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# The Swiss Observer

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## HOME NEWS



### FEDERAL.

#### SWISS MILLION-VOLT INSTALLATION.

One-million-volt testing plant has recently been installed at the works of the Oerlikon Co. in Switzerland. The installation comprises a set of three cascade-connected transformers mounted on insulating supports, the total capacity being 1,200 kVA. One of the poles of the set of transformers is connected to earth, rendering it possible to put the apparatus to be tested immediately under tension without having to insert an insulating platform. The pressure is measured by means of a static voltmeter with spheres 1,000 mm. (39.3 in.) in diameter. The alternator used in connection with the plant is of 360 kVA capacity and is directly coupled to a 320-h.p. synchronous induction motor. The compensating current is supplied by two reactance coils, one of which is adjustable and remotely controlled by means of a servo-motor. A large tank from which the air can be exhausted is provided for the testing of insulating material in oil. The tests are controlled from a switch desk furnished with a supervisory diagram, pilot lamps and miniature switches, and control is duplicated by a panel near the oil tank.

#### A GREAT RAILWAY SERVICE.

The Swiss Federal Railways have been responsible for great feats of engineering, opening up the Alps as the playground of the world. The Simplon and St. Gotthard pierce the mountains seven miles deep. Resorts up to 10,000 feet, Gornergrat, Wengen, Arosa, are reached by funicular and narrow-gauge systems. Even a railway runs almost to the summit of the Jungfrau, high over its glaciers, and others ascend to the tops of the mountains. No matter what resort is desired, what sport, recreation or entertainment is preferred, the offices of the S.F.R. in London have the information at their finger tips, and beautiful, illustrated brochures stating everything which the traveller may wish to know. The inclusive cost of a fortnight in Switzerland, most joyous holiday in Europe's playground, can be obtained for £15. The railways dovetail their services with the motor-coaches of the Post. Engineering skill and enterprise has made possible for the traveller all the famous high passes—St. Bernard, Grimsel, Furka, Ofen. To reach Switzerland is the simplest matter of transport. Thereafter this land offers everything of interest and attraction to the traveller.

Cornish Guardian.

#### AMALGAMATION OF SWISS FUEL IMPORTERS.

The German and Swiss import firms in Basle have amalgamated and formed a share company under the name of "Ruhrkohle A.G. für Brennstoffe," Basle, the capital amounting to 1 million Swiss francs. The purpose of the company is the sale of fuel of every kind in Switzerland, in particular of products of the Rhenish-Westphalian Coal Syndicate. The German coal trading firms Strohmeier and Rochling and the Swiss firm Jorin Sutter are members of the company. The big consumers in Switzerland will now have to cover their requirements from the new company, while the retail trade will continue to obtain its supplies from the wholesale trade. A similar undertaking exists already for Italy.

#### PROPOSED REDUCTION IN SWISS DUTIES.

At a recent sitting of the Federal Council it was decided that in order to assist the Swiss machinery industry, which is facing great difficulties, a reduction in Customs duties should be made on certain raw materials and semi-manufactured goods. The principal items to be affected by this decision are electrodes, pig-iron, semi-manufactured iron products and machine tools. The new Order will come into force as from July 6th.

#### WOMEN MAGISTRATES IN SWITZERLAND.

The International Women's News states that Dr. Sophie Bovet, who took her degree at Basle

University, has lately been appointed Magistrate at Basle. She is the second woman magistrate in Switzerland, the other being Dr. Margaret Schlatter in Hagen, who judges children's cases. An interesting dilemma is thus created as, by law in Switzerland, every magistrate has a right to vote; but, as no woman has a vote, these two magistrates have, so far, been prevented from exercising their rights.

#### NEW INTERNATIONAL FOUNDATION.

The construction of the new scientific station on the Jungfrauoch was carried out under circumstances of the greatest difficulty, constant battles being fought against tempestuous snowstorms often lasting several days, periods of extraordinary cold and the interruption of transport communications by avalanches. Important researches in meteorology, physiology, medicine, physics, zoology and botany are to be undertaken.

The Rockefeller Foundation, the Swiss Alpine Club, and many banks, insurance companies, industrial firms, railways, and manufacturers of scientific apparatus have subscribed important sums towards the foundation.

#### BERNE.

The death is reported of M. J. Ruckstuhl, General Manager of the "Banque Populaire," the deceased was formerly Manager of Crédit Suisse in Geneva and Banque Nationale de Crédit in Paris.

N.Z.Z.

The new International Institute for Meteorological and Scientific Research was inaugurated on the Jungfrauoch, Switzerland, on Saturday. The funds of the institute have been raised by scientific societies in France, Germany, Austria and Belgium, and by the Royal Society, London.

#### GENEVE.

A serious run on a Geneva bank took place last week. Long before the opening hour a large crowd of clients gathered outside the Banque de Genève, and made a wild rush for the counters as soon as the doors were opened.

A detachment of gendarmes was soon on the scene, and stood by to deal with any eventual disorders. Amid great tension the bank continued to meet all sight obligations. Extravagant rumours rapidly spread, and before long some thousands of people were besieging the bank.

Order was, however, maintained, and the depositors' fears somewhat allayed by an official announcement that the bank would pay all sight demands in full.

The State Council immediately instituted an inquiry into the position of the bank, with a view to taking the necessary measures to safeguard the depositors' accounts.

A hurried consultation between representatives of the Swiss National Bank and various Federal and Cantonal banking institutions was also held. The depositors, who are stated to total about 17,000, are mainly local tradespeople and rentiers.

#### URI.

Two young lawyers named Frehner and Wirz who had just passed their final examination have been killed while on a climbing holiday in the Gotthard range. They were attempting to make an ascent of the Dammastock, 7,920ft. high—a difficult peak even for first-class climbers.

Apparently they slipped and fell on to rocks far below. They were without guides, and as they failed to return to Meiringen when expected, a search party was sent out and their bodies were discovered.

#### BASEL.

Dr. Theodor Engelmann, Proprietor of the "Engelmannsche Apotheke" in Klein Basel died at a nursing home at the age of 80. Dr. Engelmann was a noted collector of antiques.

N.Z.

The "Weitere Bürgerrat" has unanimously elected Dr. Felix Weingartner, the celebrated conductor, as a "Baslerbürger."

N.Z.

#### AARGAU.

Owing to the crisis in the Machine Industry, the firm Brown, Boveri and Cie in Baden has reduced all salaries by 7.5 per cent. This reduction will come in force by October the 1st, and it is hoped that by the 31st of March, 1931, the normal pay will come into operation again.

## NOTES AND GLEANINGS.

By KYBURG.

That little old school-half-holiday-plea at the head of my article last week, called up half forgotten pictures of his own youth in at least one of our Readers who sends me a note from which I glean that he likes having old memories revived.

But if I went on now to remind him of other equally happy occasions and events in which he participated in that same sleepy looking but really frightfully industrious town which we both call "Vaterstadt," I might make him homesick and, if I alluded to some especially bright occasions when we "presented each other with the flower" I might make him thirsty!

So, let them be for a moment, those memories of old, happy days and let us be content that we are blessed in having them.

Holidays are fashionable just now and, as usual at this time of the year—I begin to wonder really whether there is a time when Switzerland has a "close season"?—our thoughts turn to our beloved Alps and the glorious snow-capped Giants of our Mountains. In the "Birmingham Post" 30th June, a Correspondent publishes an article in which he gives

#### Reasons Why People Climb Mountains:

Why do people want to climb mountains? For exercise, for adventure, for the air, for the view—these are some of the answers with which the enquirer is fobbed off by the climber. Probably he has no ulterior motive. For the earliest mountaineers, no doubt, the mountain was a means to an end. Pisgah gave Moses at least a glimpse of the Promised Land; the Alps gave Hannibal entry into Italy. But nowadays the mountain is an end in itself, and the mountaineer seldom has any practical purpose to serve by ascending it. Nor does he ask himself why he is risking life and limb to climb a height which it would be so much easier to leave unclimbed. He is content to enjoy the passing day with the sensations and experiences, painful or pleasurable, that it may bring. He climbs because he enjoys climbing, just as another man may enjoy golfing or fishing.

But to those who have "no head for heights" his enjoyment is inexplicable. The poet Gray, it is said, having set out in his carriage to look at one of the Cumberland mountains, found the appearance of even its smoother side so overpowering that he covered his eyes with his cloak and ordered the driver to take him home. There are people who lose their balance if they stand on a chair to set a picture straight, and others who cannot sit in a balcony or gallery of a theatre for fear of falling into the pit. At the other end of the scale are steeplejacks, builders, engineers, and the like, who can go about their work as gay as larks although almost as high up, and people who really find pleasure in perching on a ledge of rock 13,000 feet above sea level to admire a sunrise.

There seems to be no scientific explanation of these contrasts; and mountaineers differ in the reasons they suggest. Captain Finch, one of the Everest climbers, evidently thinks that some human beings are quite unconscious of that fear of the void which can paralyse others with terror. He holds that the true climber is altogether concerned with what he is doing at the moment, and has no time for fears and fancies. Being so intent on the ever-changing problem he has tackled, he gives not a thought to the depth beneath him and the terrible power of gravitation. Mr. Winthrop Young, on the other hand, suggests that it is not lack of concentration, but the absence of what he calls "points of reference," that causes the terror that overtakes so many people on a high peak or narrow ledge. His explanation is that on the level we maintain our balance by an instinctive and unconscious activity of the eyes in seizing "points of reference" around us; and, deprived of them, we find ourselves bewildered and overwhelmed.

Yet four-footed creatures on the mountains seem to need neither points of reference nor concentrated effort. Sheep are as much at ease on the knife-like edge of a chasm as in a broad green field, and a goat will leap from rock to rock at a speed that seems to scoff at concentration. Dogs and mules and horses,