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The Swiss Observer

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HOME NEWS



FEDERAL.

DIPLOMATIC VISIT AT THE FEDERAL PALAIS.

Sir Howard William Kennard, the new British Minister to Switzerland, presented his letters of credence to Monsieur Häberlin, President of the Swiss Confederation, last week.

WORLD'S MOST POWERFUL ELECTRIC TRAINS.

Switzerland has completed the first of a number of what will be the most powerful electric locomotives in the world.

They will be 110ft. long, will develop 7000 horse-power, and will be able to carry goods and express trains at 40 miles an hour on the steepest grades of the international St. Gothard line.

NEW SWISS COMPANY.

La Société Financière Métallurgique-Electrique is the name of a new company which has lately been organised at Basle (L. St. Alban Anlage) to finance electro-metallurgical undertakings.

NEW SWISS OBSERVATORY.

Three years of work under the most difficult circumstances has been crowned by the completion of the new observatory on the Jungfrauoch at a height of 11,500 feet. The observatory will be under international control. The installation of instruments is partially completed though the observatory will not be in use before the summer.

CINEMA TERMS TROUBLES.

At the general assembly of the Association Cinématographique Suisse Romande, recently held in Geneva, it was proposed to advise the special Commission appointed to consider the new terms for talkie films to call an assembly of Swiss renters and directors to discuss the question.

GENEVA AND FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE.

In a message to the British Red Cross Society conveying good wishes for Red Cross Day, which celebrated throughout the Empire the anniversary of Florence Nightingale's birthday, M. Max Huber, President of the International Red Cross Committee, Geneva, says:

"The 12th of May is indeed a great day in the calendar of the Red Cross.

"Nor is the anniversary of Florence Nightingale celebrated in England alone. It is on the 12th of May that the International Red Cross Committee at Geneva distributes to the most deserving nurses throughout the world the medal which was founded by the International Red Cross Conference, and which bears the image of the Lady of the Lamp."

SLOTTED WING FOR SWISS PLANES.

An agreement has been concluded between the Technical Branch of the Federal Military Department of Switzerland and Messrs. Handley Page, providing for the fitting of the slotted wing mechanism to certain of the types of aeroplane used by the Federal Military Department.

SWISS YARN EXPORTS.

Swiss exports of rayon yarns in the first quarter of the year totalled 1,092,169 kilos. The total for March was 411,943 kilos., showing a considerable improvement over the February figure of 333,424 kilos. The total for March, 1930, was 391,721 kilos. Germany was by far the largest market with a total of 138,111 kilos, against only 87,781 kilos. in February and 101,451 kilos. in March last year. There were very large increases in takings by the United States and Italy, and Spain, Czecho-Slovakia and Australia also took considerably more. Imports, which amounted in the first quarter of the year to 501,320 kilos., totalled 187,170 kilos., against 185,246 kilos. in February, and 172,087 kilos. in March, 1930.

FOOTBALL.

The Swiss "Cup Final" took place at Lugano on Sunday last. The two teams which qualified for this event, were: F.C. Lugano and F.C. Grasshoppers Zurich, the former scoring two goals to one goal of the Zurich team, thus becoming the winner of the Swiss Cup 1930-31.

COHERENT!

Schweizerische Rundsprachgesellschaft is the new title adopted by the Union Radiophonique Suisse (Swiss Broadcasting Association), as they considered a more coherent description was needed, says Philips Radio.

It certainly sticks together pretty well and so satisfies one definition of coherent, but if some of our English friends had to pronounce it, it would hardly sound coherent.

LOCAL.

BERNE.

Captain Flückiger, chaplain of the 16th Infantry regiment, was found drowned in the river Goldbach. He was on active service when his death occurred. N.Z.

LUCERNE.

The elections for the cantonal government were held last Sunday. The government consists of seven members, out of which the five conservative members were elected outright. The two liberal members did not obtain the absolute majority (23,097) and a further election for the two vacant seats will be necessary. The socialist candidate received only 4,500 votes. V

BASLE.

The Basel Mozart Festival was inaugurated last Sunday with an impressive ceremony in the Martinskirche. The Litany in E, flat, K.243, the Mass in C, K.337, and the Ave Verum were rendered by the Basel Bach Choir and the Basel Orchestral Society, and addresses were delivered by Dr. Merian, of Basel, and Dr. Benz, of Heidelberg.

In the evening an excellent performance of *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* was given at the Stadttheater and enthusiastically received by a large audience, which included many foreign visitors.

SOLOTHURN.

Owing to the crisis through which the shoe industry in Switzerland is passing, the firm of Bally at Schoenenwerd, is contemplating a considerable reduction in their personnel. J.S.P.

APPENZELL.

Landammann Gustav Altherr of Speicher, has been elected to the seat in the National Council, which became vacant through the resignation of Dr. Hofstetter. ST.T.

GRISONS.

A committee has been formed in order to collect the necessary funds for acquiring the Klosterhof of Truns which dates from the year of 1424 and where the members of the "League grise" used to meet. J.S.

VALAIS.

The State Council has nominated M. C. Piteloud as President of the cantonal government. The new head of the executive council is only 42 years old, and has already a remarkable career behind him. At the age of 25 he presided over the Grand Council and five years later he entered Parliament. N.Z.Z.

VAUD.

A farewell dinner to Colonel Grosselin, former commander of the 1st Division, was given at Lausanne on the 2nd of this month by the Conseil d'Etat, amongst the participants were: the Conseil d'Etat "in corpore," the chancellor M. Dubuis, National Councillor, colonel Guisan, the new commander of the 1st Division, colonel Schibler, lieutenant-colonel Petitpiere, chief of staff of the 1st Division and M. Perret, syndic of Lausanne. T.G.

TICINO.

M. Angelo Casé, the wellknown goal-keeper of the F.C. Locarno, who, on the occasion of a friendly match between his club and the F. C. Neuchâtel received serious injuries, has died at the cantonal hospital, at the age of 23. V

NOTES AND GLEANINGS.

By KYBURG.

Purpose and Methods of Education.

By C. J. Dryden, Ph.D. in Education Outlook.

During a recent visit to Switzerland it was my good fortune to come into contact with an enthusiastic educationist, Dr. Max Husmann, the head of Montana College, Zugerberg. The following is a résumé of the conversations I had with him which I feel will be of interest here, at a time when the extension of the school age is practically agreed upon and yet no decision arrived at as to the curriculum for the extended period.

Myself.—What, would you say, is the purpose of education?

Dr. Husmann.—First, let me clear the way by saying what is *not* its purpose.

Myself.—Well, that would be helpful.

Dr. Husmann.—It is not the purpose of education to train youth to play games merely for the sake of gaining a proficiency in them. Games should be encouraged simply for their service to health and for the cultivation of the spirit of fair play. When so employed they have the additional advantage of recreation—a change from serious study.

Myself.—I agree, and then?

Dr. Husmann.—Secondly, cramming for examinations is not education. The piling up of facts, with consequent burdening of memory, is useless. Reason must be trained in the use of what memory has stored.

Myself.—You mean, I take it, that a youth should be taught logically to handle the information he gains. But how is he to acquire or at least to train the logical faculty? What mental gymnastics are to be employed?

Dr. Husmann.—That brings me to the real purpose of education. In the first place it must be perfectly clear that the walks of life, its professions, its occupations, are so many and so diverse as to make it impossible for a schoolmaster to prepare a youth for any or all of them. But he *can* make the passage of life from the school to the working world far easier than it has been in the past. The truth is that our educational methods have not kept pace with the progress of civilisation, with all its complicated industries and varied commercial intercourse. We have lagged behind to such an extent that we have sent men into the world totally unfit to perform the tasks which a modern world demands of them. The university graduate steeped in ancient classic lore (proficient in the rhetoric which laid the world at the feet of the young Greek or the young Roman) is now like a man alone on an island, cut off, by seas of modern knowledge, from the rest of his fellows. There is, in short, no connection between his education and the life he will have to lead unless that life be one of the professions which still find a use for the ancient languages. The education of youth, therefore, must imply the laying of a foundation of something which later life completes. School life and life in the world must not be cut off the one from the other, but be parts of one whole. Industrial life and commercial life, as well as professional life, should begin at school.

Myself.—In other words, engineering applied science, commercial knowledge, modern languages, should have their place in school curricula as well as preparation for the older professions. With that view, too, I agree. But do these afford as good a mental gymnastic as did the old classical curriculum, and do they tend so well to the formation of social qualities as did the old humanities?

Dr. Husmann.—As to the latter part of your question, I do not see why the reading of the classics in translations should not give the same results in this connection as did the more pedantic ploughing of linguistic fields. As to the latter, cause and effect are ever present in the teaching of science, and such mental gymnastics as Latin, for example, affords may be found in the acquirement of some modern languages. The effects upon character are as beneficent in the modern course of study as in the old one. And the logic of facts is as good as the logic of the "Schools."

Myself.—And what is your view of the modern psychological theories relating to the school child?

Dr. Husmann.—They are very important. Every child should become the study of the teacher. You must not, indeed you *cannot*, standardise in education. Individuality must be considered and deftly handled. Only in this way can school education be changed from the performance of tasks, irksome to youth, to an interesting course of adventure into the various fields of knowledge. Moreover, the modern boarding school must be a real home, retaining only that minimum of restraint which is essential for the maintenance of discipline in the boarders' own interests.

Myself.—And how is this attention to individual character and training to be got in the public school attended by, say, hundreds of boys and girls?

Dr. Husmann.—Only by the formation of small classes. Even in these disparity in attainment occurs, so that a boy will be weaker in one subject than in another, and will require individual attention in his weak subject in order to become on a par with his class fellows.

Myself.—But a teacher can hardly be expected to give class and individual instruction simultaneously?

Dr. Husmann.—I obviate that difficulty by a system of movable classes. A boy who is weak, say, in French, may take his French lessons in a lower class than that to which he belongs, and yet retain his proper place in the school. He will not be kept in a lower class simply because he is weak in one subject. In this way he does not feel aggrieved, as he would do by being kept back in his old class till he has made himself proficient in every subject alike.

Myself.—That is an excellent idea, which I shall commend to the consideration of head masters at home. And, again, the purpose of it all?

Dr. Husmann.—To train leaders of men—no, not commanders, but leaders.

It is only when we have mastered somewhat our educational difficulties, when we have begun to *THINK* for ourselves and when we have learnt how to form and associate different views and ideas, that we can risk going a step further in our mental gymnastics and that we can read, with profit to ourselves, about

The Government of Switzerland:

Huddersfield Examiner 29/4/31.

In which article the Rev. A. E. Creedy gives his readers his views on the comparative merits of the Swiss and the British Constitution.

The chance remark of a native—that women had no vote in Switzerland—led me to study the political conditions of this country, a study which was very interesting, seeing that the constitution is so radically different from that of England. No one can hope to understand the present situation without knowing something of the history of the country and the evolution of its political system.

The Swiss look back to the year 1291 as the beginning of their independence, for it was in that year that three cantons (one of these was Schwyz, from which the country gets its name) bound themselves together in a league that they might "better defend themselves and their own." From time to time other States sought for membership in the League, until at the end of the Napoleonic Wars there were twenty-two. All these were self-governing cantons with varying customs, different criminal and civil codes, and diverse constitutions, but all united in the respect that they were jealous of their powers and resented any encroachments on their rights. Gradually it dawned upon the people that the league was not sufficient and that some form of a constitution for a sovereign State was desirable.

Looking to America.

For a long time the leaders of political thought had turned their gaze on the American federal system, and it was not surprising that in 1848 the country adopted a constitution moulded on the American pattern, preserving to a large extent the local autonomy of the cantons as far as that was compatible with the functions of the central government. The federal authorities reserve the rights of negotiating with foreign Powers, levying customs and taxes, settling disputes among the cantons, running the railways and post office, putting down internal disorder where such would threaten the interests of the Republic, controlling the army, currency, and weights and measures, and administering the civil, but not the criminal law; outside of these powers, generally speaking, each canton manages its own affairs.

The Assembly, or Parliament, consists of two houses. Members of the Upper House, the Council of States, numbering forty-four are chosen, two by each canton, and their period of office depends upon the goodwill of those who elect them. There is no hereditary chamber, as titles are unknown in this country. Members of the Lower House, the National Council, are elected by the male pop-

ulation over twenty years of age in the ratio of one member to every 20,000 persons, and they number nearly 200. The elections are held triennially. If it is the acme of democracy that a person should be given the vote because he or she is a separate entity or personality, then a prize must be given to the Swiss, for there are no property votes and no University votes. On the other hand, it is strange that the names of women are not on the electoral roll, for their emancipation in many directions is just as advanced as in other countries. All legislation to be effective, must be passed by both Houses; if they cannot agree the Bills are dropped.

The Federal Council, corresponding to the English Cabinet, consists of seven members, who must not at the same time be members of either House, although they may speak in both. They are chosen for three years, and it is a rare thing for them not to be re-elected; death or resignation are almost the only occasions when vacancies occur. Each is in charge of a department of State, and they very much resemble English permanent officials.

One is chosen as President for the year, and he cannot be successively re-elected. For convenience he is regarded as the Head of the Republic, but his position within the Council is strictly *primus inter pares*. The Council prepares the business for the Assembly and shapes the Bills in their proper legal form, but, should its proposals not be accepted, it does not resign, but bows to the wishes of the Assembly.

In England the Cabinet is the master of Parliament; a defeat on an important issue means resignation and usually a general election. In Switzerland the Federal Council is the servant of the Assembly; a defeat means nothing more than the dropping of the Bill.

Of party politics there is little compared with English, since the Liberals, and following them the Radicals, have had a majority in the National Council since its inception. Whilst the Radicals and Conservatives have remained stationary, the Socialists have steadily increased in recent years.

It will be seen from this political sketch that there is no position corresponding to the English Premiership, for the President of the Executive Council is little more than a Foreign Secretary, who receives official visitors and ambassadors in the name of the Republic. That is why very few people outside of Switzerland have ever heard of his name.

The Referendum.

No outline of the constitution would be complete without some reference to the referendum since this device is used fairly frequently in the politics of the State, of the cantons, and even of the towns and villages. Switzerland wholeheartedly believes in the principle, "Government of the people, by the people, for the people," and it is by means of the referendum that this principle is in the last resort effected; indeed so often has it been used that it has been called "the third House."

Amendments to the constitution and important matters affecting the State must be submitted to a vote of the people if a petition bearing the requisite number of signatures is submitted to the federal authorities. For the referendum to be successful there must be a majority of the people and cantons in favour of the proposal. Should the majority of the people be on one side and the majority of the cantons on the other, it falls to the ground—so nicely did the originators of the constitution preserve the rights of the cantons.

So, too, in the cantons themselves and the towns, important matters and large items of expenditure are submitted to a direct vote of the inhabitants. Critics of the referendum in England have argued that it is the negation of personal leadership. It seems to me that the whole political system of Switzerland has been so constituted as to minimise party politics and the influence of individual leaders.

Perhaps no other system would have worked in this country, since it is divided up into three distinct sections, each speaking different languages, and the Protestants are only just in a majority—to say nothing of the incessant vigilance of the cantons over their rights and powers.

From time to time proportional representation has been advocated, mainly by the Socialists, but so far in national elections the ordinary method has not been disturbed, although in some cantons, for cantonal elections, proportional representation is in vogue.

Another question very much to the fore in England just now is the abolition of the death penalty. In Switzerland it has been suspended and a sentence of imprisonment for life substituted for a long number of years in all cantons except three, which still carry out executions by the guillotine, although these are rare.

Switzerland, too, has had its religious wars, but fortunately the question of religious teaching in the schools has been amicably settled. Naturally there is no uniform agreement, but, speaking generally, where the Protestants of a canton are in the ascendancy a minister is allowed to visit the schools so many hours a week to give religious instruction, and the Catholic and Jewish children retire to their own sectarian premises for suitable teaching; and, *vice versa*, in a Catholic canton, the priest has the right of entry and the non-Catholic children retire to their ministers and teachers. It may be that some such arrangement as this will be the solution, in part at any rate, of the controversy in England.

A NOBEL PRIZEMAN.

"Prometheus and Epimetheus." By Carl Spitteler.
Translated by James F. Muirhead, M.A., L.H.D.
(Jarrolds. 7s. 6d.)

Those who make known to us a foreign author of any worth deserve our gratitude. When the author is one whom his own countrymen regard with veneration it is the more necessary for us to be attentively grateful. This is not the first of Spitteler's works which Dr. Muirhead has prepared for English readers. He translated "Laughing Truths," a collection of essays, to which Romain Rolland contributed an "Appreciation" of the author: and in collaboration with Miss Ethel Colburn Mayne he has translated a good many of Spitteler's poems. Yet it may be feared that in spite of these efforts, which were widely acclaimed by serious critics, the German-Swiss poet remains almost unknown to the English "reading public," though he was honoured by the French Academy, was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature in 1919, and is thought so much of in his own land that the Swiss Government is having a National Edition of his works prepared. Such a reputation, as Dr. Muirhead remarks, "is one that English readers can hardly afford to ignore."

It is only about five years since Spitteler died. He was a young man when he wrote "Prometheus and Epimetheus," in 1880, under the pseudonym of "Felix Tandem," because he felt that "at last" he had accomplished something: rather a characteristically young-man attitude. This prose epic which Dr. Muirhead has translated has all the zest and abounding vitality of youth. It is an amazingly exuberant piece of work. Allegory, myth, descriptive passages of uncommon beauty, irony, pure narrative of folk-tale quality, ardent feeling, matter-of-fact human touches (King Epimetheus, who chose to follow Conscience rather than to keep the freedom of his own soul, could not sleep "in spite of blankets and hot-water bottles"), humour (Conscience, deserting Epimetheus at last, ran away home "cheerfully and briskly, in a series of symmetrical bounds"), fecundity of invention, sonorousness of rhythm give an almost overpowering vitality. The symbolism is not always easy to follow. Spitteler himself said, "I also sometimes find it rather obscure," when somebody ventured to inquire about it.

But he is not to be read for his teaching: rather, for his abundant outpouring of fantasy beauty, and wisdom—or, as he put it in one of his essays, for that "elementary beauty, working direct without regard to combination, as against the excessive valuation of technical and relative skill." Dr. Muirhead's translation gives a rich measure of this "elementary beauty," which may be discerned even by the reader temperamentally at variance with Spitteler's method of approach to it.

Observer, 10/5/31.

PERSONAL.

We extend our sincere sympathy to Monsieur L. Micheli, 1st Secretary of Legation, whose father, Monsieur Horace Micheli, former National Councillor died in Switzerland.

OBITUARY.

We regret to announce the death of our late co-founder and honorary member Mr. R. Oberholzer. We convey to the relatives, our deepest sorrow and sympathy.

Swiss Gymnastic Society
Swiss Club (Schweizerbund).

On the 24th of last month the death occurred of M. E. Chaudoux, the oldest passive member of the City Swiss Club. (1891). M. Chaudoux was well-known in the City of London, and his passing away has come as a shock to his numerous friends. We extend to the members of his family our heartfelt sympathy.

CONCERT—NEWS.

We wish to remind our readers, that the Pianoforte Recital of Mlle. Pugnì, which was announced in our last number is taking place on Tuesday next, May 19th, 3 o'clock at Wigmore Hall, Wigmore Street, W. 1. We hope that a great number of our readers will be able to be present.