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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 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,

though not perhaps so sure-footed as these mountain-bred creatures, appear to have none of that fear of heights which is so common among men. Perhaps it is part of the price we pay for having acquired the proud habit of walking and standing precariously balanced on two legs instead of going humbly and safely on four. It is significant that in moments of difficulty the mountaineer abandons the perpendicular and proceeds on all fours.

But it makes one catch one's breath even to read of those moments when the intrepid climbers scramble up steep pinnacles or cross dizzy ridges on hands and knees; or when they crawl inch by inch round jutting rocks, thrusting toes and fingers into ice-encrusted cracks and snowy crevices; or when they cling, seemingly by surface tension, to paths just a few inches wide, from which the snow falls away, an icy slope, down to the fatal glacier. One needs to have a head for heights merely to *imagine* such situations without having "that sinking feeling."

The literature of mountaineering shows that even the boldest and most experienced climber may lose his nerve at times. Whymper tells us that after the disaster which marred his conquest of the Matterhorn his three guides were utterly unnerved, and for fully half an hour the four survivors made no move. The paralysis which may temporarily afflict a man when he becomes too acutely conscious of the long drop beneath is sometimes relieved if another member of the party smacks his face! There have been occasions, however, when nothing could restore the climber's courage and he had to be ignominiously helped down, foot by foot and hand by hand, with his eyes covered so that he could not again look into the abyss which had been his undoing.

It is almost fatal to look down, but it is apparently just as disastrous at times to look up. The sight of the stupendous cliffs just below the summit of the Matterhorn has beaten many bold spirits who had overcome greater dangers in arriving so far; for contemplation of a cliff top against the sky, with the clouds moving over it, creates an appalling illusion that the cliff is toppling forward. On one occasion when Mr. Winthrop Young and the late Leigh Mallory were climbing an overhang in the Alps, one of their guides was suddenly overwhelmed by some such sensation and was for a while simply petrified with fear.

But "great things are done when men and mountains meet." And in contrast with these unfortunate incidents in the history of mountaineering there are instances of almost superhuman courage and coolness in moments of danger. During that same climb (a first ascent of one of the Alpine peaks) Leigh Mallory, who was leading, made a jump for a hold above his head, missed it, fell forty feet and swung in space at the end of a rope until he secured other holds. Then, quite unshaken, he continued to lead the party. In Mr. Winthrop Young's account of the climb up the south face of the Täschhorn, he describes among other "thrills" the forced halt made by the party on a narrow shelf below a precipice and their uneasy realisation that here they had reached a point where advance and retreat were equally impossible. And then he tells us of the amazing climb up a hundred feet of sheer rock by which Franz Lochmatter in the end brought his party through. "Man could not do much more," is recorded as Franz's comment when the summit was reached.

For the true mountaineer it is essential for his complete enjoyment of what the mountains can give him that there should be sustained effort, difficulties and hardship. He does not, perhaps, seek danger for danger's sake, but it is necessary that the climber's skill and strength and endurance should be tested to the full, with so much taking of chances as this may entail. That is why the records of mountaineering make such thrilling tales of adventure.

J.O.

Another "thrilling tale of adventure" might be found in the installation of **ELECTRIC POWER** all over Switzerland. Some of us who have been privileged to visit some of the big Power Stations in Switzerland, will know what I mean. However, I find the following in *The Star*, 1st July, entitled

#### Volts For Women:

and very interesting reading too, I think. I might add, that even in this City of London, it is possible to have one's hair cut by electric clippers, at least mine has been cut electrically for a considerable time past now.—And, as soon as I have saved up enough I am having another hair cut!

The pretty Swiss village where I spent my holiday is a pleasant place, the heart of a valley of scattered farms and hamlets over which the Angelus echoes three times a day, where cowbells tinkle from dawn till dusk, and where life is so peaceful that a policeman visits the village once a week out of courtesy.

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The men of Giswil will point out to you a hillside where, when there are laws to be made, they pass or reject them on a show of hands just as their fathers did 600 years ago.

And if, by chance, you should ask whether their women have votes or not, they will reply, "No, but they have volts."

The village is picturesque and old, but everybody is electrically-minded at the same time. Volts count there and every farmer and villager does his best to use them up as much as possible.

There is a power station at the top of the valley, tapping the strength of water of Lake Lungern as it falls through almost vertical pipes.

Scrambling over the meadows one day I came across an isolated farm-house where a woman at an open window was ironing with an electric iron. The day was hot and her room was kept cool by a revolving electric fan. In an orchard adjoining, the farmer was busily spraying apples and pears, trailing behind him a light field cable attached to a portable motor which worked his spray. The whirr of the fan and the buzz of the spray seemed to reflect the contentment of a countryside made comfortable by electricity.

This farm was not all electric, but it was not far from it. Every building had electric light, and the cowsheds were clean and airy like a modern factory. They were fitted with an array of electrical devices, amongst which one recognised a row of those curious cushion-and-bobbin instruments for milking cows electrically, a small electric butter churn, and what appeared to be a machine for mixing cow-food.

Later my Swiss host explained. "One unit of electricity," he said, "will milk about fifty cows. You can milk three cows by electricity in the time it takes to milk two by hand. One unit will separate between 200 and 300 gallons of milk."

"When you have electric light in your cowshed you can see what you are doing. Think of the time saved in winter by feeding your livestock by strong light instead of by oil lamps and candles! Think of trying to treat a sick animal by candle-light! Everybody uses electricity here because it is common sense."

"And cheap?" I interposed.

"You English always say that," he replied. "You forget it costs an enormous amount of money to harness the water, and the money has to be paid back. It is costly at first, and then is cheap only if everybody uses it. Here we all use it. You can get your hair cut by electricity down the road."

I rang the bell at the barber's shop, and it was so. The barber has not enough custom to sit in his shop all day waiting for it, but electrically he is complete. His electric hair-clippers purr over your head without a twinge while you wonder which of the chromium-plated instruments before you are for scalp-massage, hair-waving, and hair-drying respectively.

Had I stayed longer I have no doubt I should have found an electric dough-puncher in the village bakery and thermostat rods regulating the temperatures of its bee-houses.

What I did not see was an all-mains wireless receiver or a moving coil loud speaker. The village has some unexpected reactions to modernism and one of them is against wireless, not because it is resented but because to them it is needless while they can yodel unaccompanied and play their accordions and guitars. There is an electric gramophone in the parlour of the village hotel, but that is for the pleasure of visitors.

Nor will Switzerland, while electricity is cutting the drudgery out of its life, allow modernism entirely to deprive it of other personal delights. Late one evening my Swiss friend and myself leaned over a fence and watched three young men in formation rhythmically lowering the level of a field of hay with scythes. Pointing to an idle mowing machine in the corner of the field my sentimental companion remarked quaintly: "It is their happiness, just like your English gentlemen enjoys to chop down the tree on his estate."

#### 450th ANNIVERSARY.

Throughout the Canton of Fribourg great festivities took place on Sunday last, when its population celebrated the 450th Anniversary of the entry into the Swiss Confederation.

A service, conducted by Bishop Besson, took place at the St. Nicolas Cathedral in Fribourg, at which high State and Local officials attended; after the service a procession was formed which was headed by Federal Councillors Motta, Minger and Musy, and accompanied by the colours of the five Fribourg Battalions.

A solemn meeting of the Grand Council was held under the Presidency of its Chairman, M. Kaelin, who passed in review some of the most important events in the history of the canton since its entry into the Confederation.

From the balcony of the Town Hall, M. Bovet, head of the cantonal Government, addressed a large Assembly, his patriotic address left a deep impression amongst the hearers and the wellknown song of the "Romands" "Le vieux chalet" by J. Bovet was sung by the population with enthusiasm.

Federal Councillor Motta, who received a great ovation on appearing, conveyed in a great speech, which was often interrupted by applause, greetings from the Swiss Government and co-patriots.

At the dinner, which took place at the Theater Livo to which about 300 official guests were invited, M. Charnillod, President of the State Council brought the greetings and congratulations of the Federal Chambers. Federal Councillor M. Musy, who is a "Fribourgeois" also made a speech which was received with great enthusiasm. As representative of the Army, Colonel R. de Diesbach spoke.

The picturesque town of Fribourg was gaily bedecked with flags and at night a grand display of fireworks took place.

#### INFORMATION SWISS NATIONAL TOURIST OFFICE.

**Cheap Alpine Trips:**—The railways and the post combined are issuing tickets at greatly reduced prices for some of the most interesting circular tours in the Alps. The circular trip from Lucerne via Furka and Grimsel, for instance, with very good connections, costs fr.30.—, whilst the circular trip over the Klausen from Zurich costs only fr. 18.50. Prospectuses of such excursions may be obtained from the Swiss Federal Post Office, Berne and the Swiss National Tourist Office, Zurich.

**Special Tickets for the Rhone Glacier:**—The most important localities on the lakes of Thonne and Brienz are issuing greatly reduced tickets to the Rhone Glacier. This exceedingly remunerative trip can be made in one day by boat and train to Meiringen, and thence by postal car to the glacier and back. Prospectuses and information are obtainable from the Federal Post Office, Berne, and the Swiss National Tourist Office, Zurich.

#### "FUNNY CUTS"

— Comment! s'étonne une ménagère qui fait son marché. Vos œufs sont hors de prix! Quand je songe qu'un œuf coûtait cinq centimes avant la guerre!

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