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The Swiss Observer

FOUNDED BY MR. P. P. BOEHRINGER.

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HOME NEWS



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FEDERAL.

DEATH OF A FEDERAL JUDGE.

The death is reported of Dr. Paul Rambert, Federal Judge, at the age of 66.

The deceased was born on the 14th of July 1866 in Zurich, where his father was Professor of French literature at the University. Early in the Eighties he received an appointment at the cantonal Tribunal of Vaud, over which he later on presided. Previous to his appointment as a Judge of the Supreme Court, he was Professor at the University of Lausanne, and since 1919 he was a member of the Federal Tribunal.

STATE HELP FOR THE HOTEL INDUSTRY.

The States Council (Ständerat) has voted a credit of 3½ million francs to come to the aid of the Hotel Industry.

INCREASE OF UNEMPLOYED IN SWITZERLAND.

The number of Unemployed at the end of August amount to 47,064 or more than twice as many as at the same period of last year.

EXPENSES OF THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS.

There has been a disposition in some quarters recently to magnify out of all proportion of its importance the cost of the League of Nations Secretariat. The question is under review. In May, the British delegation at Geneva approached the matter. There was a proposal for an enquiry concerning expenditure. This was referred to a supervisory committee within whose province such questions lie. A report from this committee is expected in this session. The sums involved are not very large. In 1923 the expenditure was approximately £1,000,000. Last year it was rather less than £1,500,000 — an increase largely due to extra work and conferences imposed on the League. These totals, divided among more than fifty nations members of the League, do not represent large individual contributions. But expenditure has tended to grow, and the British view is that it has involved increasing commitments to Governments that have been compelled to cut down their own budgets, even for expenditure on much-needed things. This is a consideration distinct from the failure of a number of Governments to meet dues that will have to receive attention.

SWISS-ITALIAN FRONTIER INCIDENTS.

A further eruption of ugly feeling between Swiss and Italian border-dwellers has been engendered by several incidents which have recently occurred on the Swiss-Italian frontier. These incidents are now the subject of intervention on the part of the Swiss Federal Government.

A few days ago the inhabitants of a Swiss frontier village were alarmed by shots being fired down their main street. They promptly took cover, and fortunately nobody was injured and no lives lost.

According to local newspapers, the shots were fired by the Italian frontier guards, who were taking action against a smuggler. In another case an Italian patrol are reported to have penetrated over two hundred yards into Swiss territory, where they arrested a Swiss shepherd, who was subsequently released.

The high-handed action of the Italian guards at another point is regarded as still more serious. A party of excursionists who had crossed the frontier returned into Switzerland, where they were followed by some Italian guards, who demanded to see their passports. Being on Swiss soil, these people refused to recognise the right of the Italians to make such a demand, whereupon the Italian guards are reported to have drawn their revolvers and to have threatened them with arrest.

This occurred just outside the village of Santa Maria, the inhabitants of which, hearing the commotion, rushed up in a body and prevented the

arrest, eventually compelling the Italian guards to beat a retreat to their own side of the frontier line. The Swiss Government have asked Rome for an explanation of these and similar incidents.

This ill-feeling on the Swiss-Italian frontier seems to be of a lasting character and finds from time to time violent expression. At the present moment it is aggravated, it seems, by the activities of professional smugglers, who make periodical expeditions into Italy with highly-taxed commodities, of which sugar is one of the chief.

Owing to the difficulty of patrolling the whole frontier, and also, it is alleged, to the conniving assistance of Swiss shop-keepers in the frontier villages, the Italian guards have little success in preventing this illicit trade.

LOCAL.

ZURICH.

The firm of Emil Landolt, Wine Merchants at Zurich, has celebrated the 100th Anniversary of their existence.

BERNE.

M. Oscar Schneeburger, Commissioner of Police since 1917, has resigned from his post, for reasons of health.

BASLE.

The death is reported from Basle of Professor Dr. Leopold Rütimyer at the age of 77. Dr. Rütimyer was a well-known specialist for internal maladies.

SCHAFFHAUSEN.

A fire broke out at the historic Schwabentor Tower at Schaffhausen. Before the fire brigade could get it under control the whole of the upper part was burnt out. The brigade had great difficulty in combating the flames owing to the great height of the tower, which runs up to 85 ft.

URI.

Flames are steadily sweeping through the forest at the Arnibergen, the fire being the fiercest known in the district for many years.

The forest guards are powerless to check the progress of the flames, and two companies of the battalion 87 are being rushed to the scene.

TICINO.

The Grand Council has accepted the budget which anticipates a deficit of 400,000fr. The salaries of the members of the cantonal Government have been increased from 12 to 14,000 francs.

THE ECONOMIC SITUATION OF SWITZERLAND.

In spite of certain partial improvements, the Swiss economic situation remains, as a whole, under the influence of the crisis. Nevertheless, the endurance of the financial and industrial apparatus remains remarkable.

The money and capital market remains extremely fluid. The gold supply of the National Bank remains at about 2600 million francs, which would allow the placing in circulation of 5 milliards more of bank notes, without going below the covering limit prescribed by the law. The wholesale prices index-figure has again fallen, (94.5 against 100 in 1914). The drop, compared to the last year, reaches more than 14%. The cost of living also shows a decrease, the index figure being 138 against 150 in 1931.

The results of foreign trade during the first half of 1932 reflect the abnormal situation of the foreign exchanges. Exports only reached 416 million francs, a falling off of 293 millions as compared with the first half of 1931, and of 500 millions as compared with the first six months of 1930. Naturally, in examining these figures, account must be taken of the considerable drop in prices. Imports, which reached a sum of 905 millions, have decreased very much less, thus proving the resistance of the home market. If the value of imports has diminished by 200 millions as compared with 1931, the quantities imported have increased by nearly 200,000 tons. The Swiss commercial debit balance for the half year has reached the considerable total of 490 million francs against 400 millions last year. In addition to this, the international economic crisis, aggravated by the restrictions imposed by different States in matters of payment, is exercising a depressing influence on the Swiss tourist industry.

The building trade has remained active, the number of dwellings constructed having reached 6,800 against 5,200 during the corresponding period of 1931. On the other hand, new construction permits have fallen off considerably. They only concern about 4,600 dwellings as compared with 7,600 for the first six months of 1931.

S. L. & T.

20th GORDON-BENNETT BALLOON RACE.

Basle, September, 25th, 1932.

Those of our readers who minutely scanned the English Daily Press for news about the International Gordon-Bennett Race, which took place last Sunday at Basle, must have met with great disappointment. The large London Daily papers have almost *in toto* ignored this great International Sporting event, which on the Continent and in America is followed with the greatest interest. True enough, England has not, — and if we are rightly informed, — has never competed, but we would have thought, that a sporting event of such magnitude would have been of sufficient interest to the British Public, to devote at least half a column to it, considering that often news of trifling importance from abroad receive an unwarranted publicity. England has always been known, and rightly so, as a Nation of Sportsmen, and it is the least said, regrettable, that the otherwise well informed English Press has not found it necessary to send their reporters to a Meeting, which ranks as one of the most important ones in the sporting world; we loath to think that the reason for such an omission is due to the fact, that no British entrants could be found to participate in this race, it would be contrary to the sporting instinct and spirit of this great Empire. Curiously enough some of the smaller provincial papers have deemed it important enough to devote a small column to it, whilst London papers, as mentioned above, have either ignored it entirely or given it a few lines only.

It was a red letter day for Basle; it is estimated that nearly 50,000 excursionists came from all parts of Switzerland, a large contingent arrived from the neighbouring Alsace. The Swiss Federal Railways provided 12 special excursion trains, in addition to the ordinary service, all of which entered the Central Station exact to scheduled time. At the official parking place altogether 1,200 cars passed the gates; the municipal tramways carried 180,000 passengers for which the receipts amounted to 45,900fr., a record which has only once previously been exceeded. (Muster-messe: 48,200fr. on the second Sunday).

The filling of the 16 balloons (requiring 33,200 cubicmeters of gas) passed without a hitch and the arrangements made by the authorities met with universal approval. The start took exactly 1 hour and six minutes and took place as follows:

1. "Deutschland" (Pilots: Erich Leimkugel, Richard Schütze); 2. "L'Aventure" (France, Maurice Marquant, N. G. Renollaud); 3. "Polonia" (Poland, W. Pomaski, A. Janusz); 4. "Belgica" (Ernest Demuyter, Coeckelberg); 5. "14 de Abril" (Spain, Capt. A. Nunez, Lt. S. Carrasco); 6. "Petite Mousse" (France, Georges Ravaine, P. Spiess); 7. "Zurich" (Switzerland, Lt.-Col. Walo Gerber, Dr. Tilgenkamp); 8. "Barmen" (Germany, Otto Bertram, Alex Dahl); 9. "Stadt Essen" (Germany, F. Eimermacher, Dr. Hugo Keulen); 10. "Victor de Beaulclair" (Switzerland, Captain Huber, Lt. Lochinger); 11. No start; 12. "U.S. Navy" (America, Lt. Settle, Bushnell); 13. "Good Year VIII" (America, Van Orman, R. J. Blair); 14. "Basel" (Switzerland, Dr. A. van Baerle, Dr. E. Dietsch); 15. "Ernst Brandenburg" (Austria, Frh. von Ethhofen, Lt.-Col. F. Mannsbarth); 16. "Gdynia" (Poland, F. Hynek, Z. Burzinski); 17. "Lafayette" (France, Georges Blanchet, Jaccard).

The balloons departed in a South-Westerly direction towards the Black Forest. The starting of the 1st Swiss balloon, "Zurich," gave occasion to great enthusiasm, thousands of spectators sang, with uncovered heads the Swiss National Anthem.

RESULTS.

(We intend to publish in our next issue a complete list, giving the landing place and exact distance flown by each competitor.)

1. Balloon "U.S. Navy" (America, Pilots: Lt. Settle and Bushnell) Landed at Wasjule near Vilna. Exact distance not yet available. America thus wins for the second time the Gordon-Bennet Cup outright.
2. Balloon "Good Year VII" (America, Pilots: Van Orman and R. J. Blair) Landed at Kowno, Litauen. Distance about 1400 km. Van Orman was the winner of the 1926, 1929 and 1930 races.
3. Balloon "Petit Mousse" (France, pilots: George Ravaine and P. Spiess) landed at Tokary near Wysokie, Poland. Distance 1233km.

The result of the Swiss competitors is as follows:

Balloon "Basel." (Pilots Dr. van Baerle and Dr. Dietschi) landed near Warsaw, distance about 1100km.

Balloon "Zurich" (Pilots: Lt. Gerberg and Dr. Tilgenkamp), landed at Deutsch-Rasselwitz, distance about 900km.

Balloon "Victor de Beaulieu" (Pilots: Captain Huber and Lt. Lochinger), landed at Calish near Warsaw, distance 887km.

(There may still be some adjustments as to the exact distance).

THE SWISS WAY WITH CRIMINALS.

A "Scientific Police" Institute

By JOAN WOOLLCOMBE.

Diseases of society, like those of the body, provoke their own remedy; and the threat of the modern criminal has forced Europe, no less than America, to organise a scientific defence against crime. The author of this article has been given special opportunities of studying the methods of "scientific police." She describes here what she saw at the Lausanne Institute.

The modern scientific criminal is being fought, most vigorously, with his own weapons and with better weapons than he can ever employ. The Swiss "answer" to him (and to her) is in their unique *Institut de Police Scientifique* in Lausanne; one of the most astounding colleges ever attached to any university.

It is entirely independent of any police control and actually provides some of the most unbiased "expert evidence" obtainable: the Director of the Institute puts his students through a grim curriculum of crime, trains them actually in the raw material of their craft and gives the world, eventually, graduates of the newest of exact sciences. Professor Mark Bischoff, who is responsible for this work, looks far too gentle for his formidable reputation — a reputation which extends as far from Switzerland as Siam and Serbia, Poland and Bolivia; and it is here, in the decorous buildings of the University of Lausanne, working like beavers with their batteries of strange modern instruments, that his experts and his students carry on their two-sided work: first to train the crime expert of the future and then to continue a relentless research into the methods of crime detection.

A great deal of the training — there is three years' gruelling work — is extremely grim and the Director explains that it needs a most persistent vocation to survive it, and no small scientific ability. There are very few women who have attempted to pass the ordeal and they are not encouraged, as yet, to present themselves, unless they have a clear call in their own genius. A very high standard of previous education is first demanded and a clear cool brain to avoid at any time the mistake of what has recently so well been described as "ghastly conjecture."

Once admitted, students are bound to secrecy: they learn methods and deal in processes that any forger or coiner would be delighted to obtain; they must maintain the position of their science which is exactly "one better" all the time than its enemies.

The curriculum is comprehensive; too long to detail, but it includes Penal Law and Practice; Legal Medicine, dissection and anatomy; Modern Chemistry; Experimental physics and toxicology; and the Theory and Practice of Modern Photography. Then at the same time the special and concentrated studies of the Institute itself cover technical research on the scene of the crime, whatever it be; the use of microscope, microphotography; ultra-violet and infrared rays; technical researches into theft, arson, rape, homicide, accidents, damage to property, etc. Then comes the whole complicated business of forgery, false coins, post-office thefts and bank thefts. At the same time the habits of criminals, their identification, classification and the check-up on the recidivist present a separate and exact science; as do the various methods of examination, of reporting, of presenting cases; and this is only some of the material!

The students work first on the material in cold storage — the famous Crime Museum of the Institute — and then on actual raw material as the cases come in for solution. Then, after three years of extremely hard work, they face their six weeks' Finals for the coveted Diploma granted in state by the University.

Deadlier weapon than any other, they have learned to use the microscope; it is said that the guilty prisoner may as well (and often does) throw in his hand when he sees this and the microcamera of the Institute in action.

At the end of their six weeks' Finals, the students tackle one of the most difficult jobs of their careers, so far; for each must solve a specially arranged "crime" complete in every detail (except the actual demise of the victim, for instance) arranged by the Director personally to

test their knowledge. He sets the stage and works out the problem "backwards"; then the examinee must prepare his dossier, plans, photographs, analyses — *everything* on his own. It is his first real "case," and for its solution he has all the formidable equipment of the Institute at his prior call.

A Visit to the Institute.

Go round the Institute with Professor Bischoff, and, before taking his visitor through the laboratories, the library, the file room of criminals or showing any of the remarkable "investigations in progress," he will touch a switch in the hallway of the Institute which floodlights case after case of the grimmest of all Museums — weapons and their results — *the Crime Museum*.

It is a most valuable training ground for his students, as it shows crime "in cold storage" — from the duller brutalities of crimes of violence to the more intriguing crimes of forgery and embezzlement.

To the layman there is a certain amount of interest in the varieties of weapons, complete with a great deal of "local colour" that need not be described — the revolver that killed the Soviet Delegate at Lausanne in 1923; a walking-stick that conceals a complete rifle in its slender shaft; an array of knives, hammers, axes, stilettos and bludgeons that is most intimidating. There is the greater interest of those delicate instruments that are used in forgery and for all types of coining, and a case full of the most convincing false passports, cheques and bank-notes. Then, lest the visitor should presume on his or her own immunity, Professor Bischoff will show the "Hotel Door" with a grim smile.

This is a section of just such a door as one may see in any hotel, complete with lock and bolt. With a slender pair of pincers the Professor manipulates the lock you thought so safe and drills a tiny hole above the bolt, which enables him to ease this back with one of the most ingenious instruments ever invented for the thief. It is apparently easy to effect an entrance; and rather disconcerting to watch!

The various exhibits are all material for the earlier studies of the students. "You see where the first blow fell?" — and the Director turns the fragile skull of an old lady over in his hands, to show the deep triangular cleft. "She was sitting up then — until the second blow caught her — so ..." and he indicates the circular cut, showing how the axe fits it. It is the case of an elderly woman, murdered by her servant.

He shows next a severed thumb, in spirits: this bears cuts at the inside of the base, indicating plainly the characteristic wounds of the victim who seeks to defend him, or herself, from the knife of an attacker. Another exhibit is merely a framed postcard showing a few spurts of blood; tell-tale signs of the murder that took place immediately below, indicating the force used by the assailant, and the approximate position of attacked and attacker.

Infinitely more interesting are those cases that contain some of the most spectacular work of the Institute: a few charred fragments pieced together and mounted on a piece of glass; beside them a microphotograph that shows these fragments to be a "proof" of a fake bank-note, recovered from the grate in a deserted room after a quick get-away by the forgers, and used as invaluable evidence against them after many hours of patient toil and meticulous chemical and microscopic work.

Forewarned and forearmed by their work in other branches the students learn to apply these tremendous resources of lighting and photography. The visitor may see the machines in use and may form some idea of their possibilities.

First, Professor Bischoff closes the door of a small laboratory and shuts out all light; then, from the complete darkness comes the glow of the hooded ultra-violet rays lamp, under which rays the Director puts a series of special exhibits. The chemically treated cheque yields instantly its falsifications; the tampered seal shows its two kinds of wax. A dozen specimens of post-office gum plainly show their twelve different "luminosities," and an opened and re-sealed letter is thus easily detected. A criminal, desperately washing and re-washing his stained linen, may think that all bloodstains, or any other stains, are removed; and so they may appear to be to the naked eye. Chemically treated, however, and presented to this lamp, they are again at once apparent; and the Director demonstrates that it is practically impossible ever to eradicate all trace of such stains from a textile.

Adulterated medicines are easily shown up: a recent case of adulterated aspirin with a very dangerous "make-weight" is particularly instructive.

From this room one goes into the daylight of the laboratory that is equipped with a mercury vapour lamp — clear, cold, all-round illumination — where can be photographed such things as the incriminating stub of candle, held in his bare fingers by the stupid criminal and carelessly

thrown away. Normally, under sufficient illumination to show the tell-tale finger marks, the wax would blur or melt: the mercury-vapour lamp, arranged in a hollow square or T-shape, illuminates without radiating heat and is invaluable in such investigations. The Director shows it at work on a screwed-up scrap of paper, rolled up and thrown away, but resurrected to give excellent evidence of the indentations of a written message; a message that is only decipherable when the all-round light has eliminated the innumerable little shadows and creases.

Then, into another small room and again in in the dark — the ticking of the metronome measures the seconds for an unseen operator who manipulates the micro-camera equipment. Magnified, we see the innocent-looking treasury bill reveal itself as a clever (but not clever enough) forgery, and thus provide photographic evidence against a gang recently caught, but not red-handed. Here the Director explains that not only the proof of guilt, but the *proof of the proof* is rightly necessary to convince a jury. Take the case of a recent shooting, in which the help of the Institute was invoked by the police of a certain Swiss city. An empty cartridge case was picked up near the victim and it was necessary for the prosecution to prove that this had been fired from the small calibre pistol owned by the accused; and that the weapon had been discharged from a second-floor window.

It was relatively easy to demonstrate, by the microphotographs, that an indentation in the rim of the little case indicated that it had fallen or been thrown from a height. Then five similar bullets were discharged from the same weapon, and the cases of these were photographed under the same conditions. Each one showed identical markings, which in each case coincided with those on the first photograph of the vital "exhibit." It is, of course, a fact that the hand-tooled detail of a firearm produces marks on the discharged case that are, to the pistol, as finger prints are in the identification of the human. These incriminating details were unmistakably shown in the specially taken photographs and, as a necessary control experiment, a variety of other photographs of discharged cases from other weapons of exactly similar make were prepared. The jury was thus presented with the proof and the proof-of-the-proof, and the accused, faced with the formidable dossier of photographs, instantly confessed.

Researches into the possibilities of chemistry yield results that are both useful and spectacular: tests for bloodstains show, as we have said, that it is almost impossible to eradicate them; but although their existence is established beyond doubt, it is further necessary (and perfectly possible) to differentiate between human and animal blood — very pretty little experiments, these; and the experts here are continually extending their sphere of usefulness in this and in similar directions.

The Director will tell the visitor that it is possible to dilute one drop of human blood in a solution of 20,000 of water, and still, from a cubic centimetre of this mixture, obtain what scientists coldly call "a useful reaction."

Very often it is chiefly a matter of deduction. Not long ago the wife of a certain Ambassador received some poisoned sweetmeats from an unknown source and certain suspected persons were held on trial. Actually during the trial she continued to receive strange parcels, but only filled with earth and rubbish and leaves! One of the accused (then under question of the *Juge d'Instruction*) had a garden, and analysis of the soil of his garden showed the contents of the strange parcels to be the same. But this was not sufficient, nor the evidence that the leaves coincided with those of a relatively rare plant growing there; the final touch was the fact that this plant alone suffered from a plant-disease which was also found in evidence on the leaves. The sending of the parcels designed to prove an alibi therefore served to convict the prisoner. And, in the face of these careful researches into simple crimes, it is interesting to remember that a very few years ago cases were chiefly solved by deductions from inspired guesses.

Less spectacular, but none the less vital, are the various systems of classification of data and of photographs, which enable Professor Bischoff not only to keep his Institute's information instantly accessible, but to reorganize and to plan the records of various police centres. And, although he is absolutely independent of Police control, he and the police chiefs work together in the continual and relentless researches into methods of crime detection, the latter providing a supply of raw material that is invaluable to the scientist. Meanwhile, crime experts from all over the world visit the entirely unadvertised work that is going on in the attics of the School of Chemistry; and the would-be forger, coiner, murderer or writer of anonymous letters would do well to remember that Professor Bischoff and his scientific "sleuths" are always just one move ahead in the most difficult game in the world.

Review of Reviews.