

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: - (1931)

Heft: 516

Rubrik: Notes and gleanings

Nutzungsbedingungen

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist die Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften auf E-Periodica. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Zeitschriften und ist nicht verantwortlich für deren Inhalte. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern beziehungsweise den externen Rechteinhabern. Das Veröffentlichen von Bildern in Print- und Online-Publikationen sowie auf Social Media-Kanälen oder Webseiten ist nur mit vorheriger Genehmigung der Rechteinhaber erlaubt. [Mehr erfahren](#)

Conditions d'utilisation

L'ETH Library est le fournisseur des revues numérisées. Elle ne détient aucun droit d'auteur sur les revues et n'est pas responsable de leur contenu. En règle générale, les droits sont détenus par les éditeurs ou les détenteurs de droits externes. La reproduction d'images dans des publications imprimées ou en ligne ainsi que sur des canaux de médias sociaux ou des sites web n'est autorisée qu'avec l'accord préalable des détenteurs des droits. [En savoir plus](#)

Terms of use

The ETH Library is the provider of the digitised journals. It does not own any copyrights to the journals and is not responsible for their content. The rights usually lie with the publishers or the external rights holders. Publishing images in print and online publications, as well as on social media channels or websites, is only permitted with the prior consent of the rights holders. [Find out more](#)

Download PDF: 13.08.2025

ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, E-Periodica, <https://www.e-periodica.ch>

NOTES AND GLEANINGS.

By KYBURG.

GOOD MORNING EVERYBODY! KYBURG
CALLING THE SWISS IN ENGLAND!

It is only my innate modesty which prevents me from comparing the Swiss Observer and more particularly my column to a *Swiss Radio Transmitter in England*. I have a very slight doubt only that our paper fulfils a similar function and that what we write is read as eagerly, as if some really Swiss Radio Transmitter were at work in England and you could listen in to it.

However, we now have two powerful Swiss Stations plainly audible over here, the one at Sottens and the Schweizerische Landessender at Berne or thereabouts. On a Sunday night, at 10 p.m. I like to listen to the latest news bulletin, transmitted by the Schweizerische Depeschengatur and read out by a compatriot who possesses a most lovely bernese voice. I don't know whether it is due to the fact of my having lived abroad for so very long, or whether I am especially gifted that way, but listening in to a Swiss, talking "high German," especially if that Swiss be a Bernese or a Basler, is an entirely delightful experience for me, and my dear wife very often thinks that I am listening in to some capital jokes by the way she sees me grinning and chuckling to myself, while she can only hear a rather raucous medley of sound coming from the loud-speaker.

Last Sunday night there was some lovely yodelling too from Berne at round about 9 p.m., and that was quite sufficient to make me forget all about private worries, the political outlook and other little miseries and to send me to bed in high good spirits to which it was quite unnecessary to add any distilled ones.

I trust our dear Swiss Radio-Officials feel it in their heart that a blessing they are to their exiled brethren and that that knowledge lightens their task and makes it more interesting still.

Electricity which has made it possible to endow our struggling humanity with a wealth of new devices and means of power of all kinds, owes a great deal to *Faraday* and Switzerland too owes a tremendous deal to *Faraday* and it is, therefore right and proper that we should read the following interesting account, taken from "Nature," August 29th, 1931, on *Faraday's Connexion, etc.*

Faraday's Connexion with Switzerland and Swiss Industrial and Economic Development.

It was through being assistant to Sir Humphry Davy that Faraday came into contact with the Swiss savants, and most particularly, at Geneva, with Gaspard de la Rive, then professor of chemistry in the Academy of that town, and with his son Auguste de la Rive, the great physicist, well known for his treatise on theoretical and applied electricity, his theory of the Volta cell, and his discovery of electro gold-plating, etc.

Apart from his invention of the miners' safety lamp, which made his name so popular, Sir Humphry Davy discovered the electric arc, that extremely valuable aid to science and industry, which has made possible the attainment of very high temperatures in the electric furnace and has revolutionised both illumination and the metallurgical industry.

Switzerland is, however, indebted to Sir Humphry Davy not only for his discovery of the electric arc, which benefits its industry, but also for taking Faraday to Switzerland and introducing him to the savants of the country. Geneva is greatly honoured in having and caring religiously for the tomb of the illustrious English chemist in the ancient cemetery of the Plainpalais commune.

We may perhaps recall the circumstances which took Faraday to Switzerland.

Faraday had been filled with enthusiasm by the lectures which Sir Humphry Davy gave at the Royal Institution in 1812, and he sent his notes on the lectures to Davy. In the following year a vacancy occurred for the post of laboratory assistant, and Faraday was appointed to it by Davy, giving up the work in a bookseller's shop in which he had been engaged for several years. A little later, Davy discontinued his work as professor at the Royal Institution to travel through Europe with Lady Davy to study. Faraday accompanied him as his laboratory attendant. They took with them a small portable cabinet which allowed them to do some chemistry on the way. They went first to Paris, which they reached on Oct. 27, 1813, and where Davy presented various notes to the Academy. On Dec. 13, this body appointed him as one of its associate foreign members in the first class. Leaving Paris, Davy, still accompanied by Faraday, stopped at Montpellier, where he met the celebrated Geneva botanist, A. P. de Candolle. We see him in Italy in 1814, and finally, towards the middle of September in the same year, we find him at Geneva, where he remained until the beginning

of winter. He finally proceeded to London in the spring of 1815 by way of Austria and Germany.

Thus it happened that by accompanying Sir Humphry Davy on his travels, Faraday had the opportunity of coming into contact with Swiss savants, and particularly with Gaspard and Auguste de la Rive, with whom he kept up a sustained correspondence afterwards, which is now deposited in the public University library of Geneva.

These letters make it clear that Faraday and the Geneva savants were in communication for many years on scientific matters, exchanging opinions from time to time on each other's work. There is neither time nor space at present to go into this in detail, but we can perhaps return to it at some future date. There does, however, emerge from this intimate correspondence an impression of mutual confidence and of profound friendship. We may be permitted to quote in this connexion a letter which Faraday wrote, dated Oct. 16, 1852, when, having reached an age of some sixty years, he felt the first touches of age, although his exceptional activity might still make many a savant envious. A vein of modesty and sincerity brings out all the sympathetic greatness of this choice nature.

à Monsieur Auguste de la Rive,

PRESINCE

Geneva, Switzerland.

Royal Institution,

16 October 1852.

"MY DEAR DE LA RIVE,

From day to day and week to week I put off writing to you, just because I do not feel spirit enough; not that I am dull or low in mind, but I am as it were becoming torpid: a very natural consequence of that land of mental fogginess, which is the inevitable consequence of a gradually failing memory. I often wonder to think of the different causes (naturally) of different individuals, and how they are brought on their way to the end of this life. Some with minds that grow brighter and brighter but then physical powers fail; as in our friend Arago; of whom I have heard very lately by a nephew who saw him on the same day *in bed* and at *the Academy*: such is his indomitable spirit. —Others fail in mind first, whilst the body remains strong, others again fail in both together; and others fail partially in some faculty or portion of the mental powers, of the importance of which they were hardly conscious until it failed them. We may, in our course through life, distinguish numerous cases of these and other natures; and it is very interesting to observe the influence of the respective circumstances upon the characters of the parties and in what way these circumstances bear upon their happiness. It may seem very trite to say that *content* appears to me to be the great compensation for these various cases of natural change; and yet it is forced upon me, as a piece of knowledge that I have ever to call afresh to mind, both by my own spontaneous and unconsidered desires and by what I see in others. No remaining gifts though of the highest kind; no grateful remembrance of those which we have had, suffice to make us well and be content under the sense of the removal of the heart of these which we have been conscious of.

I wonder why I write all this to you: Believe me it is only because some expressions of yours at different times, make me esteem you as a thoughtful man and a true friend. — I often have to call such things to remembrance in the cause of my own self examination and I think they make me happier. Do not for a moment suppose that I am unhappy. I am occasionally dull in spirit but not unhappy; there is a hope which is an abundantly sufficient remedy for that, and as that hope does not depend on ourselves, I am bold enough to rejoice in that I may have it. . . .

Now that we have recalled the circumstances which took Faraday to Switzerland, let us see what consequences his discoveries, in particular his discovery of electromagnetic induction, have had in the industrial development of our country.

It is no exaggeration to say that Faraday's discovery is, with that of Ampère, one of those which has contributed the most to our civilised life. Its influence on pure physical science has been admittedly fundamental. Without dwelling on the scientific consequences of this work, we may recall that the discovery of induction, taken up and developed by the illustrious English physicist Maxwell, has become the explanatory basis of the theory of light, and, more generally, of all electromagnetic wave phenomena, which embrace more and more the whole of physics.

It is, however, above all, in its numerous applications that the discovery of induction has been so marvellously fruitful; as we know, these applications have altered the very face of our civilised world.

This transformation has been particularly significant in Switzerland; applications of electricity have rapidly assumed a place of first-class importance in this country. The immense water power which Switzerland employs has in fact only become available through the possibility of transforming it into electric energy, which permits of carrying and distributing it through the whole country, including the most secluded valleys.

To attain these marvellous results, it has been necessary in the first instance to build generators, motors, and electric transformers, the operation of which is controlled fundamentally to a considerable extent by the laws of induction, the discovery of which is due to Faraday's great genius.

At the present moment, the power in use for the production of electric energy in Switzerland is more than a million kilo volt-amperes and the electric energy produced annually by the whole of these installations now reaches about four milliard kilo-watt-hours (kw.h.).

The establishment of immense hydraulic works was, however, necessary to capture this enormous energy; moreover, to obtain sufficient regularity in the utilisation of this water power (it is well known how a watercourse varies from one season to another), it has been necessary to accumulate immense reserves; to create by dams large artificial lakes, or to harness by more or less important pieces of work large lakes already in existence. The hydraulic energy accumulated in this way in these immense reservoirs exceeds four hundred million kw.h.

Amongst the artificial lakes made to provide the necessary reserve of energy, we may mention specially Lake Barberine (Valais), with a capacity of nearly thirty-five million cubic metres, and Lake Dixence (Valais), now in active course of construction and with a capacity of fifty million cubic metres.

At the same time, for topographical reasons, Swiss industries have been called upon to make use of considerable heads of water. The installation at Fully (Valais) employs a head of 1650 metres, necessitating conduits and turbines working at pressures of about 165 atmospheres. Even this record will shortly be beaten by the Dixence installation, which will utilise a head of 1750 metres.

All this hydraulic energy is transformed into electric energy in large installations by means of generators and sets of transformers; not only is it used to light towns and even the most remote villages in the high mountains, but also industry in all its forms absorbs a considerable proportion. Mechanical and electrochemical and electrometallurgical industries have grown rapidly through the marvellous adaptability of the 'electric fairy' for distribution. In the first rank of the Swiss electrochemical industries one finds the Aluminium Company, with large factories at Neuhausen, Chippis, etc., the manufacture of ferrosilicon, and that of calcium carbide, finally used to a large extent for the manufacture of nitrogenous manures (cyanamide). Finally, the whole network of the Swiss railways has been completely electrified quite recently, and this change represents an annual consumption of about a half-milliard kw.h. Quite apart from the many advantages of electric traction, notably from the point of view of multiplicity of trains, the rapidity with which they can start from rest, the absence of smoke, etc., this electrification is a very considerable economy for Switzerland. It obviates the necessity for importing a quantity of coal worth some tens of millions of Swiss francs annually.

Such is a very brief account of the use of our natural resources in Switzerland, which has been made possible in the first instance through Faraday's fortunate discovery. It will be readily understood why the country which has had the privilege of giving birth to a genius whose work has been so astoundingly productive should have decided to honour his memory, and to celebrate the anniversary of one of the discoveries the consequences and repercussions of which have played so important a part in the whole of our civilisation.

I have said in a previous article that the art of writing consists, among other things, in setting before your readers food of various kind, so that, like a well balanced repast, they can easily digest it, without being over-fatigued by too much of one kind.

We will, therefore, turn to lighter subjects and, passing from scientific contemplation, without abandoning science altogether, at first, read something about a "Witty Advocacy of the Metric System" or a

Change by Lobster Method:

Western Gazette, 28th August.

Racy advocacy of the decimal system was put forward by Mr. E. C. Barton, of the Decimal Association, in an address at the Yeovil Rotary Club luncheon on Tuesday.

"I have enjoyed myself at times," he said "in going from end to end of a long corridor train, putting my head in a compartment here and there, and asking if there is any gentleman who can tell me how many square yards there are to the acre. Once now and again I find an unfortunate man who knows. Almost invariably he is a schoolmaster. Poor fellow, he has got to know! Everybody else has forgotten the whole of the weights and measures except the little bit they use in their own business." Sixty per cent., he said, of the exports of this country went to metric countries.

Dealing with supposed difficulties of introducing the system, Mr. Barton said in 1824 the gallon in England was altered 20 per cent., and it was found that in the most conservative country in the world they could alter the thing as long as they retained the name. Switzerland had adopted the decimal system piecemeal in the same way. It was said when the subject was before Parliament in 1907, that if it was adopted here practically all the machinery of the country would have to be destroyed; yet on the Continent they were using English machinery made by the inch measure. Where did the politicians get these fantastic ideas? The system could be adopted by camouflage, or they could do it if they had a Mussolini or Stalin, with the boot. But there was a favourite method in this country for which the most appropriate name was the "lobster method." A man in America started a society for the prevention of cruelty to lobsters, because he was convinced that to plunge a lobster in boiling water was very cruel, but if it was put in cold water and heated gradually the lobster never knew the exact moment it was boiling. (Laughter.) That was the favourite principle in this country. (Laughter.) In Wittaker's Almanac in 1824 there was not a single athletic record in anything but British measures. In 1931 two-thirds of the events were in the metric system, and they would hear small boys in the street talking about radio in metres. The lobster was beginning to boil. (Laughter.) For 250 years after its adoption on the Continent this country refused to accept the Gregorian Calendar. The question was whether they were to continue to be lobsters for another 250 years, or make the change now and get the advantage. (Applause.)

Mr. F. E. Nutt, in proposing a vote of thanks, humorously remarked that the banks carried out the customers' bank charges on the decimal system, which was no doubt why customers were surprised to find them so small. (Laughter.)

Concerning the very last paragraph in the above, I read "Bank charges" at first as "Bank Balances" and thought I had stumbled on the reason of my own *Very* small balance. There might be something of the kind, all the same and I am enquiring, or will enquire as soon as I have paid off my overdraft (swank! as if you could get one.) Editor) and feel sufficiently courageous to approach the Bank Manager personally.—By the way, has it struck you how polite we are to Bank Managers when things are not quite so good in the City? Why, I even let one of them beat me at Golf the other day!

However, we will not discuss Finances to-day. The Budget is not public yet, I do not know what is in store for us and I do not want to refer to it at all, because by the time you read these lines, you will probably have to pay more for your tobacco and your other stimuli and feel generally not on the best of terms with finance.

THE SWISS BANKS.

In recent years Switzerland has experienced a great influx of foreign capital. She has been treated as offering a home of refuge for savings belonging to the citizens of other nations. To some extent this movement of capital is merely the continuation of a practice which began during the war, when Switzerland enjoyed the two-fold advantage of neutrality and of continued adherence to the gold standard. It has since been reinforced by distrust of other currencies due to inflation, or fear of inflation, and by the desire to evade taxation. In Switzerland the income-tax is only 3 per cent., and there are no death duties on the estates of foreigners. The counterpart of the capital influx can be seen in the Swiss banking statistics. Between August, 1930, and August, 1931, the gold holding of the Swiss National Bank has risen from 628 million francs to 1,189 millions, or roughly, £22 millions. In the same period the deposits of the National Bank have increased from 234 million francs to 678 millions. During the calendar year 1930 the combined deposits of the seven leading commercial banks of Switzerland grew by 358 million francs.

During a time of general uncertainty in the world of finance, suspicions are easily generated, and it seems to have occurred to some people to wonder whether the funds that have been placed in Switzerland are really safe. Such doubts might be classified under two heads. The first relates to the soundness of any particular bank. The

second raises the question of the liquidity of the Swiss banking system generally. They might be inspired by various reasonings. The access of resources may have led the banks to seek some profitable use for them. They may have been advanced to Swiss industry. The world depression has not passed Switzerland by, and her industries have naturally suffered. During the first six months of this year her exports fell by 34 per cent., while imports declined by only 13 per cent. Invisibles exports in the shape of the tourist traffic, commonly expected to make good not less than a fifth of the adverse balance of visible trade, have been much below normal. How far, then, are bank advances frozen in consequence of the depression? Again, how far has the German crisis reacted upon the Swiss banks? It has been estimated that Swiss funds invested in Germany amounted, before the crisis, to a milliard marks. What is their present value, and how far have they been immobilised? Account has also to be taken of the German funds formerly held in Switzerland. Has the attempt to realise them been an important contributory factor in causing the decline in security prices on the Swiss stock market? Finally, it might be imagined that the increase in the gold holding and in bank deposits may cause an inflation of the Swiss currency which would undermine her banking position.

In mentioning these several lines of possible argument there is no intention of suggesting that they are valid. On the contrary, it would seem that a survey of the Swiss banking position ought to dispel doubt rather than give it support. In the first place, the figures that have been quoted show that Swiss bank deposits have not been increased so largely as is often supposed. In particular, the amount of the German deposits is said to have been considerably overestimated. A recent Swiss estimate places them at between two to three hundred million marks. Most of the foreign capital placed in Switzerland has been re-invested in securities, largely dollar and sterling. Naturally, the banks are interested in maintaining the level of security values, and in so far as forced selling of internal securities dealt in on the Swiss market might easily create difficulty, it is not improbable that, as reported, a consortium of banks is taking measures to support prices. As regards inflation, there is no evidence to show that it has occurred. The Swiss price-index has kept remarkably close to that of other countries, and has followed for some time almost precisely the same course as that of Sweden. But the strongest argument against any general distrust of the Swiss banking position is to be found in the remarkable strength and liquidity of the Central Bank. The proportion of its gold holding to its note circulation is nearly 100 per cent. The proportion of gold and devisen together is 140 per cent. In a word, the conclusion to be drawn is that, while the world depression and the recent financial crises have created difficulties for Swiss commercial banks, as for banks elsewhere, the general banking situation in Switzerland is one of great strength and liquidity.

Financial Times.

AT THE LEGATION.

The numerous friends of Dr. Cl. Rezzonico, First Secretary of Legation, in charge of commercial affairs, will learn with regret that he has been appointed to a similar position at the Legation in Rome. His place will be taken by Dr. Rüfenacht from the political department in Berne.

Dr. Isler, who previous to his present appointment as Swiss Consul General in Shanghai, was for some years a colleague of the Swiss Minister in London, has been granted leave of absence on account of illness.

TO OUR READERS.

The holiday season coming shortly to an end, we intend publishing a few articles giving the experiences of some of our readers who spent their holiday either here or abroad. We therefore invite any of our subscribers, especially those who were lucky enough to visit the "old country," to send us an account of their experiences. The articles can be written in English, French, Italian or German.

A "PICNIC" BY CAR.

On account of the date, which was fixed for the "Picnic" by car, by members of the City Swiss Club, coinciding with the "Jeune Federal, Eidgenössischer Bettag" it has been decided to postpone this outing to Sunday September 27th. A further announcement will appear in a subsequent number.

ERRATA.

Referring to our Obituary note in the last number of the Swiss Observer, we regret that owing to a misunderstanding M. Otto Grossholzer was reported to have been accidentally killed; it should have read that M. Hermann Elmiger was killed, and we tender herewith our apology to Mr. Grossholzer for this unfortunate mistake.

DOCTOR HANS KLOETZLI †

Editor in Chief
of the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*.

We deeply regret to inform our readers of the death of Dr. Hans Kloetzli, Editor in Chief of the "*Neue Zürcher Zeitung*" which occurred last Sunday at Zurich.

The deceased has on numerous occasions shown a great interest in our paper, and on our 10th birthday anniversary, which we celebrated last year, he sent us the following encouraging message:

An die Leitung des Swiss Observer.

Sehr geehrte Herren,—Die "Neue Zürcher Zeitung" hat von Anfang an dem offiziellen Organ der Schweizer Kolonie in Grossbritannien ihr lebhaftestes Interesse entgegengebracht und nimmt heute an der freudigen Feier des zehnjährigen Bestandes des Swiss Observer einen ebenso lebhaften und sympathischen Anteil. Wir sind überzeugt, dass der Swiss Observer die geistigen Bande zwischen den Schweizern, die auf dem britischen Inselreich eine zweite Heimat gefunden haben, und der alten Heimat immer enger knüpfen und die Anhänglichkeit unserer Mitbürger in der Ferne an das gemeinsame Vaterland stärken und fördern wird.

Mit vaterländischem Gruss!

*Neue Zürcher Zeitung Chefredaktion,
Dr. H. KLOETZLI.*

The writer had the good fortune to meet Dr. Kloetzli only last year, quite accidentally at a social function in Zurich, where he could convince himself with what great interest he followed the efforts of the various Swiss papers abroad, and what a sympathetic understanding he showed for the manifold difficulties under which these undertakings carry on their not always easy task.

Hans Kloetzli was born in 1891 at Burgdorf, and was the youngest son of a numerous family. He visited the schools of his native town, and in 1910 matriculated at the University in Berne where he studied History and Languages, and where he finished his studies in 1918 taking his doctor's degree.

Before he finally decided to take the career of a Journalist he spent a few "Semesters" at the University in Florence, and at the Sorbonne in Paris, at which latter place he followed the lectures of Professor Aulard.

He started in his profession with the "*Burgdorfer Tagblatt*" writing several leaders which, through their masterful handling of the subject and their youthful enthusiasm created a great impression in journalistic circles. In 1919 he joined the Editorial Staff of the "*Neue Zürcher Zeitung*," one of the leading papers in German speaking Switzerland, and perhaps the most widely read Swiss paper abroad. His "Ressort" was foreign affairs, an office to which he was ideally fitted, as the splendidly written articles about the League of Nations Sessions proved. We can not do better than to quote a few lines which appeared in one of the obituary notices about his splendid work in Geneva:

"Er huldigte nicht einem schwärmerischen Pazifismus. Er blieb auf dem Boden der Realitäten; aber diese realistische Politik durchwob er mit warmen Sympathien und durchtränkte sie mit der eisenfesten Hoffnung auf eine schliessliche Ordnung der Dinge, aufgebaut auf mählig wieder stärker werdendem internationalem Recht und Rechtsgefühl."

In 1930 the post of Editor in chief became vacant, on account of the former occupant, Dr. A. Meyer becoming a Federal Councillor, and Dr. Kloetzli was appointed to this responsible position which alas came to such an untimely end.

A splendid career has been cut short, and not only the profession, of which he was in the real sense of the word a shining light, but also our country has become poorer through the passing away of this lovable young man, and we tender our great contemporary as well as to his family our most sincere sympathy in their great loss.

ST.

DIE BLAUE ROSE.

VON MAX GEILINGER.

Der Tageslärm, der uns verendende,
Ebbt selbst zur Erde und verkrümelt sacht.
Geheimnisvoll wie alles werdende
Blüht eine blaue Rose auf, die Nacht.
Genährt von tausend Tränen, tausend Lächeln,
Rankt sie vom Himmelrande himmelwärts.
Schon steigen Sterne falterhaft und fächeln.
Dir wird, die Rose ranke dir im Herz.
Denn wir sind voll von Sonnenuntergängen,
Randvoll von Trümmern grossen Lichts, von
Sternen.
O kühle Nacht, du rankst an Traumgesängen,
O kühle Nacht, du rankst an Traumgesängen,
Wie wohl ein Mensch an seinen Träumen reift,
Bis ihre Blüten sich zu Tränen kernen.