

Home news

Objekttyp: **Group**

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

Band (Jahr): - **(1923)**

Heft 107

PDF erstellt am: **02.05.2024**

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The Swiss Observer

Telephone: CITY 4603.

Published every Friday at 21, GARLICK HILL, LONDON, E.C. 4.

Telegrams: FREPRINCO, LONDON.

No. 107

LONDON, JUNE 23, 1923.

PRICE 3d.

PREPAID SUBSCRIPTION RATES

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HOME NEWS

The unemployment figures for the month of May show a further appreciable decrease, the number being 30,228, against 35,512 to end of April. The total amount disbursed for this purpose amounts now to 469 million francs, the larger part of which has been contributed by the Confederation; the shares of the Cantons vary according to local requirements; the canton of Neuchâtel, for instance, has spent under this heading 142 francs per head of population, whilst the quota of Unterwalden amounts to 1.42 franc only.

The Federal workshops at Yverdon (for overhauling and repairing electric locomotives) are to be extended at a cost of Frs. 1,700,000.

At a meeting of the Communal Council of Lausanne strenuous opposition was offered to the official proposal to abolish Sunday deliveries, the opinion prevailing that with increased postal rates the public service is becoming more indifferent.

A new taxation law, said to contain the first income tax imposition in the canton of Grisons, has been passed, after twelve years' discussion, by the town council of Chur.

An accountant of the Federal Department of Works, Hermann Gass, has been arrested for defalcations, said to exceed Frs. 100,000.

In Geneva five persons have been arrested for cocaine trading; they are said to belong to a well-known gang who for the last six months have done a considerable business in this article all over Switzerland.

The Catholic church in Nofels, near Albstätten, has been broken into by burglars, who carried away sacred vessels and other valuable appurtenances.

A Swiss master-dyer, Hans Schleh, has been shot dead in Dortmund by a French sentinel.

NOTES AND GLEANINGS.

By "KYBURG."

By the time these Notes appear in print I hope to have heard of the complete recovery of the President of the Swiss Mercantile Society in London, our friend Mr. G. DeBrunner, who, as we have all heard with dismay, I am sure, is ill with a bad attack of influenza. There are far too few Swiss who take such a continuous and intelligent interest in the welfare of the Colony as Mr. DeBrunner does, and we can ill afford his being ill. I raise my glass to drink your health, Mr. President, and wish you a speedy and complete recovery! And so, I am sure, say all of us.

The Economy Axe at Work.

The Times (11th June).—On Sunday, June 3rd, the electorate of the town of Zurich accepted a Bill, reducing the salaries of the town employees by amounts varying between £12 16s. and £16 per annum for high officials, and from £24 to £26 8s. for clerks and workers.

Political Awakening at Geneva.

The Christian World (7th June).—In Switzerland, just as in the United States and in England, there is a steady progress in the admission of women to fuller authority and to more accurate education in matters of religion. The electorate of the National Church of the canton of Geneva has just now voted, by 1,947 against only 410, that women shall henceforth be eligible for membership of the parish councils. And at the University of Geneva there are now a dozen lady students, taking a two years' course of training under the Divinity Faculty with a view to fitting themselves for public religious work. Professor Breitenstein reports of them that they study hard, and that they acquit themselves with remarkable success in their half-yearly examinations.

It is interesting to note that several comments on the recent Alcohol Referendum express the view that the "Ayes" would have had it had women had the right to vote! Seeing what a frightful mess mere men have made of the world during the last 2,000 years or so, I think we might safely give the women a fair chance. In the worst of cases they could not but make a better show than, as I have said and as History shows, men have made so far. I think the old theory about the men being the "Lords of Creation" is now as dead as mutton.

International Fencing.

Morning Post (31st May).—

The contest for the military championship of Europe for individual swordsmanship (épée), in which only Switzerland, Belgium and France were represented, resulted as follows: 1. Commandant Perrot, (France); 2. Lieutenant Empayta (Switzerland).

I suppose the Belgian was third! And a very useful sport, too, fencing is. Apart from keeping you fit, it enables you to call your opponent's bluff and get him off the map in a gentlemanly fashion. Who said "Mensur"? Because "Fencing," I would have you know, is not at all the same thing, being much more refined a way of killing or wounding your opponent. Somebody reminded me the other day that Christianity was nearly twenty centuries old. Just fancy!

A Charming Article on Switzerland

appears in the *Daily Dispatch* (29th May) by Gerald B. Hurst, K.C., M.P., and I think my readers will be pleased to have it in full:—

There is no prettier custom in all Europe than that which leads the Swiss to inscribe on the familiar façades of their chalets maxims in prose or verse inculcating domestic virtues, or invoking upon these simple homes the blessings of Heaven.

The same groping after ideals animates Englishmen when they call mean streets "avenues" and lodging-house keepers of every nationality when they christen houses with a distant glimpse of water "Sea View" or "Ocean Prospect." But the Swiss families who carve these couplets on their house fronts are immeasurably less sophisticated.

Here are a few gathered at random in a little village near the Lake of Thun:—

"Schweizerhaus und Schweizerland."

Schirm es Gott mit Starker Hand."

This can be translated:

"Home of Swiss and Switzerland."

God protect with His strong Hand."

Another runs: "God defend this house and those who go in and out"; another, "Sing all praises to the Lord God if you want happiness and blessings"; another, "Everything comes to us by God's Grace"; another—perhaps the most charming—"Every home with its peace is a part of Paradise." Such legends are carved with the handicraft which one always associates with Swiss toys, cuckoo clocks, penholders and whistles.

Modern Switzerland has wisely tried to play but a minor and unheroic rôle in the world's affairs. Happy the country which makes no history if it be a country with a small population wedged in among great States. It is, however, a wonderful thing to preserve in these days so real a simplicity of heart.

Hence the extraordinary feat accomplished in Switzerland alone—the feat of moulding French, German and Italian people into one nationality. Two strokes of political genius have helped in the achievement of this great purpose. First, a system of national military training has broken down—as, when properly organised, it must always break down—barriers of race, class and creed.

Secondly, the schools teach what is called 'civics'—the broad principles of citizenship, public conduct, and national duty. Perhaps we may one day arrive at this stage in England. People sometimes say that it is unteachable without importing party spirit—but is it true? We have so many greater and fresher rallying points for patriotism than the shadowy romance of William Tell.

Neither national service nor education alone, however, would have been adequate to solve Switzerland's racial problem. Character, not ability, is the pivot of a country's well-being. The homely and even childish homilies, cut on the fronts of these chalets, are true symbols of national worth.

I could add quite a number of such maxims which I remember having seen on Swiss houses. There is one at Flaach as follows:—

Quidquid agis,
prudenter agas,
et respice finem,

which might be translated into:—

Whatever you undertake to do,
do it with circumspection,
and bear the end well in mind!

And another one, which surely is the sweetest:—
"Moi et Toi,"

which does not require translation, I think.

Summer in Switzerland.

It will not be the fault of the British Press if Britishers do not transfer temporarily their residence to one or other of our native valleys or mountains. In former issues of the *S.O.* I have given instances of well-written articles appearing in papers in all parts of the United Kingdom. This week I notice two splendid articles on the Lakes of the Ticino, one on Lago di Lugano in *The Evening Telegraph* and *Post*, of Dundee, 2nd June, and the other on the Lago Maggiore in the same paper four days later. They made me quite homesick, the second one especially, giving a vivid and charming picture of the delights of an evening near Isola Bella. Once upon a time "Kyburg" was fortunate enough to sip sparkling Asti at Baveno, not in one of the big hotels there, but at a shabby three-legged table outside the Ristorante degli Amici, where the butcher and baker and other notables of the bourgeoisie of the village



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foregathered of an evening and were pleased to let "Kyburg" into the secret as to how real Asti—there and at that time 1 lira per bottle!—ought to be enjoyed. And a hand-organ playing the old sweet melodies from the Trovatore. And the night dark blue and warm. And the air perfumed wondrously, making you feel as if you were in a Persian garden and as if some Eastern potentate might come round the corner of the Piazza at any moment. Dear, dear, as Platen said, "Was sucht ihr mich heim, ihr Bilder, die längst ich vergessen geglaubt?"

The Surgical Clinics of Switzerland.

British Medical Journal (June 2nd) by H. S. Souttar, M.Ch.F.R.C.S., Director of the Surgical Unit London Hospital.

In a very long and extremely interesting article the eminent director gives his impressions gathered during a ten days' visit to the clinics at Basle, Zurich, Berne and Lausanne, and I strongly recommend anybody who is interested in these matters to get the article and read it. I can only quote the concluding remarks:—

The hospitals belong to the town or canton. So far as we could gather, they do not depend on voluntary support. A charge of about 6 francs (5s.) a day is made for each patient, but the whole or greater part is defrayed by a national insurance, to which the whole of the working classes contribute. The fees of the students are for the most part paid from national sources, and the cantons and towns vote large sums for new buildings and equipment, both clinical and educational.

Every hospital we visited was equipped with first-class operating theatres, and with clinical theatres (usually many) far superior to anything of the kind we had ever seen. I have seen nothing in England to compare with the anatomical department just opened or with the maternity department in course of erection at Basle.

It is most improbable that at the present day such equipment can be provided in England from private sources, and it was our unanimous opinion that our only hope of raising the equipment of our training schools to the level of Switzerland lies in the support of our hospitals by the State. The Swiss have recognized the health of their nation and the care of their sick as primary national duties, not to be left to the vagaries of private enterprise. And they have realized that a highly trained medical service is as valuable an asset as a nation can possess. I hope that we may soon be given an inspired glimpse into the obvious, and follow their example.

For the Ladies.

Although the wintry summer we are passing through just now gives little scope for the ladies to bring out their loveliest and flimsiest frocks, it surely is good news that Swiss Embroidery is coming into its own again. The *Pall Mall and Globe* (5th June) writes:—

Lace carries all before it this summer, but some sorts of lace are anything but durable. That is where the new net application Swiss embroidery scores, for it is both economical and durable, and the materials can be washed indefinitely without injuring or impairing the delicate fabric. There is nothing more attractive for wear in summer than lingerie frocks, and one recently seen was made of this new net application Swiss embroidery, about which so much has been heard lately. It had an underskirt and sleeves and a short, jaunty, irresistible little cape hanging from the shoulders of net, while the rest of the gown was of plain clear muslin. A youthful looking affair was slim and straight in outline, the major portion of the dress composed of fine Swiss embroidery in a delicate gossamer design.