

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: 488

Rubrik: Notes and gleanings

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The Swiss Observer

FOUNDED BY MR. P. F. BOEMRINGER.

The Official Organ of the Swiss Colony in Great Britain.

EDITED 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. 11—No. 488

LONDON, FEBRUARY 28, 1931.

PRICE 3d.

PREPAID SUBSCRIPTION RATES

UNITED KINGDOM	{ 3 Months (12 issues, post free) : 3s 6d
AND COLONIES	{ 6 " " 2s 6d
	{ 12 " " 5s 6d
SWITZERLAND	{ 6 Months (26 issues, post free) : Frs. 7.50
	{ 12 " " 14.—

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



FEDERAL.

SWISS GOLD POLICY.

The annual report of the Swiss National Bank contains some interesting remarks as to the gold policy pursued during the past year. The report points out that the Swiss National Bank is under no legal obligation to buy gold at a fixed price; by the end of August its note cover had risen to 70 per cent., and the Bank declined to accept any further gold. The Swiss banks then availed themselves of their right to have coins minted at the Federal Mint, and the National Bank assisted them inasmuch as it refrained from engaging the Mint through giving it any orders for minting. In October, when the influx of German funds tended to bring about a further appreciation of the franc, the National Bank increased its foreign exchange holding, but converted part of it into gold deposits in London and New York.

The report emphasises that the international position of the Swiss market compels the National Bank to keep an unusually large reserve, so as to meet any pressure caused by a wholesale withdrawal of foreign funds temporarily placed in the country.

SWISS BANK REPORTS.

The net profits of the Swiss National Bank for 1930 amounted to 7,100,000f., against 7,310,000f. for 1929. The dividend remains unchanged at 6 per cent.

The net earnings of the Banque de Dépôts et de Crédit, Geneva, amounted to 1,390,000f. for 1930, the same as for the previous year. The dividend remains unchanged at 6 per cent.

RECORD SNOWFALL.

Telegraphic communication from Switzerland yield the information that they have just experienced the heaviest snowfall within living memory.

The whole contour of the country has been completely changed, and paths, hillocks, valleys, and other familiar landmarks have been wholly blotted out.

The hotel at Kleine Scheidegg, head-quarters of many of the finest ski-runners visiting Switzerland, high up on the Jungfraujoch railway, has been cut off by an avalanche which has buried the line, and it is not expected that communication by railway will be re-established for some days.

Meantime, visitors to this hotel who are obliged to get home are coming down on skis to the lower altitudes, while their luggage is brought down on luges—not without a certain element of risk, for other avalanches are still liable to slip before the snow has settled.

CATERING FOR SWISS FILM FANS.

There are, according to a recent statistic of the Swiss Society of Public Help, 400 cinemas throughout Switzerland.

The Canton of Vaud heads the list with 63 (one cinema for every 5,200 inhabitants), whereas the average for the whole country is one for 10,000 inhabitants.

Neuchâtel has one cinema for 3,800 inhabitants.

Two districts in the Canton of Glarus have refused to admit the commercial cinema, but have opened a communal cinema, at which, for special films, school children are admitted free, and the charge for adults is a minimum one in order to cover expenses.

The choice of film is in the direction of educational, documentary, scientific, and "healthy recreation" films.

LOCAL.

BERNE.

The cashier of the Federal Gun Powder works at Wimmis, Schneeburger, has been arrested on a charge of embezzlement. The amount in question as far as could be ascertained is from 10-20,000f.

N.Z.Z.

BASLE.

M. Jakob Schaffner, the oldest citizen of the canton died at Ormalingen at the age of 106. He was born at Anwil in the year 1825.

LAUSANNE.

The Orient express from Italy, due here was greatly delayed by heavy snowfalls on the Italian-Swiss frontier.

An express on the Lötschberg line (Bernese Alps) had to stop on account of an avalanche. The passengers have been taken to their destinations by another route.

THURGAU.

M. Carl Brüschweiler from Salmsach, has been appointed Director of the Federal Statistical Department in Berne.

N.Z.

GRAUBUENDEN.

It is feared that six members of a family have perished in an avalanche which fell across the Lukmanier Pass, in the Canton of Grisons, last week. The avalanche struck the Zur Post, a large inn known to many British tourists, partly wrecking it and burying the occupants.

Three members of the family were dug out alive, and later the bodies of the innkeeper's wife, Mme. Wenzin, and her grandson were recovered.

Owing to the danger of fresh falls, rescue work is very difficult, and little hope is entertained of saving the proprietor and three other members of the family.

MONTREUX.

The death is reported of M. Alexandre Emery at the age of 81. M. Emery was one of the leading men in the Hotel Industry and he enjoyed an international reputation.

N.Z.

TICINO.

CANTONAL ELECTIONS.

A rectification is due as regards the article published three weeks ago, in this respect, Councillor of State Martignoni headed the list of conservative candidates for the Southern Ticino, instead of National Councillor Dollfus.

The elections do not appear to have cleared the air very much, beyond establishing the fact of a further considerable advance of the progressive parties (liberal and socialist) which obtained about 20,000 votes, while the clerical-conservatives remained at their 11,000. The Government is composed of two liberals, two conservatives and one socialist, but it is not yet clear whether liberals and socialists will co-operate or whether the main direction of affairs will remain in the hands of the conservatives, helped by the socialists.

GRAND COUNCIL.

The 78 years old ex-National Councillor Antonio Soldini took the Chair, as doyen, at the opening session on the 9th inst. In his brief speech of welcome he impressed upon all members the need to give of their best, and of approaching all the grave problems awaiting solution with firmness of character and consistency of purpose. Only to one problem he referred in particular, as it was nearest to his heart, viz. the question of the taxation of the Ticinese abroad, for whom he had words of great praise. "Some good steps forward," he said, "have been made during the last few years, in partial acceptance of one of my proposals, but we have still to complete the task of giving our fellow-citizen abroad fullest justice in matters of taxation. I firmly hope this will be done during the present term of office." I wonder if military tax matters will come in for a share of redress? Not that it interests me financially, but on a question of principle I am as interested as I ever was.

FINANCIAL RECOVERY.

The papers have published lately instructive statistics concerning private deposits with the banks of the Ticino. While in 1890 they stood at 13.2 million francs, they had increased to 44.8 millions by 1913. At the beginning of 1914 came the various bank crashes and deposits fell to 9.4 millions, partly through losses and partly through withdrawals, 1924 they had recovered to 37.5 millions and at the end of 1930 exceeded 76 million francs.

TRY TO ATTEND

the lecture of Engineer HUG on
Friday, 6th March 1931, at 7 o'clock

at the

INSTITUTE OF MECHANICAL ENGINEERS
STOREY'S GATE, S.W.1.

NOTES AND GLEANINGS.

By KYBURG.

I have been working my way through a rare list of articles on Winter Sports this week, some good, most of them of the frankly advertising character. But I found one which I should think it a pity to withhold from you, and that one is written by Gwynneth E. Jeanes, M.A., in the *Woman's Magazine*, January, 1931:

A Winter Playground.

Among those who know and love Switzerland in summer, there must be many who have never seen it in winter, mantled in snow and sparkling in the sun.

Of those who are free to go, some fear the cold, others the great expense, while many feel themselves too old for the great playground of youth.

No need to fear the cold.

To the first I would reply: "If you are normally healthy, and your heart is sound, you have nothing to fear. The days are hot and sunny; only the mornings and evenings are cold—even then, it is not the damp, penetrating cold we so often get in England, but dry, crisp and sparkling.

No need to fear the expense.

To those deterred by thought of expense, I would say: There are, among the many parties going out for winter sports, many which do not aim to be ultra-fashionable, have no jazz bands, and with whom you need not appear in a different outfit every day of the week.

All you need are a pair of skiing boots, and either breeches or trousers for skiing; boots with skates *screwed* on, and a wide, short skirt for skating; to these add a thick woollen sweater, a warm cap, scarf, and gloves, thick socks to wear inside the skiing boots, and a pair of dark glasses to protect the eyes from the sun-glare on the snow: then you have your outfit complete. Such things as skis and toboggans are to be hired out there, for any period, at a very moderate charge.

Only, do not try to save money by going to some cheap place at a low level (between 5,000 and 6,000 feet is best), because, if the winter is not good, conditions will be poor, your money will be wasted, and you will return home disappointed and disillusioned.

And age is no obstacle.

To those who fear they are too old: I have known many people over middle-age learn to ski and skate; but to attempt the former is seldom advisable, especially as other pleasures are infinite.

Nothing could be more thrilling than driving in a sleigh to the music of jingling bells.

The first time I went to Zermatt in winter—indeed, the first time Zermatt was opened for winter sports—some sixty sleighs, drawn by mules, met our party at St. Niklaus, and, packed in with rugs and hot-water bottles, we drove, four and a half hours, up the valley through fairy-like scenes.

As we passed each little village on the way, the local band turned out to greet us with national airs! Now, of course, the mountain railway has been opened up in winter right up to Zermatt, and even beyond, to the Riffelalp, so that villagers have grown accustomed to the hundreds of incoming winter visitors.

To Hospenthal.

Last winter I went, with the same party, to Hospenthal, above Andermatt. There were between seventy and eighty of us, and we had the entire hotel to ourselves—a jolly company of boys and girls, young men and women, and whole families beside. Our youngest member was just ten.

Being no longer a beginner, I was able to enjoy most of the various sports. One's first expedition must be to get skis fitted, and then one practises a little on the nursery slopes. After this, one is ready for the longer excursions.

For the inexperienced the better plan is to divide the day between skating and skiing, or perhaps skiing and tobogganing; it is unwise to overdo any one thing. Even the moderately good skaters may enjoy ice hockey, and feel the exhilaration of chasing the solid rubber disc as it skims over the rink.

The better skiers may try ski-jöring (being pulled on skis by a horse), and cannot fail to reach a high pitch of excitement.

Ski-jöring adventures.

I shall certainly never forget a day when five of us, out on one rope behind the driver, were returning from Andermatt. The horse was going at a good pace, and our energies were concentrated on directing our skis along the polished surface of the road, when—suddenly, shout! the rope had broken, and the last two skiers on it had tumbled over into the snow. The driver pulled the horse up with a sudden jerk, and away went the rest of us into the snow, even the driver himself. By the time we had picked ourselves up, quite unhurt, the horse had plunged into deep snow. Having dragged, and coaxed, till he got him out, the driver handed the reins to me while he fixed up the rope again.

I passed a horrible moment imagining a sudden start, and myself as sole ski-jörer! However, the horse stood perfectly until, at the sound of his master's voice, he set off once more and pulled us up to Hospenthal without further mishap.

Ski-ing over the St. Gotthard Pass.

My most memorable day was when, with several others, I went over the St. Gotthard Pass on skis.

We left Hospenthal at 9.30 a.m., and after a stiff climb of about thirteen kilometres in the blazing sun, we reached the Hospice at 1.30 p.m. We were hindered several times on the way up by meeting companies of soldiers ski-ing round the most awkward corners at lightning speed!

At the Hospice we renewed our strength by eating our packed lunches (we had carried these in our rucksacks), and drinking the steaming hot chocolate one can get there.

After a short rest we decided to go down to Airolo, a village at the entrance of the St. Gotthard tunnel. Having been told we should reach Airolo in less than two hours, we hoped to get the 4.30 train through the tunnel to Göschenen, and, from there, the mountain train back to Andermatt. The descent, however, proved most difficult owing to weather conditions affecting the path, so that it was 6.30 before we reached the barracks above Airolo, where, after much persuasion, we were permitted to phone through to Hospenthal to tell our party we could not get back that night. *Italy is reached.*

By this time a silvery moon had risen and lighted us on our winding way down to the village. About half an hour later, as we were going through its main street, one of our party slipped on its icy surface, and a small native onlooker exclaimed sarcastically: "Ecco! bene!"—which reminded us that we had left the German-speaking Canton on the other side of the pass. I therefore, as interpreter, had to readjust my tired brain to *la lingua Italiana* as we set out in quest of a resting-place for the night.

It was a long search, for most of the hotels were closed, but we finally found shelter at a small hotel opposite the station. After an excellent dinner we felt somewhat revived, and were extremely proud of our achievement, especially as one of our number had only put on skis for the first time five days before! He was a man, and young, and exceptional! I would not advise other novices to emulate his exploits.

Having slept the sleep of the healthily weary for over eleven hours, we spent next morning exploring the village shops; our train to Göschenen did not leave till 11 a.m.

Our first visit was to the watch makers, where we bought ski badges to commemorate the occasion. The watchmaker addressed us in Italian, but on learning that we were English, and had crossed the St. Gotthard the day before, he aired his few English phrases in expressing his great surprise and admiration. When we left he accompanied us outside his shop door, rang a bell till his good wife popped her head out of an upper window, and with much gesticulation he shouted to her—also, in fact to the whole village—to look at "gli Inglesi" who had come over the pass from Hospenthal.

After journeying by train through the tunnel we reached our hotel in time for lunch, after an enjoyable and never-to-be-forgotten adventure.

One day I made friends with the local priest, who was an accomplished organist, and he generously invited one of our party, also a talented musician, to play in the church.

Some of us joined in the beautiful German carol, "Stille Nacht, heilige Nacht," and another day at the request of one of the Kloster sisters, we brought our English hymn-book with us, and sang a few well-known English hymns. She joined in our singing, and on parting we wished each other God's ever-present blessing.

In the evening the village children came to the hotel to yodel, and each day there seemed to be some new joy awaiting us. It might be the rosy morning glow on snow-capped peaks, or silvery moonlight behind the pines as we re-

turned from Andermatt at evening. It might be a letter from home that awaited us when we got in, or the enjoyment of new friendships formed—the sunshine on the snow, the tinkling of sleigh-bells and the cheery "Ski-Heil!" of the passer-by. All these things combined, send us home so absolutely fit that having had our playtime, we return with abundant energy to our different tasks.

For the rest of this week's GLEANINGS, there is nothing of importance, or appeal to me, or of a nature to interest many. There is a letter, for instance, in the *Western Morning News & Mercury*, January 12th, signed "Schoolboy," which deals with the question of Swiss Silk Stockings competing with British Stockings. That "school boy" is for taxing the Swiss stockings, because:

To compare the value of these two articles is grossly unfair. The English manufacturer before he makes a single pair of stockings has to pay employer's liability, sick and unemployment insurance, to pay his employees a minimum trade union rate, in addition to rent, rates and taxes.

The Swiss manufacturer has none of these liabilities and obviously he can produce identically the same article as an English manufacturer at a much lower price.

Plymouth, Jan. 10. **SCHOOLBOY.**

I have made a note of this because I am going to ask some friends of mine who are Swiss manufacturers to let me join them in their business. I have often longed to have a business which would be free from employer's liability, sick and unemployment insurance, minimum trade union rates, rent, rates and taxes! No wonder people here often think that our Swiss brethren have a lovely time to spend in a lovely country in lovely pursuits! A pity only that that article in the said paper was signed by "schoolboy."

NOUVELLE SOCIETE HELVETIQUE, LONDON GROUP.

PRESIDENT'S ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1930 READ AT ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING ON FEB. 28TH, 1931.

The short survey of the life and activity of the London Group of the N.S.H. during 1930 which I propose laying before you to-night will, I hope, give us food for thought and point the way in more than one direction. On the whole, it is certainly a pleasant story that may be unfolded of the calm but active period behind us. There have been few decisive changes; we have at no time been called upon to step outside our accustomed path of intention or profession, but it is not without a certain pride that I can speak of an increased activity, of a greater determination and of a keener interest which have characterized this past year in our Group. You may remember that a few years ago I was frank enough to advise the London Group to "lie low" for a while, to collect and re-organize the remnants of its forces and to re-build its financial strength. We have quietly done all this with the result that 1930 is likely to have seen the end of this quiescent period, permitting us to re-emerge strong and healthy from the reaction of our boom years of 1919-1922.

But before I speak of the increased activity of the Group, I would once more refer to the curious mental attitude of the major portion of our membership. They appear to regard themselves evidently as honorary members since they do not in the least wish to participate in the active life of the Society, but pay their subscription with commendable regularity. Some may stick to us in memory of greater times; others may regard it as good taste to be a member; others again may do so out of regard for a friend, or because they have been recommended to belong to the movement. Yet this abstention from active participation, needless to say, is a serious point of weakness and produces a curiously anomalous state of affairs in our Group. We are almost like a Mexican army, all generals and no privates; for it is the Council and the Council alone who takes an active interest in the affairs of the Society.

The Council according to the Statutes consists of a maximum number of 14 members, but for the above stated reason I would wish to see this number doubled and shall revert to the matter at a later stage. There have been nine meetings during the past year at this address. These monthly meetings are advertised in the *Swiss Observer*; no direct invitations are sent to the members, but since the meetings have been held with unfailing regularity on the third Wednesday in each month for many years past, we are not conscious of committing a breach in the omission of direct invitations. The administrative part of the Council has experienced a serious loss during the period under review. Miss Crawford who has been our able Secretary since the abolition of the standing Secretariat has been obliged to retire during last May on account of health. She left England, joining her mother in Canada. Her work has been taken over and very conscientiously carried on by Mrs. Clara Muller who, as you all know, is also re-

sponsible for the clearness and correctness of our accounts as well as for the promptness with which members' subscriptions are remitted.

The activities, other than administrative, of the Council may suitably be described under four headings, viz.

- (a) Causeries
- (b) Film Shows
- (c) Official participations
- (d) General activity.

(a) Five causeries were presented to the Group in the course of the year, all by members. They proved to be of great educational value, being given by distinguished experts in most cases, and were followed by prolonged discussions. It is more than refreshing to know that we may rely upon such valuable co-operation and performances among our own members.

March 19th Experiences in Japan, by Mr. Paul Liechti.

May 21st The influence of the League of Nations, the International Labour Bureau and the International Bank on Switzerland, by Mr. Th. de Sonnenberg and Mr. L. H. Micheh, of the Legation.

Oct. 15th Report of the Eleventh Journée des Suisses à l'Etranger à Bâle, August 30/31, by the President.

Nov. 19th The history of the Swiss Church in London, by the Rev. Hoffmann de Visme.

Jan. 21st Psychological influences on Cancer, by Dr. Walter Mons.

(b) As has now become our custom, we have given the Colony two Film shows during the year. They were held, with free admission, at King George's Hall, and drew a large audience in each case. The performances have again been attended either by the Minister himself or his Representative who addressed the meetings and added greatly to the patriotic significance of the movement. I am of opinion that we have every reason to be pleased with our activity in this direction; the N.S.H. film shows have now become an institution in our Colony and are fulfilling their purpose admirably. The two films were

May 3rd. A Travers La Suisse, four separate films of South Western Switzerland and the Bernese Oberland.

Nov. 8th. With the Swiss Mountain Troops in the Alps, a military film of great beauty and patriotic appeal. This film was obtained from the Central Secretariat in Berne through the good offices of the Legation.

(c) We have further participated officially in the following events and entertainments.

Aug. 28th. With the co-operation of the S.M.S. we organized the famous lecture of Prof. Schroeter on the National Park in Switzerland, at King George's Hall.

May 31st. At the Jubilee on the 10th. anniversary of Minister Paravicini's work in London, held at the Rest. Monico, when your President was entrusted with the official speech on behalf of the London Swiss Societies.

Aug. 30/31 Your President officially represented the Group at the 11th Journée des Suisses à l'Etranger in Basle, where he took an active part in the deliberations. Mr. and Mme. Campbell were also present, en route from Germany.

We further participated, as per long standing custom, in the Swiss Sports at Herne Hill and the First of August Festivity at Hendon, discharging our usual obligations in the organization and management. At the latter function we carried out the First of August Collection in favour of Swiss Schools abroad and remitted to the authorities in Switzerland the sum of £46 5-0.

(d) Our general activity during the year followed much the usual course of events. It would lead us too far to mention in detail the various interests and occupations, but I can assure you that a good deal of time and work is involved in these matters, month by month. It should be noted, however, that the intercourse between our Group and the various Groups abroad is steadily becoming more active and this is due to a large extent to our initiation of sending Christmas greetings to all overseas Groups. We have also remained in closer touch than ever before with the Central Secretariat in Berne, as well as with our very staunch old friends Mr. Jean Baer and Prof. A. Latt, both of whom were visited by your President, when in Switzerland.

(4) It is a most pleasing reflection that our relations with the Swiss Legation and the sister Societies in London continue to be of the most friendly character. The encouragement and co-operation which we have received during the past year from the Minister and Mr. Th. de Sonnenberg in particular are treasured by us with sincere gratitude and will not fail, I am sure, to evoke in us a greater enthusiasm for our cause and a deeper patriotism. If a further proof of the esteem we enjoy at the Legation were needed, it is easily found in the ready agreement of Mr.