

Notes and gleanings

Objektyp: **Group**

Zeitschrift: **The Swiss observer : the journal of the Federation of Swiss Societies in the UK**

Band (Jahr): **- (1930)**

Heft 433

PDF erstellt am: **28.04.2024**

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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: FREPRINCC. LONDON.

VOL. 10—No. 433

LONDON, FEBRUARY 8, 1930.

PRICE 3d.

PREPAID SUBSCRIPTION RATES

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	6 Months (26 issues, post free)	6s 6d
	12 Months (52 issues, post free)	12s 6d
SWITZERLAND	3 Months (13 issues, post free)	Fr. 7.50
	6 Months (26 issues, post free)	Fr. 14.—
	12 Months (52 issues, post free)	Fr. 27.—

(Swiss subscriptions may be paid into Postcheck-Konto Basle V 5718.)

HOME NEWS

FEDERAL.

MOTOR-CAR IMPORTS UP.

During 1929 motorcars have been imported into Switzerland amounting to 77.3 million francs, or two million more than 1928. The exportation of cars and accessories reached a total of 18 million francs, nearly three-quarters of a million less than during the preceding year. T.G.

IMPORTANT CONTRACT FOR SWISS FIRM.

A triumph for Swiss industry and technical achievement is the fact, that the construction of the first tunnel to be built in Egypt has been entrusted to Rothpletz & Lienhard, of Berne. Rothpletz is well-known as a former National Councillor and member of the S.B.B. board of administration, as well as builder of the Weissenstein- and Grenchenberg tunnels, two constructions which offered exceptional difficulties owing to water and peculiar geological hindrances. N.

LOCAL.

ZURICH.

Salomon Gessner's 200th birthday is on April 1st next. The Lesezirkel Hottingen and the Swiss Association of Authors, as well as the Swiss Association of Painters, Sculptors and Architects, have submitted a petition to the Authorities to convert Waldhaus Sihlbrugg, Gessner's summer residence, into a Salomon Gessner museum and to erect a monumental fountain in the Sihlthal in memory of the famous citizen. N.Z.Z.

BERNE.

The 17th Annual Report of "Pro Juventute" shows the wonderful development of this meritorious work. From Fs. 127,593.90 in 1912 the net proceeds of the sales of stamps and cards have increased to Fs. 531,757.40 in 1928. N.Z.Z.

The Federal Council has decided to accept the offer of Carl Spitteler's heirs to present to the Nation all manuscripts and documents left by him. The collection will be housed either in the Federal Archives, or in the Lucerne Town Library. St. G.T.

Statistics compiled by the Department of Political Economy show that 36 strikes and 2 lock-outs took place in 1929, with a loss of nearly 100,000 working days. N.Z.Z.

URI.

24-years old Anton Ziegler, of Flüelen, was caught in the machinery of a dredger and killed. N.Z.Z.

BASLE.

A few days ago the demolition of the house "zum Trübel" at the Bäumlengasse was started. This house was built in 1430, and with it disappears a further relic of the old town. N.

NEUCHÂTEL.

A terrible accident happened at La Chaux-de-Fonds where Mme. Laure Bourguin, a sexagenarian, was filling her burning oven with old paper. The flames shot back and caught her dress. She was unable to call for help and was found completely carbonised. ***

The "Banque cantonale neuchâteloise" is likely to suffer severe losses in giving credit to a La Chaux-de-Fonds house which has failed. It is estimated, that the loss in connection with the firm Invar will amount to between 4 and 5 million francs. The magistrate has granted a stay of execution in order to prevent the disastrous consequences of a "krach" and to facilitate the liquidation of the firm. T.G.

The Council of Administration of the bank has issued the following communiqué to the press.

"In accordance with the mandate given to it by law the 'Banque cantonale neuchâteloise' has always endeavoured to assist, as widely as possible, commerce, industry and agriculture in the canton, and the only approach which could have been lodged is that they might have granted too large credits to reliable and trusted business houses. This refers especially to the case Invar.

As soon as the bank found out that they were likely to suffer losses with this establishment they did all in their power to save the situation, until at last they had to stop any further help. The liquidation of Invar will without doubt bring large losses to the bank, although there are no definite figures to hand as yet. However, there can be no question of attaching any blame to the bank."

The communiqué then refers to the difficulties in the watch trade and concludes: "In order to continue its mission the bank needs the confidence of all; this confidence it fully deserves and there is nothing in the actual state of affairs to injure it." J.G.

VAUD.

M. Henri Savary-Pitte, the doyen of the vaudois teachers, has recently died at the age of 82, at Sassel near Payerne, where he was for 50 years teaching before his retirement in 1918. He was a pioneer for the inclusion of agricultural science in the school syllabus and had a profound knowledge of the dialects in the French-speaking parts of Switzerland. ***

Shortly after having left the station at Lyss a goods train was derailed causing an obstruction of the line and damage to the engine and several wagons. Fortunately no one was injured and the traffic could be diverted to other lines. The cause of the accident is not yet known. T.G.

APPENZEL.

A while ago, a building belonging to the Urnäsch workhouse burned down. One of the inmates had been chopping wood in the destroyed building and was under the impression that by smoking he may have been the unwitting cause of the fire. Although it was established beyond doubt that he was not to blame, the whole matter so pressed on his mind, that he committed suicide. St. G.T.

ST. GALL.

The Cantonal Assizes have sentenced Schneider, former school treasurer at Murg to 18 months penal servitude for having fraudulently converted to his own use 22,500 Francs obtained from taxation and for fraudulent bankruptcy. ***

Part of the Textilwerke Blumenegg near Goldach have suffered heavy damage by fire. N.Z.Z.

Dr. Eduard Scherrer, for 28 years Mayor of St. Gall, has decided to retire on June 30th next. ***

The covered wooden bridge crossing the Rhine at Schmitter has disappeared. Its renewal was accomplished in a very few days. The wood will be sold by auction. ***

On the initiative of the Liberal-Democratic Party, the Communal Council has elected a commission of seven members to study ways and means of bringing home industry a much needed fillip and to find work for the empty premises formerly occupied by Wier & Ross. St. G.T.

GRAUBÜNDEN.

Federal State Councillor Colonel Brügger died at Chur on January 29th. N.Z.Z.

NOTES AND GLEANINGS.

By KYBURG.

It is sometimes very difficult indeed to write these Notes and Gleanings, because it occasionally happens that the British Press finds little of interest to publish about Switzerland and during such weeks we only get winter-sports articles and perhaps a few purely commercial reports. It also happens, if truth must be told, that Kyburg sometimes does not feel quite the industrious chap who he ought to be. These remarks are the outcome of a shock I experienced when opening our last issue and finding that the Editor had cut out quite a few articles I had sent in. It is true, I had sent in the articles with just a word to say that they were interesting enough in themselves without any more or less appropriate remarks from me, but the Editor evidently thought otherwise. Hence a very dull issue of the S.O., I thought, modestly!

However, we are going to make up for it this week, and my task is rendered fairly easy, because I have found a lot of very unusual and interesting items. Some there are which made me feel very proud as a Swiss, but, alas, there are others which made my good old Swiss blood tingle with shame and made me long to travel over to Switzerland to launch a furious campaign with a view

to cleaning up some Augean stables evidently requiring such a process.

A Nation of Inventors:

Dublin Evening Herald, 24th Jan.

A compilation of statistics on patents granted by civilised countries to their own citizens and to citizens of other countries shows Swiss citizens leading all other nationals both in patents taken out at home and in those taken out abroad. In 1925, for every million of population Switzerland obtained 930 patents abroad, against Austria's 299, Germany's 271, France's 195, Britain's 188, Belgium's 180, and the United States' 160.

Records disclose a long list of distinguished Swiss inventors and scientists, whose original work has richly endowed the world since those early days of religious strife. There was that father of pharmacy, Philippus Aureolus Paracelsus Bombastus, born about 1493, who is said to have been the first man to combine chemistry and medicine. There was Jaquet Droz, whose inventive skill produced the first automatic figures, mechanical dolls moving their finger joints. There were Ferdinand Berthoud, inventor of naval clocks, and Abraham Louis Brequet, who perfected an instrument for measuring time. Jean Andre de Luc, geologist and chemist; Louis Agassiz, scientist; Lavater, physiognomist and Pestalozzi, educationist, are on the list, though their contributions to scientific development may not be strictly termed inventions.

While the world must thank Switzerland for many inventions not recorded in patent offices, it was for her fine hand-made watches that she first attained fame among other nations. A Burgundian clockmaker, Charles Cusin, introduced the art of watchmaking into Switzerland in 1587. At the time Cusin settled in Geneva that city already enjoyed a certain reputation for craftsmen jewellers. Fine goldsmith work was gaining ground in the north. One hundred years after Cusin opened his first workshop Switzerland was turning out 5,000 watches a year. By 1856 it was producing 800,000 in the canton of Neuchâtel alone.

Guilds are formed with regulations governing relationship between master and man. These guild regulations were clearly set forth, and the system of apprenticeship thereunder strictly adhered to. Apprentices became masters, who handed on their delicate craft to other apprentices, sometimes sons, who in their turn became leaders in the craft in which they excelled. Though Geneva long kept her eminence as the home of fine watches, other districts set up factories and shops that eventually gained renown.

The story of Daniel Jean-Richard is the story of a blacksmith turned watchmaker, who founded the great watchmaking industry that subsequently flourished in the cantons through the Neuchâtel mountains. It was in 1679 that Jean-Richard mended a watch for a passing traveller, the first watch he had ever seen. After that while working at his trade, for which he had no love, he dreamed of delicate watchmaking, and in his leisure hours lovingly fashioned fine tools for the craft that held his imagination. He continued to invent and originate fine tools, and in 1705 set up a workshop for watchmaking at Le Locle. The first workshop became a series of factories, and in 1886 Neuchâtel raised a monument to the memory of the blacksmith who laid the foundations of its greatest industry.

The watch industry appealed to men with artistic tastes, and it also fostered research in mechanical combinations. A Swiss named Georges Leschot introduced the machine-made watches to Geneva. Observations were established for timing clocks astronomically. Other inventions attracted men of genius to a Switzerland busy with a hundred new mechanical devices.

It is not only in industrial inventions that the Swiss have achieved fame. Swiss names are numerous among engineers achieving distinction in the field. Horace Benedict de Saussure invented a thermometer for ascertaining the temperature of water at all depths, and another instrument for showing electrical conditions of the atmosphere. Daniel Bernoulli was the first to produce the propulsion of ships by the reaction of a stream of water thrown backward. It was the researches of Pierre Louis Guinand, a Swiss optician, which made possible the

modern refracting telescope. Aimé Argand, the inventor of the Argand lamp first made a lamp-wick in the form of a cylinder, and his brother invented a cylindrical chimney to steady the flame as to yield the greatest amount of light.

Now the above was an article which made me proud to be a Swiss. But what shall we say to the following terrible news item?

White Drug Kings:

Daily News, 23rd Jan.

This article is an interview which a Daily News Correspondent had with Major-General Russel Pasha, director of the Central Narcotics Intelligence Bureau at Cairo.

Russel Pasha, who arrived in Geneva on Jan. 23, to report to the League of Nations Advisory Commission on Opium, took up the question of narcotics in 1925, when the situation had become, as he told me, "perfectly hopeless." He was appointed head of the Narcotics Bureau and decided that it was necessary to look for the "bottle neck" from which drugs were pouring into Egypt. This report is the result of that search.

Never before has a man so fearless and determined tackled the drug trafficker. "I have a double-barrelled gun," he said to me. "What I cannot tell the League of Nations I have just put into the Cairo report. I don't know what will happen to me. I may be in prison before the end of the week."

Straight away in the preface of his report he pillories several European firms who, he says, "are making colossal fortunes by pouring their poisons into Egypt and the Far East."

"Such factories as those of Dr. Hesti, of Zurich, the Roessler Fils, at Mulhausen, the Orient Products Company, at Constantinople, and Dr. Muller, of Basle," states the report, "are the real enemies of Egypt. These represent the formidable breastwork and fortifications of the Central European fortress which must be stormed before any permanent results can be expected from merely local engagements with the emissaries of the white drug kings."

"Dr. Hesti, of Altstatten (a suburb of Zurich), supplied a speciality known as dionyl, which he manufactured in large quantities. This substance, it must be clearly explained," continues the report, "could at this time be manufactured without infringing the Swiss law controlling the manufacture and sale of narcotic drugs."

"Nor was Switzerland the only country which had omitted to make effective legal provision for the extraction of what are known as the esters of morphine (ether salts of the synthetic derivatives of morphine)."

"This is an omission which has since been hurriedly rectified by Great Britain. Other countries are expected to fall into line very shortly."

"An extremely clever chemist, Dr. Hesti, had for several years been making and selling dionyl quite openly. Twice prosecuted, he was twice acquitted, there being no technical offence."

Russel Pasha continues: "Though morally reprehensible, his conduct was legally unimpeachable. His country's laws permitted him to manufacture moral and material poisons in uncontrolled quantities, and he did so, disposing of it at an average price of 26 Egyptian pounds per kilogram (about £6 per lb.) to illicit traffickers and international smugglers."

"No visions of demented, tortured victims of his poisons ever came to disturb him. No pictures of broken-down humanity turning to crime to obtain money to buy his drug, no vistas of ruined lives, shattered ambitions, disrupted families, ever troubled his dreams in the peaceful little Swiss suburb. He was just a plain business man."

In intriguing manner Russel Pasha describes how he traced back the drugs from a carpet seller in Cairo to the firms mentioned above.

One firm between 1926 and 1929 manufactured and exported more than six tons of heroin, nearly a ton of morphine and 4cwt. of cocaine—in all, nearly eight tons of narcotics. What this means is explained as follows:

"It has been estimated that the legitimate scientific and medical requirements of one European country of 53,000,000 inhabitants are 110lb. of heroin per annum. About 21lb. of heroin is, therefore, sufficient for 1,000,000 persons for one year."

"If the population of the world is taken as 1,646 millions, and an allowance of heroin given at the rate of 21lb. per million, the world requirements in one year would be about 1½ ton of the drug. In the year 1928 Roessler Fils manufactured 4½ tons of the drug—that is, two-and-a-half times the legitimate requirements of the world. And this is only one of several factories in central Europe."

A very big and dangerous international organisation has, says Russel Pasha, been attacked and completely broken up by the splendid work of the Swiss police based on in-

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formation and proof supplied by the Cairo Bureau.

He submits that the facts revealed offer a very serious and cogent reason for all manufacturing countries to come into line as regards the esters by subjecting them to the same control as all other derivatives of morphine.

Evidently the revelations have already had their effect in Switzerland, for to-day at the meeting of the Opium Advisory Committee of the League of Nations, Dr. Carrière, the Swiss representative, announced that the Swiss Federal Council had adopted new regulations amplifying the law of 1924 and extending the control to a series of new pharmaceutical specialities and in a general way, to the esters of morphine.

(We hope that "Kyburg" will not be disappointed again, but we must once more postpone publication of some of his articles. They will appear in one of the next issues when perhaps some of our other contributors are not feeling "quite the chappies they ought to be.")

AN EYE TO BUSINESS.

"Do you want to go to Heaven when you die?" said the rabbi to the wee child of Israel. "No," replied the small Isaac. "You don't—why not?" said his spiritual leader in surprise. "Vy," said little Ike, "Fader said that pizness has all gone to hell."

Training for Switzerland!

My friend who is getting fit for Switzerland by climbing to the top of the Monument every morning tells me that his training-ground has been closed for a week, and he is therefore contemplating, somewhat earlier than he had intended, passing on to the second stage in his activities—the campanile of Westminster Cathedral.

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