

# To our minister

Autor(en): **Gallus**

Objekttyp: **Article**

Zeitschrift: **The Swiss observer : the journal of the Federation of Swiss Societies in the UK**

Band (Jahr): **- (1930)**

Heft 449

PDF erstellt am: **23.04.2024**

Persistenter Link: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-692928>

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## NOTES AND GLEANINGS.

By KYBURG.

Weather conditions in this part of the world have not been ideal during the last week and one friend of mine who greeted me one day with a rather testy "Merry Christmas" was voicing the fairly general sentiment! However, the summer may yet take place this year and while the days are still getting longer, there is hope. But, how short the summer season is and how soon we shall be in the grip of winter again! And how nice it is, therefore, to read in the *South Wales Argus*, that a machine to dispel fog has been invented and been tried and found to be efficient.

### A Machine to Disperse Fog.

"The Smoke Abatement Act lies on the Statute Book, and though we are on the edge of summer, where there will be an opportunity for indulging in sunshine, nothing has been achieved in ridding this country of the pall of smoke which hangs over our cities. In the large towns of Berne, Essen and Cologne, the carbon clouds of which we are victims do not exist.

In Switzerland there has been exhibited a remarkable invention for the dispersal of fog. The machine is described as a "fog-removing apparatus," and it clears the atmosphere by force-and-suction of local foginess (due to a damp and misty geographical situation), of carbon, steam and dust. In favourable wind conditions it will be possible to use such a machine on a big scale.

If the Ministry of Health have not explored its possibilities, it is hoped that those interested in smoke abatement, and especially Members of Parliament, concerned with the health of their constituents, will do so."

With the opening of the high-efficiency broadcast stations in this country, notably the increased old 2LO, my set has some difficulty in getting a tolerably good reception of Berne and I have been looking forward very keenly to the time when Switzerland would have at least one really powerful station and we could get its signals fairly all right on sets over here. I am not quite sure whether the following information is a step in this direction, but I take it that if the League of Nations wants to broadcast, it would do so only from a powerful station and not from one that could not be picked up by the masses all over Europe.

### League of Nations Radio.

The Observer, 18th May:

"The negotiations concerning a radio station for the League of Nations, which have for some time been conducted between the secretary of the League and the Swiss Federal Council, have now resulted in an agreement ready to be signed. The idea of a radio station owned by the League has been given up. The League will avail itself of the services of the station at Prangins, near Geneva, which belongs to the 'Radio Swiss' Company, but will be put at the League's disposal in time of crisis. This solution has the advantage of being very cheap. It will cost the League about £500 a year, whereas a station of its own would have cost nearly £100,000 for construction, and annual expenses amounting to another £20,000.

The objection to this plan, which was raised chiefly by France, was that this arrangement did not grant the League the necessary independence. It was for this reason that the clause about a time of crisis was added. The station will be obliged not to violate Swiss neutrality in any way.

### A Great Daily.

During the early times of the war, when my battalion was stationed down in the Ticino and when I spent some of my leisure moments to write correcting information to the *N.Z.Z.*, the then Editor in chief of that famous paper once asked my father who was a friend of his, whether he had a son down at Biasca, and when the answer was affirmative, asked him to inform me that if they wished to reply to all those who criticised their correspondents, they would have to employ a huge army of helpers! I was reminded of this little private affair of mine when reading in the *Manchester Guardian*, 20th May, about the 150th anniversary of the famous newspaper.

"Switzerland, though a small country, is rich in newspapers of international reputation, among which the '*Neue Zürcher Zeitung*' holds a very high position. To celebrate its remarkable feat in attaining its hundred and fiftieth birthday it has just published a handsome anniversary volume, 150 JAHRE 'NEUE ZÜRCHER ZEITUNG', 1780-1930, which contains both a history of the paper from its foundation and a detailed account of its present administration, staff, and policy. Particularly interesting is the chapter on the war years, which brought loud complaints of partisanship from all the belligerent countries on both sides. The '*Neue Zürcher Zeitung*' is as distinguished to-day as ever it has been for the fullness and impartiality of its news, home and foreign news service, and the excellence of its special articles. One wishes it many more years of useful service to the European community."

Reverting to "weather-talk," always a fertile subject of conversation, I find that England has not been alone in enjoying a very wet Spring. Alarming news comes from Switzerland where, in the Bernese Oberland, considerable damage has been done by earth-slips at Zwiöltschinnen, and where an even more serious fall of earth and

rock is threatened in the Canton Glaris. The *Observer*, 18th May, writes:

### Alpine Village in Danger.

"Owing to the uninterrupted downpour of rain during the last few days a big landslide has been caused in the Canton of Glaris. Enormous masses of rocks have come down from the side of the Kilchenstock, a mountain of six thousand feet, overshadowing the village of Linthal. They blocked the valley just above the village, and a lake was rapidly formed behind this wall, through which the waters have now broken in two places, washing avalanches of loose material towards the village, which is in danger of being buried under them. All the fire brigades of the neighbourhood have hurried to the spot, but as they are unable to cope with the situation, troops are being called to their assistance.

A number of houses in the upper part of the village have had to be evacuated, and the inhabitants are erecting palisades for the protection of the rest of the village.

Linthal is a village of about two thousand inhabitants, with an important textile industry. Similar catastrophes have befallen the place in former times, and more than once it had to get out of the way of the moving mountain. One of its former church steeples bears witness of this fact, standing lonely in the bed of a torrent.

The whole mass of the Kilchenstock consists of soft sandstone and slate. Minor landslides occur there every year, and there were two large ones in June, 1926, and November, 1928."

### The American Tariffs.

The question of the proposed increases in American Tariffs still worries Swiss and others quite a lot. And justly so. However, the following gives an illustration, for the accuracy of which I do not vouch, but which is quite plausible, of the effects produced on Swiss minds by the ridiculous American proposals:

"Americans visiting Switzerland must not be surprised this year to meet a coldness exceeding that of the Alpine glaciers, for nowhere has the proposed revision to the American tariff caused greater resentment. An M.P. recently returned from Zurich was surprised to find that the increase of duty on Swiss-made products, principally watch components, has created an indignation sufficiently widespread to embrace hotel employees. On one occasion, having asked at a drug store for a certain well-known American shaving cream, he was told that in spite of the great demand for that commodity it would no longer be kept in stock.

From other source comes the story of a Swiss citizen who set fire to his recently purchased American car as a protest against the raising of the import duties. The bonfire took place in a public thoroughfare, and was loudly cheered by the passers-by. No doubt British manufacturers will be investigating the possibilities of benefiting from this present wave of unpopularity which the politicians at Washington have inadvertently brought upon the merchandise of their country."

By the way, the Spanish and Swiss Ministers in Washington having protested publicly against these tariffs, one Senator on the floor of the American Congress demanded that Mr. Hoover should ask their respective Governments to recall them. Naturally, if an Ambassador or Minister is accredited with a Country, he must not let the people of that country know what the people of his country feel, think or intend doing! That's not what he is there for, quite the contrary.

### TO OUR MINISTER.

Ten years, Your Excellency, have passed by  
Since when you came to dwell amongst us here  
As our leader, our spokesman, our peer,  
Helvetia's flag unfurled, raising it high.

You sacrifice yourself to knot the tie  
Which binds us to that native land, so dear,  
Still closer. . . Your active help in ev'ry sphere  
Spurns us to tasks that still before us lie.

Whilst Switzerland finds great and trusted men  
Are ready thus to serve her, year by year,  
She can be proud, as we are proud of you.

We may seem somewhat stolid now and then,  
Yet all pay tribute to your great career  
And our gratitude rings deep and true.

GALLUS.

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