-OPERATION OF MEMBERS OF THE LONDON COLONY.

Telephone: CLERKENWELL 9595

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

Telegrams: FREPRINCO, LONDON.

VOL. 10—No. 432

LONDON, FEBRUARY 1, 1930.

PRICE 3d.

PREPAID SUBSCRIPTION RATES

UNITED KINGDOM AND COLONIES	3 Months (13 issues, post free)	3s 6d
	6 Months (26 issues, post free)	6s 6d
SWITZERLAND	3 Months (13 issues, post free)	12s
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(Swiss subscriptions may be paid into Postcheck-Konto Basle V 5718).



FEDERAL.

REPLY TO FASCIST COMPLAINTS.

In an official communiqué the Federal Council gives an indirect reply to the unfounded charges made in the Italian press against the Swiss authorities concerning anti-fascist activities. As a result of police inquiries it is stated that no proof whatever exists that bombs or other weapons for criminal purposes have found their way from abroad to Geneva, or that the suspects arrested in Paris and Brussels ever communicated with Bertoni, Ludovici and Vella, or other persons in Switzerland with a view to the perpetration of a plot on the delegates to the League of Nations or on the Belgian Royal family on transit. The alleged visit of Berneri to the League buildings or to Geneva has not been proved. But on the other hand it is known that a Fascist agent provocateur who, was in touch with Berneri has visited Geneva in company of his mistress.

FEDERAL ELECTRICITY OFFICE.

On the 1st of April a new Federal Office for the surveillance of all matters connected with the generation and supply of electricity in Switzerland will be established. The office will collect useful statistics, seek contact with all electricity producers for purposes of co-operation in all respects, and especially deal with questions of the exportation of current.

LOCAL.

ZURICH.

Hans Hofer of Zollikon, a pupil of the Cantonal Commercial School in Zurich, was late in leaving his home and, in order to catch the train, ran as fast as he could. He got into the train and collapsed; heart failure had ended his young life.

Karl Wegmann, butcher, was on his way home at midnight, when he was accosted in an offensive way by a man on the Limmatquai. As Wegmann resented this, the other man retaliated by sticking a knife into him.

A few weeks ago an American film "The King of the Bernina," based on the novel by J. C. Heer, was stopped at a Zurich cinema on account of demonstrations by students.

The same film has now reappeared in Uster and a band of about 20 students from the Grisons have started a protest. It is stated that the film, which was not staged in Switzerland, does not do justice to the novel and further that no permission for its production had been obtained from the heirs of Heer.

BERNE.

Thieves have given their attention to the Kunstmuseum and the historical museum at Berne, in each of which small oil paintings were taken.

The town of Berne also desires a Zoo. An association has been founded with this end in view. The Elfenau is the proposed site, and the cost is estimated to be 1,117,500 Frs.

The Berne Town Council is now presided by Hurni (soc.) formerly its first vice-president, and Dr. Flickiger (lib.) follows the former as vice-president. Berger-Stalder (cons.) was elected second vice-president.

The Administrative Council of the Kursaal Schaanli has decided, on account of the insufficiency of receipts, to close its doors in October next and in future to keep open from June to October only. The re-establishing of the games has not met with the expected success and every week the deficit is increasing. Since the maximum stake has been reduced from Fr. 5 to Fr. 2 the number of visitors has greatly diminished.

The Federal Council has requested the town authorities to prevent the square in front of the Federal Palace and streets in the immediate neighbourhood from being used as parking places on account of the incessant noise and the traffic congestions caused by stationary vehicles. Their

wish has been acceded to although Berne is not any too well provided with space for parking cars.

SCHWYZ.

Josef Tritsch, of Unter-Iberg, during his work as a wood-cutter, climbed a pine to remove a branch with his axe. A blow with his axe glanced off and hit his forehead with such force that he was killed instantly. He leaves a widow and five children, aged from 2 to 10 in poor circumstances.

ZUG.

On January 10th, the Mayor of Zug, X. Schmid, received a post-card with a menacing message. Exactly eight days afterwards, at 9.15 p.m., three revolver bullets were fired at his house, one of which penetrated the window of the dining-room in which three people sat at the table. In the following night, stones were thrown through two windows. The authorities offer a reward of 500 frs. for the arrest of the miscreant.

SOLEURE.

Solothurn town inhabitants have reached the number of 14,052, and Grenchen now counts 10,972. Since the last census (1920) Grenchen's population has increased by 21 per cent., Olten by 14 per cent., and Solothurn by 8.34 per cent. At this rate, Olten and Grenchen will soon overshadow the Capital.

BASLE.

Spectators were horrified to see a railway employee, who crossed the lines early last Monday morning, slip and fall in front of a fast goods train. They rushed across the lines to help the poor unfortunate, if human help would still avail, only to see the man get up absolutely unharmed. He fell between the lines, and the train passed over him without touching him.

The tramways of Basle, covering 67½ km, realised an excess of receipts of Fr. 2,300,000 for the year 1929. After payments for interest and amortisation the net profit amounts to over Fr. 560,000, an increase of Fr. 200,000 over the preceding year.

SCHAFFHAUSEN.

Pro-Rector Professor Gustav Kugler was elected rector of the Kantonschule in place of Dr. Ed. Haug, who retired.

Low water during winter usually exposes part of the right side of the Rhine bed immediately above the falls and seems to attract foolhardy people to show their prowess as climbers. A few days ago, two strangers were climbing about the rocks, when one suddenly slipped and fell into the water which carried him into the depth. By a miracle he escaped serious injury and, being a strong swimmer, he managed to reach safety.

ST. GALL.

Entertainment Tax in the town of St. Gall has added 96,061 Frs. to the Town's revenue in 1929.

"Migros Ltd." has opened a branch at the Burggraben in St. Gall and has also organised sales in the streets by means of a fleet of lorries. Customers rolled up in masses, even country people came to the "cheap shop" and carried their purchases away with them. But the interesting point is not the instant success of the new shop; that this venture would force their competitors to reduce their prices was foreseen, but not to the extent to which it amounts. Not only 10 or 20 per cent., no even bigger reductions have taken place, and the Co-operative Society (Konsumverein) is flooding the households with leaflets showing that their prices and the dividend at the end of the year enable our housewives to buy as cheaply from them, if not cheaper.

VAUD.

A visitor to the "Musée cantonal des beaux-arts" at Lausanne discovered that a painting, dating from the 18th century, was missing. The canvas by the French painter Largillière (1656-1746), represents the sculptor Coysevox in grey attire, holding in his hands hammer and chisel and standing in front of a bust. The picture was the property of the Baron Pierre de Coubertin who had loaned it to the museum.

NEUCHÂTEL.

According to information from the Chilean Legation at Berne that country has now decided to establish a Consulate at Neuchâtel.

NOTES AND GLEANINGS.

By KYBURG.

Did I? Oh yes, I did! Did what? Why, hit them down the middle! And so, after all, I shall again look at those "very helpful" bits of advice in my Golfing Almanack! Yes, laddie, such is Golf!

We are getting nearer the time when our friends in some parts of Switzerland think of Carnival and all that it means. Winter-storms and other cares are forgotten and put on one side and busy minds are trying to find out how best to achieve a complete change from our usual self for a few hours.

It may therefore be somewhat appropriate if we select a few gleanings in a lighter mood this week and, although I have stated before that I will not publish too many winter-sports articles, I will now make an exception to that rule by putting before you a few articles, which are, to my mind, worth reading because they are delightfully light.

First of all we will make our flesh creep a bit—this in order to make the "light-reading" all the lighter afterwards—and take the following from *The Daily News*:

My Greatest Half Minute Thrill

By WILLIAM J. MAKINS.

Which sport gives the greatest half-minute thrill? It is not easy to decide. I have stretched myself in sun and spray on a surf-board and raced with a roller towards the beach at Waikiki, in Honolulu. There was that glorious half-minute in a racing-car on Verneuk Pan in South Africa, when I roared into a mirage at 100 miles an hour. And there was the thrill, lasting more than half a minute, when in an aeroplane flight across India at night, our pilot swooped down to what he thought was the glitter of a big city, and found it to be the jungle ablaze.

Those thrills were memorable. Yet they were all swept away in the half-minute thrill I experienced when bob-sleighing at St. Moritz. On the Cresta run, with a skeleton sleigh, you travel at 80 miles an hour; on the bob-sleigh run in a crew of five you travel at a mere 40 miles an hour. But lying down with one's face near the blue ice that 40 miles an hour seems terrific.

It all began so casually. For two hours at St. Moritz I had been a looker-on at Sunny Corner, that semi-circular curve of the wall around which the bob-sleighs swirl in dizzy fashion, then hang at a terrifying horizontal before dashing into the narrow slope that leads to Horse Shoe Bend. Motor-racing at Brooklands seemed tame in comparison.

I saw one bob-sleigh with its five riders outstretched swirl up that wall of ice to the height of 15-ft., hang for one breathless moment, and then fall abruptly to the bottom, throwing its riders into the air. Steel discs on elbows and knees saved them from serious injury, and they rose feeling their limbs and brushing snow and ice from their clothes.

When, later, a friend suggested I might care to join a bob-sleigh crew, I tried not to show any hesitation. I only realised after a few seconds that I had accepted. I was taken to the pavilion and there introduced to the steerer of the bob-sleigh with a daring name. He was not prepared to accept me as one of the crew with any enthusiasm. I found I was the amateur among a group of men who year after year took their chances in this modern Suicide Club. I had not even the experience of a village toboggan to my credit. Finally he mumbled that I might be placed as number four

Home News—(Continued)

VALAIS.

The following subventions have been granted by the Federal Council: Fr. 72,500 or a quarter of the total cost, for the construction of a forest road in the "Val des Dix" in the commune of Hérémence and Fr. 31,032 for afforestation purposes estimated to cost Fr. 50,000.

GENEVA.

A cantonal committee, composed of members of various political parties and representatives of the medical profession, has been formed for the purpose of organising a campaign in favour of a reform in connection with alcohol legislation.

on the bob-sleigh, and gave the fifth place to one who could manipulate the steel brakes.

Obliging Swiss helped to strap the circular steel discs over my elbows, knees and hands. A leather crash helmet was pulled over my head. Then I was led to the infernal red bob-sleigh on which I and four others were to hurtle and swirl down the ice-slope. In the quietude of these preparations I visualised again that crash at Sunny Corner and the five figures flung against the ice wall.

"The record speed so far is 31 seconds," said an onlooker to the steerer. "You'll have to go some to beat that."

The steerer nodded, a grim expression on his face. Stretching myself out on the bob-sleigh with the others, I took a final glance at the snow-covered mountains towering above, the trees powdered in white, and the stark blue sky swimming in sunshine.

"Are you ready?" someone shouted.

The steerer, stretched head foremost grasped the wheel. The rest of us, sprawled behind, held ourselves tense. I felt my hands clutching the rail of cold steel with the tightness of terror.

"Go!"

Slowly we slithered forward. We gently bumped down a snow slope. The next moment there was a whirl of steel against ice, and we were on the run proper. I heard a bell clang loudly, and realised that we had gone past the starting post.

The whirl had now risen to a roar. By just raising my head and peering across the back of the man sprawled before me I could see the terrifying slope down which we were hurtling.

"Right!" yelled the steerer.

Mechanically we all swung our bodies to the right and were round a curve before I had realised it.

"Straight!" yelled the steerer.

The five bodies swung back again. Now we were slithering down at break-neck speed to that awe-inspiring Sunny Corner. Would we get round it? The ice banks flashed past. There came a long-drawn-out howl of a Swiss boy perched on the snow slopes above, giving a warning that a bob-sleigh was travelling.

"Right!" yelled the steerer.

We just heard his voice above the roar of steel on the ice slopes and swung our bodies to the command.

I glimpsed that ice wall above my head and the spectators dotted like dolls. Up—up—climbed the sleigh. Now we were sixteen feet high on that wall of ice, hanging like flies. The steerer twisted the wheel viciously. We were falling—falling—and with a roar slithered down the narrow slope towards the next bend. We had got through.

In a few seconds we were swirling round Horse Shoe Bend. Powdered ice and snow smothered my back, and flakes of ice tore against the hands gripping the sleigh. We were hurtling along at over forty miles an hour, and the sleigh was rocking dangerously.

"Brakes!" yelled the steerer, but it was too late. I felt a jerk at my waist, I was nearly torn off the sleigh, and my nailed boots were cutting the ice. One swift glance over my shoulder and I realised that the man behind had been flung off.

I clung on all the more desperately. My eyes were streaming tears with the cold wind, and I was smothered in snow. Then a bell clanged again, and with a sigh of relief I realised we had passed the winning-post. The sleigh slithered to a standstill.

"Thirty-five point seven seconds," growled the steerer despondently. "At least five seconds too many."

And I felt his eye upon me.

A telephone message came through that our number five had been picked up unhurt but blaspheing. The thrill was over. We were hitched to a horse-drawn sleigh and dragged up the long hill. I dozed with the others in the sunshine. It was the finest half-minute thrill I have ever experienced.

Then we will turn to the *Morning Post*, 18th Jan., in which Marthe Baylis writes of

Facing the Puck at St. Moritz:

Jingling bells round the corner—four hefty horses gay with plumes.

The sleigh waits for us at the door. Lazy members of the party settle themselves amongst the fur rugs. Energetic ones take to the tailing seat trailing on the uneven length of a rope.

There are cheers and jeers as we bump and skid along the worn-out and frozen snow of the village street, with more than occasional spills.

In a flurry of snow and jokes we wend our way to St. Moritz, knowing full well that our sleigh is loaded with provisions and good beer from Hell—the perfectly genuine name of the village where it appears to be manufactured.

All these are essential ingredients to the

perfect enjoyment of an ice hockey match, at least from the onlooker's point of view, for we arrive ripe with emotion and exertion.

We picnic in the Stadium, alive with bright flags flicked about by the keen breeze, and as our feast progresses we look with growing disdain upon the Palace de Luxe ready to disgorge an over-fed and sleepy public.

The first spectators trickle along in a galaxy of fat and fur coats. Herr Berlin wears the inevitable Tyrolean feather. Frau's taste in colour is comprehensive and obvious. Russians rub elbows with Italians; Scandinavians mingle "ya's" with Austrians; there is a Japanese here and there, and an outstanding sprinkling of "Says," "Guesses," and "Yeps."

Pretty women bring hot water bottles to keep their hands warm beneath multiple rugs, much to the indignation of real hockey fans, who *know* that clapping gives a sting to the most manicured fingers.

A sudden silence. The challenging team takes the ice first. Players try their form with an odd shot at goal. Here comes the other team in the brightest of rigs and with the best looking defence in the world, chewing for dear life.

The referee it not quite so magnificent, already tinged with the insignificance of a man who is doomed to appear in everybody's way.

The puck is faced, the game starts. The two forwards and the centre chase it up the rink in a series of passes. Then it is lost, checked, carried back by the other team.

"Skate, man, skate," shouts a Canadian.

"Check him early," shouts another supporter, and we all join in a roar, swelling and dying as the puck travels.

Players crash along the boards or dart forward at lightning speed, jumping a stick, wiping fifteen yards of the rink with one fall, for ever pressing an attack or skating backwards at full speed to defend their endangered side.

Excitement become tense. Spectators stand. The clock rings first half-time. Many sigh with relief, and others get rid of their suppressed feelings in an inter-party fight between opposing supporters.

The referee's whistle restores comparative calm, but we have all singled out our favourite players, and, as they handle the puck, we shout encouragement to their deaf ears:

"Come on, Campbell" . . . "Buck up, Earl!"

We all try to surpass one another by volume of voice until Young Bimp, who resents having his swamped (he is such a refined connoisseur that he only delivers technical orations) vents his disgust at our behaviour by treacherously slipping snow down his sister's back.

This procures a brief interlude. However, a promising defence takes the puck up in dangerous style: a lightning flick . . . the padded giant of a goalkeeper sprawls on the ice, hits it away . . . "Well saved. . . Well saved, goalie!"

Half-time again. Slices of lemon and hot punch for the teams. They skate stiffly to the pavilion, perspiration dripping from foreheads, exhaustion heaving between tight ribs, breathless, anaesthetised to physical pain.

Pale sunshine crawls away from our side of the Stadium. The gigantic cold breath of the mountain blows upon us. Feet stamp, hands clap. The last period of the game is a test of endurance even for spectators.

The teams change sides. Blinded by the sinking sun, the goalkeeper misses the puck. . . Goal. . . Goal. . . Delirious enthusiasm. Come on, boys. . .

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SWISS RIBBON INDUSTRY

Basle possesses the most ancient branch of the Swiss textile industry: silk ribbon weaving.

In 1570 a group of refugees, whom religious persecution had driven from their country, settled down in Basle and started to weave ribbons. To-day Basle is still the business center of the principal ribbon manufacturers. Weaving is done in factories and at home. This applies to the simplest smooth ribbon as well as to the richest brocade ribbon. This industry in the home was created in the 17th century and is at present restricted to the valleys of the Canton of Basle. It enjoyed formerly a far greater extension and occupied the inhabitants of the Cantons of Solothurn and Aargau as well; now there remain but very few looms in the latter districts. The inhabitants of the valleys of the Canton of Basle, however, are still strongly attached to ribbon weaving. For generations they have inherited a liking for this industry, as well as great technical skill, to which may be attributed the high grade quality and handsome finish of their articles.

The principal ribbon manufacturers are in Basle itself and in various towns of the Canton. The first concentration of the ribbon industry began towards 1830 and was brought about by the invention of steam looms and machinery. This tendency decreased later owing to the introduction of electricity throughout the country-side which, together with other technical improvements, made it possible to run the looms with electric engines. The looms throughout the Canton of Basle belong to the Basle ribbon manufacturers. These factories remain in constant contact with the weavers of the Basle country-side and deliveries are promptly made by means of an extremely well organized transport service.

At the beginning of our century ribbon weaving gave employment to 15,000 workers and was one of the most important branches of the Swiss textile industry. But in later years this trade was destined to suffer severe blows. Being directly dependent on the fluctuations of the fashion, ribbon manufacturers often found themselves obliged to curtail their production. To-day this industry is undergoing a serious crisis, beginning in 1920 and the end of which cannot yet be predicted. This crisis may be attributed to two determining factors: the extreme simplicity of ladies' clothes and underwear, the small felt hats the stylishness of which resides in the cut and line, and short hair have reduced the use of ribbon to a minimum. It is encouraging to note, however, that the new fashion advocates longer and more elaborate frocks, tasteful and elegant in line, which are frequently trimmed with large bows and broad insertions.

The second factor to which the present crisis may be attributed is the increasing vogue of artificial silk, which has strongly affected the whole textile industry. The handsome pure silk ribbon is now replaced by artificial silk ribbon. The demand of the clientele of to-day is for cheap artificial silk goods, so that the average value of Switzerland's ribbon exports, attaining formerly 10,000 frs. per q. dropped in the course of the last few years to 2,500 to 3,000.—frs. The Basle ribbon industry has undergone a complete transformation and is able to fulfil all the requirements of its clientele. Manufacturers are now making high grade artificial silk ribbon and they have acquired a wide experience in the working and treatment of artificial silks.

Still another unfavourable factor is the wholesale trade which, being in a bad position in a great many countries, is therefore unable to undertake or maintain a publicity campaign in favour of the ribbon industry.

Although ribbons enjoy but little vogue to-day, they are not entirely forgotten, and they serve many purposes independently of fashion. Nothing can replace them to make an artistic bow tied around a gift, be it on a bouquet, a small package or a dainty box of sweets. Sofa cushions are often trimmed with ribbon, and many hand-made objects cannot do without them, such as lamp-shades, handbags, artificial flowers, garters, slippers, socks, baby clothes, etc. Silk bows and hair ribbon are again being worn in spite of the prevailing fashion of short hair.

The Basle ribbon industry is doing its best to satisfy its clientele. Manufacturers endeavour to adapt design and colour combinations to the taste of a most elegant clientele; the great variety of their articles enables them to please all their customers, and as regards prices, they can successfully compete with foreign concerns. S.I.T.

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