

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: - (1932)

Heft: 570

Artikel: 20th Gordon-Bennett Balloon Race

Autor: [s.n.]

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-695069>

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The Swiss Observer

FOUNDED BY MR. P. P. BOEHRINGER.

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. 12—No. 570

LONDON, SEPTEMBER 24, 1932.

PRICE 3d.

PREPAID SUBSCRIPTION RATES

UNITED KINGDOM	{	3 Months (13 issues, post free)	3s 6d
AND COLONIES	{	6 " " (26 issues, post free)	6s 6d
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SWITZERLAND	{	6 Months (26 issues, post free)	Fr. 7.50
12 " " (52 " ")	:	14s	

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



(Compiled by courtesy of the following contemporaries: *National Zeitung*, *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, *St. Galler Tagblatt*, *Vaterland* and *Tribune de Genève*).

FEDERAL.

SWISS BANK BALANCES.

The Gold holding of the Swiss National Bank has increased from Frs. 650,000,000 at the beginning of 1931 to the present total of about Frs. 2,637,000,000, while during the same period the balances of the commercial banks with the National Bank have increased from about Frs. 150,000,000 to Frs. 1,200,000,000. It has often been assumed that the increase in both of these items is to be attributed to the influx of foreign funds seeking safety in Switzerland and that a withdrawal of such funds would compel the National Bank to part with a large amount of gold and thus affect the position of the currency. A recent study prepared by the Crédit Suisse in Zurich points out that this line of argument is based upon a misconception of the amount of such foreign funds which has come in and of the period of its entry.

MOVEMENTS OF FUNDS.

As a matter of fact, a considerable amount of money came into Switzerland in 1930 and during the first half of 1931, but during this period neither the bank's stock of gold nor the balances of the commercial banks was increased, and up to May, 1931, there was rather a falling-off. The increase in these items of the bank's balance-sheet only started about the middle of 1931, since when it has continued almost uninterruptedly.

During this period the banks were not only receiving no fresh foreign deposits but had rather to provide for the withdrawal of considerable amounts. From the end of 1931 up to the end of June, 1932, the eight principal commercial banks together repaid Frs. 1,374,000,000 in this way.

REDUCTION OF PAY FOR SWISS CIVIL SERVANTS.

The appointed commission of the National Council, to study the question of a reduction in the pay of Civil servants, has finished their deliberations.

They have decided by 11 votes against 9 to propose a reduction of 10 per cent. for the next $\frac{3}{4}$ years, starting on the 1st of July 1933. The minority suggested a reduction of 7 per cent. for $\frac{1}{4}$ years. Families with three and more children will receive an additional 30f. for each child, but the reduction of salary for these families will also amount to 10 per cent.

FOREIGN DIPLOMAT AT THE FEDERAL PALAIS.

Monsieur Künzl-Iserski, the newly appointed Tcheco-Slovakian Minister, has presented his credentials to M. Motta, President of the Swiss Confederation, on Friday last. Monsieur Künzl is the successor of M. Fierlinger who has been transferred to Vienna, he was formerly Minister at Bucarest.

FOREL PRIZE 1931.

The Swiss Forel prize for 1931 has been awarded to Dr. Scholder of Lausanne for his work on congenital dislocation of the hip.

A MOUNTAINEERING RECORD.

Two climbing feats, one of them a mountaineering record, were performed by an alpinist during the week-end in the St. Moritz district. By climbing for 18½ hours, Dr. Walter Amstutz, accompanied by the guide, Walter Risch, succeeded in ascending five peaks, the Piz Roseg, the Porta Roseg, the Scersen, the Piz Bernina, and the Pizzo Bianco. This is the first time that such a climb has been accomplished in less than one day.

Dr. Amstutz also made an ascent of the Pizzo Bianco peak by the Black Ridge, afeat which has only been accomplished once before.

NEW SWISS LAKE.

In spite of the decline in railway traffic, the development of the Swiss State railways is to

continue. During the next few years over two hundred and fifty miles of the system are to be electrified, and this will entail the establishment of a new power station in the district between Lake Zurich and Lake Lucerne. The plans provide for the construction on the plateau of the Etzel, near Einsiedeln, of a huge reservoir, with a capacity of over twenty-six million cubic metres. This reservoir, which will be at an altitude of nearly three thousand feet, will be a mile wide and four miles in length.

The works have been planned for the production of 110,000 h.p. of monophase and three-phase energy, and the cost will amount to sixty-two million Swiss francs, at the present rate of exchange roughly three and a half million pounds sterling.

LOCAL.

ZURICH.

The reputed Soap Manufacturers firm Friedrich Steinels at Zurich, has celebrated the 100th Anniversary of their existence.

BERNE.

Professor von Speyr, for many years director of the lunatic asylum Waldau, near Berne has celebrated his 80th birthday. Professor von Speyr is a great authority on mental diseases.

LUCERNE.

A big fire almost entirely destroyed the "Gewerbegebäude" on the Mühleplatz, which is owned by the Corporation of the town of Lucerne. The damage is said to exceed 1 million francs.

URIA.

The Swiss Federal Railways have carried altogether 100,000 passengers during the 600th Centenary celebration at Lucerne. (Saturday and Sunday).

The number of motor cars parked is estimated at 4,000.

BASLE.

A boy, aged 14, returned from a school excursion through the Gothard tunnel, shortly before arriving at Göschenen he leaned out of the window, and received serious injuries which proved to be fatal, he died on the way to the Hospital.

NIDWALDEN.

The town of Basle has lost one of her distinguished sons, in the person of M. Ernst Dreyfus. The deceased was for over 25 years head of the large provision combine Bell A.G. During the great war, M. Dreyfus has rendered great services to our country, by making adequate arrangements with the French and Italian Governments for the supply of foodstuff such as potatoes and fats, etc.

GENEVA.

The death is reported from Wolfenschiessen of M. J. Zumbühl-Häckli at the age of 65. M. Zumbühl was formerly a member of the cantonal government of Nidwalden.

APPENZELL.

Dr. Gustav Weber, a well-known medical practitioner and former "Bezirkssarzt," died in Arau at the age of 83.

APPENZELL.

On climbing the Kreuzberg the 36 year-old Hans Moser, from Winterthur, fell over a rock and was killed instantly.

VALAIS.

Georges Evolena, a guide of Canton Valais, has saved the life of a British tourist in unusual circumstances.

The two men were descending the Berthold arête, the guide being first, when, as he was on a

narrow cornice, the tourist fell on him from a height of about 20ft. Holding the rock with one hand, the guide caught the tourist with the other, and pulled him on to the cornice.

The guide, who had his shoulder dislocated, climbed up with one arm, and then, holding the rope with his uninjured hand and his teeth, pulled up the tourist and saved him after strenuous efforts.

M. Motta, President of the Swiss Confederation, paid a flying visit to the little village of Blitzingen, near Brigue, which was almost completely destroyed by fire (see our last issue). He expressed the hope that help from all parts of the country would be forthcoming.

The Federal Council has granted an amount of 5,000f. towards the damage caused by the disastrous fire at the village of Blitzingen. Gifts from all over Switzerland have been sent for the sorely tried population.

VAUD.

The Federal Council has sanctioned the decision of the Government of the canton Vaud, to allow gambling at the Kursaal in Montreux for the duration of one year.

The "official" day at the "Comptoir Suisse" in Lausanne took place on last Thursday. M. Schulthess, Vice-President of the Swiss Confederation made a remarkable speech.

20th GORDON-BENNETT BALLOON RACE.

1909 : Zurich ; 1922 : Geneva ; 1932 : Basle. Twenty-four years ago, the startling victory of Colonel Schäck, President of the Swiss Aero Club, as he then was, caused a great stir throughout Switzerland. The start was made from Berlin, where altogether 23 balloons took off. The distance flown by the gallant colonel and his companion amounted to 1200km. and they were all in all 73 hours in the air. The Americans came in second, covering a distance of 428 km. This event was unfortunately marred by some regrettable incidents; but a few minutes after starting, an American balloon, burst at the height of 500m.; fortunately the cover acted as a parachute, and both pilot and passenger had a narrow escape, landing without being even hurt. The day following the net of one of the Spanish competitors snapped during the voyage but luckily enough no loss of life occurred. The Swiss balloon "Cognac," piloted by Victor de Beauclair landed near the north sea coast, others risked the trip over the open sea, with the result that four balloons were fished out of the water, somewhere near Heligoland, when two German pilots lost their lives, through having been drowned.

Luck favoured the Swiss, after many hours of anxious waiting, the welcome news came over the wire, that the balloon "Helvetia" which was piloted by Colonel Schäck, had landed safely on the Norwegian coast, after having been altogether 73 hours in the air. Switzerland thus not only won the race, but had also beaten the world record of a duration flight. For the first time therefore our country was entrusted with the arrangements for the next competition, which was held at Zurich, at the beginning of October 1909. Switzerland was then represented with three balloons: "Azura" (Captain E. Messmer, the companion of colonel Schäck in 1908); "Helvetia" (Colonel Schäck) and "Cognac" (Victor de Beauclair) and took 3rd, 4th and 7th place. The winner of this race was the American Mix, with balloon "America II," and second the Frenchman Alf. Leblanc with balloon "Île de France." A strong west-wind blew the balloons over Austria, Tcheco-Slovakia and as far as the Russian Frontier.

Eleven years later (1921), victory again came to Switzerland. M. P. Armbruster from Berne, started from Brussels, where 14 balloons were entered, having been blown towards the open sea, he risked the journey over the water, and landed safely on the island of Lambey, near the Irish coast, 766km. away from the starting point, and once again the beautiful Gordon-Bennett cup, which is valued at 10,000 Swiss francs, was entrusted into the safe-custody of Switzerland.

In 1922 the race was held at Geneva, where 19 balloons competed, amongst them three under the Swiss flag. The winner of this race, was the Belgian Demuyter, who also won the next two races and consequently the cup became the perpetual property of the Aero-Club of Belgium. Gordon-Bennett, the proprietor of the New York

Herald, then offered a new cup, an exact replica of the first one, this new cup was won again by a Belgian. Then W. T. Orman, an American appeared on the field, and in 1928, after three consecutive wins, the trophy was won outright by the Americans.

After Henry Ford had provided a new cup, the Gordon-Bennett race continued in 1929 at St. Louis (U.S.A.) and 1930 in Cleveland (U.S.A.) at both meetings the American W. T. Orman proved to be the winner, and should on the 25th of this month the Americans win again, this much coveted cup, would for the second time become their ultimate property.

For this year's competition the Swiss have entered a strong team, and we sincerely hope that they will be able to bring this cup home once more, we are sending them our most sincere greetings for to-morrow's event, and wishing them a victorious and safe journey.

LIVES LOST FOR FLOWERS.

By H. CHALLINOR JAMES.

More than a score of lives have already been lost this season in the Alps in search of that much over-rated plant the edelweiss.

It is always sad to see a legend destroyed, but that surrounding the edelweiss has such a melancholy history that nobody need regret its passing. Like the giant gooseberry and the marine monster, it has had a very good innings, but unlike those hardy annuals, the romance and tradition surrounding it exact a heavy toll of life every year.

The edelweiss proper is not really an alpine at all. It grows in profusion in the East, and on the steppes of Russia it is used as fodder for cattle. Even in the south of Europe it is so common as to excite no interest whatever.

The variety which has made its home in the Alps flourishes in "rich meadows, on turf, or on rocky slopes" . . . and also on the roofs of houses. At a fete held some little time ago in a Swiss town, edelweiss formed the principal decoration for many shop windows and balconies!

The Beautiful Forget-me-not

Much more rare than the edelweiss are some members of the humble little forget-me-not and androsace families, which do not grow on the roofs of houses and in back gardens, but are only found in rocky clefts or hidden around the glaciers at heights above 7,000ft. So scarce are some of these peerless beauties that I have seen botanists take off their hats when they have come across them. The same applies to certain members of the beautiful saxifrage family, which as the result of generations of vandalism have been driven for self-protection to take up their abode in almost inaccessible places.

How strong remains the fallacy of the edelweiss's elusiveness is shown in the true story of the young Englishman (who shall be known as Jones) who, with his fiancée and a number of friends, was visiting Switzerland for the first time.

Having secured the services of a hardy guide, he set out one morning for a spot where edelweiss was reported to flourish. Many hours of laborious climbing brought no result, and as the time slipped by the guide bitterly reproached himself for forgetting to put in his pocket a few roots of the plant, which many members of his profession carry for emergencies such as these.

At dinner that evening, when Jones had returned weary and crestfallen, a waiter placed a little bouquet of edelweiss in front of Jones's fiancée.

She took from the bunch a tiny card on which was written "With the compliments of the manager . . . to be taken away." "Oh, it's quite simple," explained the manager; "any time you want some edelweiss just ask the waiter... there's plenty growing on the roof"!

And if this is not sufficient to deter people risking their necks for a plant which can be bought almost in sheaves in most of the populous alpine valleys the experience of former British Foreign Minister who was botanising in the Alps several years ago should suffice.

Determined to take back with him a few roots of edelweiss, he set out one day alone on a 1,000ft. climb to a glacier near which it was supposed to grow in profusion. For many hours he searched in vain, and, giving up the quest, he returned home. Just as he was crossing a meadow in front of the hotel he stumbled over a stone, and on picking himself up found he had alighted on a cluster of edelweiss.

Specimens of the plant now embellish his rock garden in the south of England! D.M.

SPORTSMEN ALL.

By ROBIN BAILY.

Who are the fittest and most efficient body of sportsmen in the world to-day?

The other evening at a well-known London club, much frequented by out-of-doors men of all types, this verbal bombshell dropped into the smoking room provoked an animated and most interesting discussion.

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A Scot, whose name is familiar to football enthusiasts wherever a ball is kicked, claimed that the great Soccer "stars" of his native land have no equals for all-round athletic ability, stamina, and grit.

He said: "These lads, for whom English clubs are eager to pay ten thousand pounds transfer fees, are masters of the most difficult and scientific of games. They begin playing football almost as soon as they can walk; they play it all the year round, and the best of them have reached a standard of skill that is at once an art and a science.

"Where would so-called English first-class Association football be without the Gallachers, Jameses, Hallidays, and Gibsons?"

Yes, there is a good deal in what you say," remarked a bronzed giant in an accent that recalled overseas cricket and athletic invasions. "But do not think anyone who thoroughly knew both sets of men would seriously claim that your deft-footed ball jugglers were superior to the New Zealand All-Black Rugby teams. Our boys play the manliest game on the map, and have achieved such a pitch of excellence that more than once they have proved invincible, and compelled opponents to revolutionise their methods. The typical New Zealand Rugger-man works hard at some useful calling, and when he turns to his hobby and game plays it for all it is worth, but, keen as he is, never forgets it is only a game, and win, draw, or lose has still got a smile left. Also he keeps fit without being a freak. The 'All-Black' lives like a sensible human being, and yet plays like a champion, no outlandish schemes of dieting or rules of sleep are necessary to him."

"You are dead right, Bill, the New Zealand Rugby man is a super-sportsman. I saw something of him on the Pacific Coast, a year or two ago," said a tall youth, with the twang of the U.S.A. in his speech. "But, don't ask me to believe they have anything on our American lawn tennis players.

"What did Maurice McLoughlin, the Californian Cyclone, do to that game? Why, he turned a pink-tea pastime, only fit for garden parties and girl school-treats, into a man-sized sport worthy of trained athletes. It is now admitted that nothing in the whole wide world of sport takes more out of a man than a hard match of top-class tennis between two players of the same rank.

"I know a clever young base-ball player, who used to sneer at lawn tennis as a lady's game. He was taken to see McLoughlin in action in Golden Gate Park, San Francisco, and was converted on the spot. That baseball player became Bill Johnston, not unknown at Wimbledon."

"True, brother," said a quiet-voiced man, with the deepest coat of tan among those present, and there are few pale faces at this famous hub of sport. "Your Yank lawn tennis champions are a jolly bunch — I know Bill Tilden well — they are as keen as they are fair, and a credit to the country and courts that have moulded them.

"Talking of fitness and masterly efficiency, though, what about the Swiss Alpine guides? I have just spent a month on Europe's best playground, and for the one hundred and twentieth time my life depended on the knowledge, good faith, and unshakable nerve of these modest, mainly fellows. How well they know every inch of the 'frozen magnificence' of their beloved mountains. I went up the Matterhorn, where eighteen good sportsmen, several of them guides, have lost their lives. It is not in these days considered a difficult climb, yet the final four thousand feet are punctuated with rock and icy conundrums, where a mistake such as a missed catch at cricket, or a muffed smash on the netted courts, would mean disaster.

"The Swiss guides play a game in which a blunder means death.

"Yet, those who have once played it are so fascinated that they are seldom afterwards satisfied with any other pastime, and one of the attractions is the spirit of comradeship that exists among all mountaineers, not for a moment excluding the guides.

"One incident that happened at Zermatt this year is typical of the brotherhood of the Alps. A guide was killed by a falling stone, the English climber next to him on the rope was badly knocked about, but he attended the funeral of his comrade, though he had to be wheeled in a chair, and went against doctor's orders.

"This chap was a pal," was his explanation. Sportsmen of all sorts will understand.

"Whether you strike him smoking his pipe with other guides, in the main street of some Alpine village, in the cool of the evening after the day's hot, perilous work, or in the sparse-worded consultation before a big climb, with his employer, after dinner, or at the end of a rope, with keen eyes, supple wrists, and cat-like feet, directing affairs on a razor-edge ridge, flung dizzily over some nerve-racking, yawning abyss, he is the same pleasant, easy-mannered master of the situation."

"Not a doubt about it, Charles," said another, a popular figure at Lord's and the Oval. "Those Swiss guides are a thoroughly white-hearted lot, who know their job from A to Z. I have seen a little of them, and do know, in their loose-limbed, effective carriage, poise of manner, and snap of the eyes, they have often reminded me of our English county cricketers, which brings me to the point I wish to make.

"When all is said and done, or if you prefer it, now everybody has bowed his over — what better lot of chaps are there — fitter, more competent, so unvarying cheerful when times are good or bad — than the flannelled fraternity to which Maurice Tate, Jack Hobbs and Wilfred Rhodes belong?

"Are they not the same type, moulded by different conditions, as the dead game, thoroughly reliable sportsman who stood by you to the death in blizzards, fogs, thunderstorms and tropic heat on the Alpine summits?"

What the answer would have been of the famous mountaineer, no one can tell, for at that the dinner gong clanged.

But one of the debaters whispered to me as we trooped to the banquet board: "What a great old place is this world, so generously sprinkled with real good sportsmen."

From P. F. Warner's *Cricketer's Annual*.

B. P. +

To begin with, I beg to offer my apologies to the makers of that eminent bye-product which motorists deservedly appreciate for using the caption by which they so prominently and so successfully advertise it to the public at large.

But let me come to my point at once, the point, I mean, I wish to make to the Members of the Swiss Societies in particular.

The short interruption of their activities during the summer months which some of the societies rightly observe, has come to an end. Some have resumed their meetings, monthly mostly, already, others will do so shortly.

So I attended last week's meeting of the Swiss Mercantile Society where the evening was so agreeably enlivened by an interestingly useful discussion on how to increase the attendance of members, old and new, by offering them greater inducement to do so.

One young and enthusiastic member had prepared in a most praiseworthy effort a carefully elaborated exposé of what, in his opinion, should be done and thereby opened a debate of considerable length and usefulness. He deserved to be mentioned by name, but I am afraid his modesty would not allow me to.

However, there was point in many suggestions that were made and what was said not only applies to Members of the Swiss Mercantile Society, but to those of other Swiss Societies as well.

They all have their own aims and serve their useful purposes in the interest, and for the benefit of our Colony as a whole, and consequently it should be every Member's bounden duty not to be satisfied only by having his name on the Society's register, but by giving the Society his support in a practical manner, which he can show in no better way than by attending and making his presence felt at the regular meetings to which he is convened.

In short, a larger measure of that B.P. + spirit by one and all, I mean the best possible plus — that little extra effort to make that laudable intention to turn up next time, a fait accompli.

And the next meeting of the Swiss Mercantile Society on October 12th, or whatever meeting of any other Society one may attend, will be considerably nearer the ideal to which every President and every Committee member aspires. W.B.B.