

The "Swiss Observer" thirty years ago

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THE "SWISS OBSERVER" THIRTY YEARS AGO

Reading through the five issues of April 1933, I could not help noticing a slight improvement in the news from home. The economic position of Switzerland was by no means rosy, but the figures of unemployed persons had actually dropped from 96,273 to 71,809. Some of the annual accounts showed small surpluses. The Government had decided to adhere to the Gold Standard. It was reported that Federal Councillor Motta had arrived in Rome and had been received by the Pope and that Mussolini had given a small luncheon party in his honour. The Swiss Federal Government had examined the British Disarmament Plan and decided to support it, at the same time making some reservations with regard to the number of aeroplanes that would be allowed to Switzerland and which was considered insufficient to ensure the defence of the country. The first issue of the month brought a report that the Federal Council had instructed the Federal Police Department to take steps to protect the frontier from an influx of Communistic and Jewish elements of undesirable character.

The issue of 1st April 1933 carried a message in French to the young Swiss away from their country by Federal Councillor Guiseppe Motta. It was a patriotic address, asking the young people to remember what was great in their own country, but also to try and like their country of adoption. To compare institutions, natural beauties and customs would, he hoped, fill their hearts with pride, but also at times with salutary humility.

Not so much good about Switzerland an English clergyman had had to say in an unfair article in the "Daily Sketch" to which an excellent answer by "St.", the editor, appeared in the form of an open letter called "O Santa Simplicitas!" An English reader complimented Mr. Stauffer on his answer in the subsequent number.

The standard of articles throughout the month was high. There was an excellent biography of the hotel king, César Ritz, an interesting description of "Zug — one of Switzerland's unknown gems", and an article on "Geneva — a Tale of Two Cities". A short story in German by Ida Frohnmeier, the well-known author, appeared on 22nd April, called "Der Kleine Junge", in which a man spoke harsh words to a little boy who had shown compassion for a friend. He wanted to teach the boy a lesson, he should not be soft, but become hard and the reprimand had been spoken out of love. But, the author said, it could never be right that compassion should be torn out. Even if it meant deeper suffering, it would be a good thing if our world became like the little boy and did not rejoice at the bad luck of its neighbour.

Quite a number of short poems appeared in the "Swiss Observer" in April thirty years ago, amongst them several in German by Alfred Hugenberg. They make excellent reading, and perhaps I shall have space to reprint one or the other some time.

I did not read the articles on football in Switzerland which appeared regularly, but the reports of meetings and dinners in the Swiss Colony made interesting reading. It seems to me that the speeches made at such functions were certainly longer than they are today. Nobody, I am sure, regrets this, although what with the menus being much shorter, too, there would be more time to enjoy the oratory gifts some of our compatriots seem to possess. A long report appeared on the "Grand Swiss Rally", the Annual Banquet and Ball of the Swiss Club in Birming-

ham under its active President Mr. P. Brun. Five columns were filled with the report — and an S.O. page at that time was exactly double today's size!

At the Nouvelle Société Helvétique Dr. Ruefenacht had given a talk on "Switzerland's Economic Position". The news today is of economic boom and unprecedented prosperity. But thirty years ago things were different, and Switzerland felt the world crisis acutely. The report of Dr. Ruefenacht's lecture was full of gloom, restrictive measures, a very adverse balance of trade, the worst hotel season ever experienced, frozen credits, bad state of agriculture and the heavy debt of the Swiss Federal Railways. Nevertheless, there were signs of improvements and reasons for hope.

There was a report on a bazaar organised by the Swiss Y.M.C.A., and the A.G.M. of the City Swiss Club, as well as on the Annual Banquet and Ball of the — now extinct — Union Helvetia. Annual reports by the Secretariat of the Swiss Abroad and the Swiss Relief Committee in Liverpool also appeared. Finally, a resolution deserves to be mentioned, which the Nouvelle Société Helvétique passed at a meeting on 19th April. This concerned the Military Tax which, the resolution stated, contained some flagrant inequalities that should be abolished. It is gratifying to know that the steady efforts of the N.S.H. have borne fruit and that the tax has been very much modified since, and indeed abolished for Swiss permanently resident abroad.

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Syllabus

Monday, 22nd April — The Land of Switzerland, The Geographical Background, Miss P. A. Nicklin, M.A., Staff Tutor in Geography, University of Birmingham.

Monday, 29th April — Travelling in Switzerland 1863-1963, "Miss Jemima's Diary," 1863, Mr. A. Kunz, General Manager, Swiss National Tourist Office, London.

Monday, 6th May — Cultural Switzerland, Dr. W. Viola, Dramatic Critic, Broadcaster, and Author of "Child Art".

Monday, 13th May — Swiss Towns: Berne, Zurich, Dr. J. Horne, Lecturer in German, University of Birmingham.

Monday, 20th May — Switzerland in the 20th Century: A historical review, Monsieur J. Revilliod, Cultural Counsellor, Swiss Embassy in London.

Monday, 27th May — The Swiss Economy, Monsieur Marcel Heimo, Counsellor for Economic Affairs, Swiss Embassy in London.

Monday, 10th June — Regional Contrasts in Switzerland, Miss P. Nicklin, M.A., University of Birmingham.

Monday, 17th June — Life in Switzerland Today, Mrs. Mariann Meier, Editor of the "Swiss Observer".

INTERNATIONAL SALON OF AVANT-GARDE GALLERIES

The success met with last year by the International Biennial of Tapestry encouraged the curators of the Lausanne Museum of Fine Arts to organize a first International Salon of Avant-garde Galleries, in which a score of galleries that have acted as pioneers in the contemporary art world since 1945 will be taking part. The first International Salon of Avant-garde Galleries will be held in Lausanne, from 20th June to 22nd September next. [O.S.E.C.]

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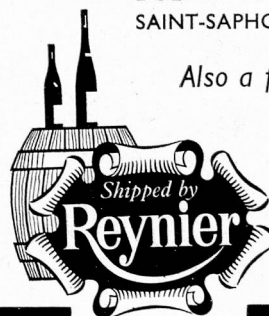
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