

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: 532

Rubrik: Notes and gleanings

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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. 532

LONDON, JANUARY 2, 1932.

PRICE 3d.

PREPAID SUBSCRIPTION RATES

UNITED KINGDOM AND COLONIES	3 Months (13 issues, post free)	3/6
	6 " " " "	6/6
SWITZERLAND	6 Months (26 issues, post free)	Frs. 7.50
	12 " " " "	14.-

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

To All Our Readers
A
Prosperous New Year

HOME NEWS

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

FEDERAL.

THE CHAIRMAN OF THE SWISS FEDERAL RAILWAYS.

Dr. H. Walther (Lucerne) has been appointed Chairman of the Board of the Swiss Federal Railways. Dr. Walther is a member of Parliament and has been on the Board for several years.

RESIGNATION OF FEDERAL JUDGE G. BERTA.

At the end of this year, M. Berta will retire from his post. G. Berta was born in 1870 at Giubiasco, and is the brother of the well-known Ticino painter Berta who recently died. He studied law at the Universities of Lausanne, Munich and Berne, and held the degree of doctor of law. He started his career at Bellinzona and for several years he held a post at the Federal Chancery in Berne. From 1899 to 1910 he was Professor of law at the Commercial University in St. Gallen. In 1911 he was appointed one of the Judges of the Appeal Court of the Canton of Ticino, where he remained until 1920. Since the foundation of the Federal Insurance Tribunal, he was a member of this Court, which he presided over for the last 4 years. He has presided over several International Tribunals settling disputes amongst the following countries: Italy-Germany, Italy-Austria, Italy-Hungary, Italy-Bulgaria. Dr. Berta was an eminent lawyer and an excellent Judge.

HUGE DAM CONSTRUCTION.

Switzerland is progressively exploiting its natural resources by the harnessing of its water power, and operations have now started on the new dam of the Dixence, near Sion, in the Rhone Valley.

The building of this dam involves the construction of a new road, a special railway line, a funicular and several aerial railways. A large artificial lake is to be formed at an altitude of 7,350ft. retained within a dam 500 yards long, 300ft. high and 220ft. thick at the base. Eight thousand car loads of cement will be used for its construction. To-day, nearly 1,800 men are employed.

The height of the waterfall will be approximately 5,250ft. and its output 200,000 h.p.

LOCAL.

ZÜRICH.

Colonel Edward Locher, a Partner of the firm Locher & Cie, Building contractors, has died at the age of 60.

LUCERNE.

M. Plazidus Meyer von Schauensee, a noted lawyer and judge died at Lucerne at the age of 82.

BASLE.

Prof. H. Kreis, formerly analytical chemist of the canton of Basle has died in Basle at the age of 70. Prof. Kreis retired from his post early last year.

SOLOTHURN.

The 450th Anniversary of the entry of the canton Solothurn into the Confederation was celebrated on the 23rd of last week. The guests

were received by the members of the Cantonal Government at the Town Hall. The Federal Council was represented by M. Häberlin, President of the Swiss Confederation and M. Musy; the Government of the canton Fribourg arrived in *corpore*, and different cantons sent delegations. The "Kantonsrat" held a solemn meeting, and in order to mark this important event, voted a credit of 50,000f. for the unemployed and an amount of 30,000f. as a Christmas present to be distributed amongst old people. M. Häberlin, President of the Swiss Confederation, made a speech which was received with great enthusiasm. The Socialist party abstained from participating in the festivities.

GENEVE.

Burglars broke into the shop of Messrs. Jaccard, Jewellers at Geneva, and stole jewellery to the value of 20,000f., the firm was not insured against burglary.

THURGAU.

The butchers of Romanshorn have decided to supply all unemployed with meat at a reduction of 20 per cent.

GRAUBÜNDEN.

The first section of the Davos Parsenn Cable Railway, which was opened recently, carries passengers up more than 2,200 feet in ten minutes to within easy reach of the Parsenn skiing region, thus making many runs and tours much more accessible to skiers. This first section, the construction of which was started in June last, comprises two tunnels, an iron bridge, and several stone viaducts. The second part, another 1,500 feet or so, will be completed next year, and some work has already been done on it. The modern all-steel cars are fitted with the newest devices, are comfortably heated and smooth-running, and are provided with automatic brakes, which would come into action at once if the cable should snap. The section now open leads to the "middle" station, at which, when the whole line is complete, passengers will change cars for the last bit. This middle station is situated just below the Höhenweg, a picturesque pathway running along the mountain-side 2,000 feet above Davos; and the terminus of the final section will be the Weissfluh Joch, where a new restaurant has already been built in readiness. The first section deals with the steepest part of the climb, and skiers will find no great difficulty this winter in reaching the starting points of the various runs.

* * *

A fire completely destroyed the Hotel Seehof, at Lenzerheide. This Hotel was only opened in 1930.

SCHAFFHAUSEN.

The Brick Works Thayngen A. G. at Tayngen were destroyed by fire last Sunday, the damage caused is estimated to be about 500,000f.

LOCARNO.

On Christmas day the prison authorities hoisted the white flag, a sign that the prison was devoid of any "pensioners," this is the first Christmas for the last 10 years that the authorities were able to close down.

VAUD.

A Christmas Eve tragedy has aroused great emotion in the little village of Froideville. It caused the death of a gendarme named Arthur Genier, aged 43, the father of four children, who were preparing to spend the evening round their Christmas tree.

An Italian mason in the village threatened to shoot his wife, but she escaped from the house and reported at the police-station. On the gendarme going to the house, the Italian opened the door and fired. The gendarme fell mortally wounded. For three hours he lay on the floor bleeding to death, as the Italian kept up a continuous fire so that no one dare approach. Eventually the gendarme was taken to hospital, where he died.

A regular siege ensued by the force of twenty police, headed by a magistrate and armed with tear-gas pistols. The Italian continued to fire in all directions, and it was not until midnight that the house could be entered. He was then found dead, having fired a shot through his head.

NOTES AND GLEANINGS.

By KYBURG.

1931

Ein sonnenloser Tag will leis zerrinnen,
Mir ist, als schaut ich ihn, ein blosses Weib.
Das sich mit silberzarten Nebelfächern
Verhüllt den weissen, schemenhaften Leib.
Ein Weib, das sich mit zögernder Gebärde,
Die auflebt und verflackert und verweht,
Den schmalen Weg durch stille Stunden tastet
Und Schritt für Schritt auf grauem Grunde geht,

Das ab und zu nur wie in müdem Traume
Die geisterbasse Hand zum Herzen hebt,
Allwo das feine, bläuliche Geäder,
Wie unter Wellenschlägen leise bett.

(Marie Bretscher).

1932

Ein neuer Morgen will sein Antlitz heben,
Noch steht er wie verkettet auf der Schwelle,
Doch leise schon zur Stirne steigt die Welle
Des roten Blutes, und die Lider heben.

Die Arme aus den mächtigen Schlingen streben
Empor, empor! Aufrauscht des Lichtes Quelle
Und steigt und stürzt in strömendem Gefälle,
Treibt tief zum Grund jedwedes Dämmerweben.

Hoch über weisse Firnen geht sein Schreiten,
Und seine Augen fassen alle Weiten,
Und mählich, mit der Stunden fernem Schlag
Steigt er hinauf zum steilsten Felsenrande
Und neigt sich vor der Sonne mächtigem Brande
Und schwingt sich jubelnd in den hohen Tag.

(Marie Bretscher).

Elena Lunghi in "Un Articulo?" in our issue of the 12th December, 1931, opined that the Public sees and reads too much, and that, therefore, it is rather difficult to find something to tell it.

This being the end of the old and the beginning of the New Year, when New-Year's resolutions are being made and broken, I might, perhaps, appeal to our Readers to adopt yet one more of those Resolutions, to wit: Let's beware ourselves of reading headlines only!

Being one of those inquisitive persons who are never quite happy unless they know the "wherefore" of any problem or phenomenon that comes their way, I often find it extremely difficult to get my friends to substantiate their assertions and I find, time after time, that what they are telling me is merely a jumble of headlines they have glanced at during breakfast time or in the morning train and on which they have then not formed, but adopted their so-called opinions. It is most aggravating, this head-line-business, because it robs otherwise quite rational men and also women of their power of thought, of concentration, of memory and you will find that those people who are afflicted by this head-line disease, do not remember from one day to the next what they have read. Hence the ease with which the yellow press influences its public. Hence the muddled outlook on anything political, economical, etc., which you find amongst the masses. Hence the *Ill-Will* that can be produced in the twinkling of an eye by the Stunt-Newspapers.

And, to my mind, it is this *Ill-Will*, largely if not quite, an artificial product, which lies at the bottom of our present-day crisis, political and economical.

At heart, and when they are free from the poisonous dope given them daily at breakfast-time by the yellow press, not only of this country, but of all countries, these people are quite good fellows. Ask any one of them and he will tell you that he quite agrees that the nationals of any given country are quite decent chappies, and that he, personally, certainly wishes them no harm and fully realises that the human family can improve its present-day standard of living only by all pulling together and working and playing together and observing the rules of the game. Etc., etc.

Well then, and as I do not wish to outline my case further, but only to draw attention to it, I think that if we made an honest effort to read not only the headlines, but the articles below them, we would find either that the article below them does not bear out what the headline suggests, or that the whole matter is relatively unimportant and certainly not worth making a fuss about. Besides, we shall find that in a great many cases the assertions are disproved next day, or withdrawn or otherwise toned down. But, in order to find out these happenings we must take the trouble to read the whole article. Otherwise, we

get an entirely wrong idea of most of the important events which, after all, are the very events which affect our daily life and are likely to affect our future.

At this Season of Goodwill, it is up to us, I think, to make an effort to think straight, to banish all thoughts of hatred, of prejudice, of ill-feeling for past wrongs and to look forward to a time when we shall all be brethren of one great human family.

As in the past, when the Continent was subdivided into a very great number of little states, little so-called free towns and republics and when each of them had its own little army, its own customs barriers, its own ambassadors even, and when, as a result of this subdivision ad absurdum they fought each other like tigers until they were all ruined, so to-day, when distances have been shortened tremendously and it takes less time to get from Sidney Australia to London than it took in the Middle Ages to travel from Zurich to Hamburg, we find that the World is cut up in a tremendous number of small nations, Kingdoms, Republics, Free States, etc., all with their own army, etc. see above!

We are very near the same end which befell those little States in the Middle Ages. We are very nearly on the point of falling into the bottomless pit out of which no Gold-Standard and no League of Nations would save us.

Is it hoping too much that the Nations of the Earth shall see the danger, ere it's too late and that they shall act in harmony, ere their disunion cripple them beyond repair, beyond hope?

Is it not time that the harrower form of Nationalism, such as exists in England, France, Germany, Switzerland, Italy, etc., shall be modified? Are we not *Europeans* and *Human Beings*? Why should we Swiss, for instance, think that we are better than any others? If, in some respect we are better, is it not because we had better opportunities than others, or, perhaps, because we underwent our schooling centuries earlier than others? Should we not, therefore, *Help* others, rather than sit on the laurels won for us by our Ancestors. Should it not be Switzerland's foremost task to *Lead*, morally? And yet, what do they prate about at our Federal Festivals? The song of the Fathers, of William Tell, Winkelried and others, but not the Song of Future, when the Sons of the present-day Fathers shall be proud to be not only Swiss, but Europeans. Switzerland's Neutrality and Sovereignty must be modified sooner or later if the world is to progress. Why not le beau geste now? Why not risk it?

When I was at school, we were told that old Latin tag according to which it is glorious to die for one's country.

It is, of course, much sweeter, to Live for it, but if there is anything at all in the idea that when a country is attacked it behoves its men to defend it, surely then it would be much better to risk a *Death* by trying to show the world a lofty leadership in progress, Disarmament, for instance, than to wait until the chaotic conditions into which we are drifting make it necessary for us or our children to perish by the sword and by the fire!

I believe Switzerland could light a beacon of hope in declaring for Disarmament on a vast scale, on a scale that would be unequivocal to all, and acting on such a declaration, whether others would follow at once or not.

The present-day jealousy of the armed Nations surrounding Switzerland would anyhow prevent any of them seizing us at once.

And what, if they did, what if our Country became the battle-ground for foreign armies, as it was before?

If the World is really morally bankrupt, then, to my mind, it would be much better to bring matters to an issue at once.

There is no hope in procrastination, in shirking vital issues, in shutting one's eye to the so obvious and inevitable dangers that await us, unless *We Disarm*.

If there is any sound reasoning in my thoughts, as given above, then it follows that Gymnastics and Sports must take the place of military training of Switzerland's youth. Discipline must be taught, because a young man not having learnt discipline is like a rudderless ship in a storm. But the army is not necessary to achieve this. The army is an obsolete weapon, the weapon of the frightened, the weapon of defence and attack, and, unless it is used for police duties only and limited in size and equipment for that duty, it is an anachronism and a real danger to Peace. We must get rid of the idea that we feel pride in our army. I know we do. I do, but, we must steel ourselves to change our feelings and our views, otherwise, we shall never be good citizens of the greater unit, whatever that may be. Let's be proud, as the Londoner is proud, of our *Police*, but let's abolish the *Army*, i.e., change it to a *Police* force pure and simple.

Let no one think that I am not proud of our Army. But then, I am proud of some pranks I played at school!

Goodwill Among Men of all Nations is being preached all over the world during these few days

of Christmas and New-Year, but, at heart we pay lip-service only to the noble sentiment first spoken by the Christian Saviour.

I remember the day when War was declared by England. In 1914. An English friend of mine and I were walking down Victoria Street that evening when we were accosted by a young German who was hurrying to the Station to see whether he could still get away. He told us, with tears in his eyes, that he had lived here for years, that he had no wish at all to do any harm to England or the English, but that he was hurrying home to Germany, because war had been declared and because, therefore, *He Had to Join Up*.

No doubt, later on, under the influence of sufficient doses of war-lies he developed sufficient war-psychology to be able to shoot, bayonet or otherwise kill, burn or poison-gas a few or as many as he could, of his former pals. *That Is War*. But, that man, if he killed a great number of his former pals, was not a criminal murderer, oh no, he was a hero. *That Is Insanity*.

If all men of all nations, in that fateful August 1914 had refused to go to war, *That would have been Goodwill towards Mankind*.

They would have been put into prison and branded as criminal or idiotic lunatics, or as cowards.

My dear Readers, you may be surprised at my article at this time of the year. But, let me tell you this, as a parting shot:

Be Honest with Yourself, Think it out, Don't Repeat Simply What Others Say or What You Read, But THINK for Yourself.

The process is very inconvenient, it leads you to very unorthodox thoughts, you may go wrong and err, but believe me, it is much better to think for yourself and err in the process than not to think at all. And it will only be by people thinking really hard and pondering over the result of present-day Nationalism, etc., that we shall get a *Universal Free Opinion Breathing Goodwill Among Men*.

PENNY-WISE AND £ FOOLISH!

This is the conclusion at which every good Swiss, having the international welfare in mind, must have arrived when becoming aware of the fact that the Swiss National Council by 74 votes to 45 decided to cut down the credit for the Swiss Delegation to the Disarmament Conference next year, whilst on the other hand preparations on a lavish scale have been undertaken at Geneva for this conference, as announced by the Swiss Observer of December 11th.

Such a decision is incomprehensible if one considers that millions of Francs will come to Switzerland directly and indirectly through the Disarmament and International Conferences, and that the grant in question is destined for the most noble cause, that of promoting and securing international peace and welfare.

It is obvious that the Swiss credit reduction for the disarmament is not giving a good example to the other countries. Should not just Switzerland that was spared from the war and its disastrous consequences show other nations her gratitude and her great interest in the Disarmament Problem by supporting same magnanimously?

Such an act on the part of Switzerland would mean a blessing and a divine service not only to herself but to the whole civilisation.

It is therefore most regrettable that our National Councils with the right spirit in the Disarmament question are in minority.

Christian Kunzle,
Birmingham, England.

NEWS FROM THE COLONY.

L'ESCALADE DE LA COLONIE GENEVOISE DE LONDRES.

Notre petite colonie s'est réunie le 11 décembre au Restaurant tessinois Paganini, sous la présidence de Monsieur Raoul de Cintra. Etaient présents 23 membres, parmi lesquels l'on remarquait, outre le président, le pasteur de l'Eglise suisse M. R. Hoffmann de Visme, M. C. Campart, H. Charmaux, E. Cottier, le Dr. Ferrière, Fred Gampier, L. Haussauer, P. Oltramare, P. Savoie, Messieurs L. and A. V. Flaegel père et fils, le doyen et benjamin respectifs de la réunion, et d'autres figures bien connues.

Ce fut une soirée très réussie, qui fit revivre au cœur de chacun l'un des épisodes les plus glorieux et les plus romantiques de l'Histoire de Genève, si riche en événements qui ont en leur répercussion bien au delà de ses murs.

Une surprise agréable attendait les convives, sous la forme d'une Chronique arrangée par Monsieur Campart, des éthers d'Escalade des Genevois de Londres et de leurs amis, depuis leur institution en 1914; c'est un manuscrit des plus intéressants, accompagné de documents dont la valeur rétrospective ne manquera pas d'augmenter

avec les années, chaque participant signant la page spéciale dédiée à cette gentille réunion annuelle.

Le toast habituel à la santé de Genève fut proposé par Monsieur de Cintra et cordialement offert par l'assistance. La solennité de l'occasion fut marquée par la lecture, de Monsieur Hoffmann de Visme, du Rôle Officiel des victimes de l'Escalade, puis, en un mouvement d'une énergie appropriée et en s'exclamant: "Ainsi périt un ennemi de la Patrie!" Monsieur de Cintra défonça d'un couteau (probablement faute de poignard) la magnifique Marmite d'Escalade qui décorait la table.

Monsieur Hoffmann de Visme eut également l'obligeance de lire un extrait d'un choix heureux du livre de Blaise, cette oeuvre toujours si fraîche, qui ne manque jamais de ramener les souvenirs de tout Genevois à ses bancs d'école. D'autres communications, d'un intérêt historique, furent faites par Monsieur H. Charmaux, qui s'intéresse tout particulièrement à ce qui, dans les débris du passé de Londres, pourrait avoir trait à l'Histoire de Genève.

Comme de coutume, le fameux "carnet noir" circula; ce Noël prochain il fera de nouveau des heureux, à témoin les 350 et quelques enfants de la grande colonie suisse qui l'an dernier, bénéficièrent de ses largesses.

Avant de se séparer, le président adressa des remerciements à Messieurs Meschini et son bras droit W. Notari, qui avaient si bien préparé table et menu, et contribué au contentement des "escaladeurs;" n'oublions point notre jeune major de table M. George Dimier qui lui aussi, y mit entrain et gaieté, et occasionna quelques délicieux bourdonnements de M. Piaget.

Puisse cette belle tradition de la réunion d'Escalade, être maintenue longtemps encore parmi les quelques Genevois exilés par les circonstances dans la grande capitale britannique et ses environs; même les brouillards les plus épais, ne sauraient refroidir dans leurs coeurs la place chaude qu'ils y gardent pour leur chère ville natale ou celle de leurs années de jeunesse.

H.A.

OLD FOLKS CHRISTMAS LUNCHEON AT THE FOYER SUISSE.

Not very long ago I had the pleasure to spend an evening amongst the younger and coming generation of the Colony; I speak of the Students dinner of the Swiss Mercantile Society College. There I was surrounded by youth, by an unbounding spirit of optimism; God's wide world lay before them, the future belonged to them, life with its bitter experiences had not yet succeeded in putting a damper on their youthful aspirations, many of them still looked at the world through rose coloured glasses. Hardly did I expect then, that soon after, I should be a guest at a function quite different from the one just mentioned.

The House Committee of the Foyer Suisse once again gave their customary Luncheon to the old Folks of the Colony at 15, Upper Bedford Place, W.C. on Monday, December 21st. Here was a gathering of some 50 venerable Ladies and Gentlemen, most of them at the eventide of their worldly pilgrimage. They have all experienced life in its fullness and gladness, as well as in its harshness and disappointments. Many of those who sat round those nicely decorated tables could relate tales of bitter experiences, of incessant, hard and untiring work, of hardship, but also of success and happiness; some have made careers some have climbed to the top of the ladder, some have not reached those exalted heights, but have rested half way, but all of them, I am sure have struggled to overcome the many adversities of which life is so full, and to all of them I hope a kind providence will sweeten their remaining days amongst us.

To be quite candid, I must admit that I felt rather uncomfortable at first, I somehow had an idea as if I was trespassing, I imagined that all those old Ladies and Gentlemen asked themselves what on earth this "baby" has come here for; and the first time in my life I was proud of the few white hairs which I possess and which I so often try to hide; still my embarrassment soon wore off, when I looked in their kind faces and saw their happy smiles, after all what do years matter, do we not all hail from the same country and are we not members of the same great family?

The Luncheon started shortly before 2 o'clock, and about fifty people sat down to a most delicious meal, which Mr. Meyer put before them; not only was the food exquisite but the service too was most efficient, and the staff of the Foyer Suisse could compete anywhere successfully, where politeness and attention are still considered to be a virtue.

The Hall was artistically decorated, even a picture depicting the snow clad mountain tops was put up for the occasion, and I feel sure this pretending painting has brought back to many present, glorious times of happy days spent in that land; which although far away, is ever present in their memories.