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The Swiss Observer

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THE FIRST OF AUGUST.

We have no intention to add our own panegyric to the multitude of laudations which appear on this day in the columns of our contemporaries at home. We could hardly do better than emulate the example of that bashful patriot who when designated some years ago to deliver the official oration at a National Festival in Bellinzona was so carried away by emotion when mounting the rostrum that he could only shout "Vive la Suisse." While this is a day of thanksgiving and jubilation, it is for us Swiss in this great metropolis also a day for serious reflection and meditation. The world crisis is working havoc in our little colony, alike amongst institutions and individuals. We cannot expect a helping hand from our home country. We must work out our own Salvation. Our watchword proclaimed on that historic field in 1291 and which, alas, has become a cheap slogan, must be reinvested with its solemn meaning and should be uppermost in our thoughts and actions in these strenuous times:

Einer für Alle Alle für Einen.

HOME NEWS

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

FEDERAL.

THE FEDERAL PRESIDENT TO BROADCAST.

The official address at the First of August celebration in Winterthur will be delivered by Dr. H. Häberlin, the Federal President, who is breaking his return journey from the Engadine for this purpose. The address will be broadcast from the Swiss Radio stations at about 9 p.m.

SWISS NATIONAL BANK.

The latest return of the Swiss National Bank exhibits a gold reserve of over one millard francs —a record—and a bank note cover in gold of 95%.

EXPORT OF BANK NOTES.

It is stated that the Swiss National Bank has discontinued issuing notes of a higher nominal value than Frs. 100 so as to prevent or discourage cash payments for abroad.

SWISS LOCOMOTIVES FOR ASIA.

Successful trials have just been completed with an electric Diesel Locomotive manufactured by Sulzer Brothers to the order of the Siamese government; the engine develops 450 H.P., and weighs about 60 tons.

DEATH OF A GREAT SCIENTIST.

Dr. August Forel died last Monday in Yvorne at the age of 83. His versatility in many branches of science earned him an international reputation; as an entomologist he has probably not found his equal. He discovered, described and classified no less than 3,500 species of ants. His literary output was phenomenal there being something like 500 volumes to his credit. Born in Morges, he studied Medicine in Zurich, Lausanne and Vienna and for a number of years practised in the latter capital as a nerve specialist. In 1879 he was appointed professor of Psychiatry at the University of Zurich and at the same time director of the mental institution at the Burghölzli. After twenty years' intensive instruction he retired to his home "Fourmilière" in the canton Vaud, where he continued his research work in the cause of humanity.

DISTINGUISHED VISITORS.

The King and Queen of the Belgians have arrived at their villa at the Haslihorn on the Lake of Lucerne for a three weeks' stay.

King Feisul, of Irak, is undergoing a medical treatment in Berne which will presumably last about three weeks.

THE ROVER SCOUTS AT KANDERSTEG.

The first international meet of Rover Scouts from 22 different countries (about 3,000) is being held at Kandersteg from July 27th to August 8th. The Federal Council will entertain the principal delegates to a luncheon at which Federal Councillor Motta will be present.

LOCAL.

ZURICH.

The divisional military tribunal sentenced a foreign legionary to three months imprisonment for omitting to join the repetition-courses in the years 1928 to 1930. It was stated that the malefactor enlisted in the year 1926 in the French Foreign Legion for the price of a meal when he was "down and out." After absolving the contracted five years service he returned to Switzerland and presented himself without delay to the local military authorities.

BERNE.

The Swiss Exhibition for Sport and Hygiène ("Hyspa") was officially opened last Friday, July 24th, by Federal Councillor Meyer in the presence of a large and representative gathering. A salvo of 22 guns accompanied the inauguration.

* * *

Max Schafroth-Lüdy died in Burgdorf at the age of 61 after a prolonged illness. He took a leading part in the development of his native town and was at one time the head of an important artificial wool factory bearing his name.

* * *

Dr. Walter Merz, a well-known and popular free-lance journalist, died suddenly last Saturday at the age of 69.

LUCERNE.

Large audiences are being attracted by a miracle play "Das Spiel vom verlorenen Sohn" (The Prodigal Son) first performed in Lucerne on Sunday the 19th inst. It was originally arranged as a miracle play by Hans Salat, who lived from 1498 to 1561. The text has been re-written by the Swiss poet, Hermann Ferdinand Schell, while a modern musical setting has been provided by Jean Baptiste Hilber, of Lucerne.

The plays are performed on the steps of the Cathedral of Lucerne. All the players are members of the Brotherhood of the Coronation, which has been revived in its old form. Performances are given three days a week—Wednesday, Saturday, and Sunday—twice daily.

Each year in the future one of the ancient miracle plays will be revived. Although text and music will be brought up to date, the manner of performance will follow as closely as possible the ancient method.

SCHWYZ

Fruit-growers are finding great difficulties in securing cherry pickers; offers of Frs. 7.- to Frs. 9.- per day with free station are meeting with no response.

GENEVA.

The private banking firm of Messrs. H. Boveyron & Co., founded in 1881, have suspended payments; the failure is attributed to the crisis created by the insolvency of the Banque de Genève.

AARAU.

While on a five day excursion up and down the Rhine the Pontoon Club of Aarau met with a very serious accident. When continuing their journey last Saturday morning from Buchs, one of the three boats was unable to clear the new bridge over the Rhine and the strong current dashed it against the first bridge pillar. All the 22 occupants were thrown into the river; two of them could not gain the bank and disappeared in the water. The names of the victims are Hermann Hediger, aged 28, from Rupperswil and Emil Häusler, aged 63, from Aarau, they were both good swimmers.

* * *

Director Huldreich Meier, of the Sursee-Triengen railway was the victim of a singular accident. He was being driven home from Olten late one evening when the driver in order to avoid an oncoming car was forced over the road border. Mr. Meier, in order to ascertain the cause of the hindrance, looked out of the window; at the same moment the car pulled up again with the result that his head was knocked against a telephone pole. He died soon afterwards from a fractured skull. Mr. Meier who was 50 years old leaves a widow and three children.

ST. GALL.

A novel and somewhat radical departure from established practice has just been sanctioned in the canton of St. Gall. It is maintained that medical research and science has conclusively demonstrated that the alcohol admixture in human blood can be ascertained by unfailing methods. In dealing with traffic accidents blood tests may therefore become a determining factor. In cases where a defendant may refuse to submit to such a blood test, the examining magistrate may enforce this ordeal if the accident has resulted in fatal consequences.

THURGAU.

The commune of Egnach has been left Frs. 67,000 by the late Mr. Konrad Michel for public and philanthropic purposes.

* * *

National Councillor Karl Eigenmann died in Müllheim at the age of 82 after a short illness. He was a great veterinary authority and rendered eminent services to cattle breeders throughout Switzerland for which he received the doctor h.c. from the University of Zurich; he has been a member of the National Council uninterruptedly since 1899.

GRISONS.

About ninety university students are working as farm labourers in different parts of the canton. This is in accordance with an arrangement whereby during the long summer vacation students at our universities and other high schools offer their labour to needy farmers in the lower alpine regions. These volunteers, who are said to be stirred by great enthusiasm, receive free board and lodging.

VALAIS.

A rare situation has been created by a petition presented by 20 Councillors demanding an extra-ordinary sitting of the Grand Conseil for the purpose of removing the parliamentary immunity of certain members. This will enable the widow of Col. Schmidt to institute proceedings with regard to certain attacks on her late husband.

COMBATTING UNEMPLOYMENT IN SWITZERLAND.

Unemployment, as has been repeatedly pointed out in this paper, is an international scourge, affecting certain countries particularly severely. It constitutes one of the manifestations of the crisis prevalent throughout the world today and is a result of the growing disproportion, which has developed latterly, between production and consumption. It is difficult to obtain an accurate idea of the full significance of this phenomenon, for in certain countries official statistics are lacking and in others they cannot be relied upon. In one of our last numbers, we published a series of figures relative to this subject. Since then a slight decrease of unemployment has been noted in various countries, without, however, offering the hope of a durable improvement in the situation; this recent decrease is largely due to certain factors which are closely connected with the season of the year, the influence of which is, therefore comparatively limited and localized, not exceeding a few months.

The Swiss labour market is however less seriously affected than those abroad, but conditions are by no means reassuring. Although unemployment exists, it is not of the gravity noted elsewhere, especially if the country's situation is compared with that of several years ago, during the first post-war crisis. In 1922, Switzerland counted not less than 67,000 unemployed, entirely assisted by the State. Including the partially unemployed, the total number exceeded 100,000.

The situation of the labour market, examined in the light of a comparison between the number of demands for employment and that of offers of employment registered at the official labour offices, has a less serious aspect to-day. Unemployment, which, in certain countries, has assumed the proportions of a national disaster, has affected Switzerland to a far lesser degree. This is due, partly, to the special character of the country's production, composed of both industrial and agricultural

elements, which thus provide a certain compensation; while in other countries, where production is less varied, the consequences of the crisis are more serious.

At the end of May, 14,365 demands for unemployment were registered, against 27,316 at the end of January 1931 and 9,545 at the end of May 1930. Fluctuations in offers of employment followed the opposite direction. The figures for the same period were, respectively, 3,627, 2,131 and 4,042. A marked improvement has been registered during the past few months, determined, as has already been pointed out, by the season of the year. On the other hand, the situation is decidely less favourable than during the corresponding period a year ago. It has become especially critical for certain trades, such as watchmaking and jewellery as well as for the textile industry.

The fore-going figures, however, are not sufficient to give an accurate idea of the present situation of the labour market in Switzerland, upon which unemployment insurance statistics throw further light. As is stated below, this organisation, created several years ago, was destined to combat the social and economic consequences of unemployment and incorporates a large proportion of the country's working classes. At the close of April 1931, the 126 Swiss insurance organisations in existence, grouping 263,000 insured, counted 10,389 totally unemployed and 27,726 partially unemployed ,representing, respectively, a proportion of 4% for the former and 10.6% for the latter. We will add that the number of workers employed in factories, registered in Switzerland by the census of 1929, totalled approximately 400,000. Supposing that the above-quoted proportions should apply to the entire mass of salaried workers, the percentage of the unemployed, while not as disturbing in Switzerland as elsewhere, deserves, nevertheless, the attention of the public authorities.

For several years already, the State as well as employers' and employees' unions have been endeavouring to combat unemployment and its consequences. At a time when the economic situation was still comparatively favourable, certain steps were taken to prevent the repetition of a crisis such as our country experienced in 1921 and 1922. During that same crisis, the measures adopted to combat unemployment absorbed considerable sums, partly in the form of subsidies granted by the authorities and destined to assist the unemployed or create work to provide employment for those out of work on as large a scale as possible.

The system of combating the economic and social effects of unemployment were based upon the principle of assistance, thus presenting certain drawbacks which it is not necessary to develop here. With a view to preventing a possible renewal of the scourge, the *unemployment insurance system* was created several years ago, in accordance with the federal law of October 17th, 1924. These insurance benefits created by the public authorities as well as by private organisations, received subsidies from the State, premiums being paid by employers and employees. In the case of the unemployed, they are granted, for an indeterminate period, an indemnity proportionate to their salary and variable according to prevailing circumstances.

Under the regime of the law of 1924, three types of insurance benefits were constituted; public funds, organised by the townships or Cantons, trade union funds constituted by workers' organisations and parity funds created by employers and employees under the auspices of their respective organisations. The payments of the 126 insurance organisations, comprising, at the end of April, 263,000 insured, totalled 5.4 millions in 1928, 6.8 in 1929 and 16.7 millions last year; the subsidies granted by the Confederation amounted to 6.4 millions for 1930. Expenditures for 1931 are estimated at 30 millions, of which 12 are taken over by the Confederation.

In Switzerland, as in the majority of the countries in which the unemployment insurance system exists, it is a very recent institution. The normal resources would have been rapidly exhausted without the subsidies granted by the State in 1930 and more recently still, thus allowing the unemployed of those branches which were hardest hit by the crisis, to receive indemnities over a period exceeding that determined by law, originally established at 90 days. This maximum was doubled for certain branches and extended to 210 days in one case.

The importance of the choice of measures adopted to combat the economic and social consequences of unemployment is well-known, for it may prove extremely influential as regards the movement itself, viz. it may determine its decrease, or, on the contrary, its extension.

Unemployment insurances, based on the financial participation of both employers and employees, can give good results. Every crisis of a certain intensity, however, is a severe ordeal for insurance organisations and the system upon which they are based.

B.I.S.

NOTES AND GLEANINGS.

By Kyburg.

" I suppose this is rather a nice job for you, this writing of pure unadulterated twaddle " that's how an English friend of mine who got hold of my last week's article expressed himself.

Of course, I know, that he could not even do that, *i.e.* that he could no more write such wonderful articles, than fly, but all the same, a still inner voice tells me, and with some persistence too, that his scathing words had just a wee little grain of truth in them. Does it hurt? No, because in these days of summer—vide last week-end!—one must write something to amuse one's readers, one has to be somewhat lighthearted and one cannot play the heavy all the time.

However, not too much of a good thing! and that is why this week we will let others have more room and we will first of all introduce a rather serious, albeit very interesting subject, to wit:

Weights and Measures:

Irish Times 14th July.

A case for the adoption of decimal coinage and metric reform of weights and measures was made by Mr. E. C. Barton, F.R.C.S., of the Decimal Association, London, in an address to the Dublin Rotary Club. His subject was: " How we puzzle our foreign customers with our funny money and our weird weights." Mr. Kevin J. Kenny occupied the chair.

Mr. Barton, who declared himself an Australian and a retired engineer, said that Britain measured in many ways,and that it would be an advantage in schooling children, in offices and in practical work if the decimal or metric system of calculation and counting in weights and measures and in coinage were adopted. Sentiment had played a great part in the opposition to reform, and this would probably be fatal to any change if it were not easily allayed by paying due respect to names and their retention.

The Swiss Plan.

How can the change be made? They had the guidance of metric history in other lands, especially in those governed by parliaments, such as Switzerland, where the system of government put all law breaking at the mercy of small minorities.

The Swiss reformers were glad to find that " England, a most conservative country, had altered its gallon by 20 per cent. without difficulty in 1824 by the simple device of keeping all the old names." Instead of adopting the kilogram naked and unashamed, the English took the half kilogram as their chief weight, but called it a lb., from which the half-kilogram differed by scarcely more than 10 per cent.

They dealt in the same way with other measures, giving to each set a point of contact with the metric system, keeping the gallon, but making it just four litres.

It was now proposed to follow the Swiss plan in England and to apply it also to money, keeping all their gold and silver coins, but altering the penny by raising its value to one-tenth of a shilling. The coinage then would be virtually decimal, with twenty shillings to the pound, and 10d. to the shilling. By conversion of the pounds into shillings every sum became completely decimal, and fit to use on a slide rule or other machine without conversion.

It would assist the school teacher, the scientist and the industries based on chemistry and physical science, as well as solve the office machinery question.

Such was the case for decimal coinage and for metric reform of weights and measures.

Methods of Cæsar's Time.

English speaking people, Mr. Barton said, refused calendar reform, and clung to that of Julius Cæsar for 250 years. They had refused metric reform for 150 years, and still clung to methods dating back to the days of Cæsar. Several times a " clean-up " was attempted in Britain, and a hundred years ago a law suit led to a search for the standard yard in the Pyx at Westminster, under an expert named Bailey, who found it to be broken and mended with rivets, so as to resemble a pair of tongs.

In Britain such discoveries led only to a general overhaul and the establishment of standards on the old model, or somewhere near it. On the Continent the case was too hopeless for such half measures, and called for more drastic action.

Fortunately, the need was recognised of building up the new measures in agreement without counting. If 10 tens made 100 in ordinary reckoning, then 112lb. should not be called a hundred weight. At present ounces were taken in lots of 16 to make lbs., while inches were taken in dozens to make feet. It would be better to lay out all of them so that they ran in tens and hundreds, thereby avoiding the wasted effort of many calculations.

Such thinking led to the metric system of weights and measures, which was used to-day by every nation outside of the English-speaking nations, and by all science men of every nation. To-day British coinage stood alone surrounded by money systems in which the chief coins divided into 100 cents.

After a brief discussion, a vote of thanks was passed to Mr. Barton.

Yes, and I know some of us who have had to fathom out the query " when is a gallon not a gallon " and believe me, the problem is not as easy as it looks. What?

Another, even much more serious problem with which most Swiss are familiar or of which most of us have heard, is the fight against that dreaded cattle disease called

Foot and Mouth Disease:

Those among us who come of peasant stock and have some roots still in some Swiss Village, have heard a lot about the various attempts to stamp out this horrible disease and of the heart-breaking killing which so often seems the only means. Any new idea which holds out some hope is welcome therefore and the following from the Yorkshire Post, 22nd July, will be read with interest by many:

Remarkable success in checking the recent outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease seems to have been achieved by wholesale inoculation on the borders of infected areas. The number of animals so treated was 3,203 and only one caught the disease. The serum employed, I am told, is being produced in great quantities on the Baltic island of Riems, where the Prussian Landbund, an agricultural society, has spent some 7,000,000 marks in establishing an elaborate experimental station. Here some 5,000 animals are inoculated annually for the extraction of the serum, the flesh of the animals being sold on the Berlin meat markets. Both the British and Swiss Governments are buying from the Landbund, and their experts are apparently justified in the belief that the serum affords a nearly complete protection.

The treatment is expensive—£2 an injection for cattle and something less for smaller animals such as sheep and pigs—and each injection ensures safety only for a period of 10 to 14 days. Thus two injections are required to protect an animal during the normal period of foot-and-mouth infection, and the owner has also to pay the veterinary surgeon's fees. Little information is available about the progress of the experiments at Riems, but obviously an incalculable benefit would be conferred on agriculture by the production of a cheaper serum affording a longer period of protection.

Too often does it happen that large tracts of our Alps are closed to the wanderers and seekers after Alpine beauties, because of an outbreak of Foot-and-Mouth Disease, and I only hope that this new serum may by and by help to eliminate one of the most dreaded calamities that can befall a farmer.

Nature still reigns unbeatable in some parts and in many respects. In many more than we often think, because we do not think! Conquests follow each other, however, and as far as the climbing of Mountain peaks is concerned, there are few of them in Europe which have not been conquered yet. But climbing them is one thing, and conquering them so that everyone, strong or weak, old or young, can master them, is another, and just now the next article, taken from *Windsor Magazine* will give you an idea of the colossal work which is in progress with a view to securing the final

Conquest of Mont Blanc.

How few among the multitude who flock annually to Chamonix have made the ascent of that most famous mountain of Europe, the Mont Blanc!

Those who leave the plains of France for the fashionable resort that lies at its base pass through the steep valley of the Arve. This mountain torrent winds through such a narrow, tortuous bed that both road and railway are hewn out of the rock, one above the other. Emerging, at last, from this dark, sinister gorge, the sight that meets the eye is not easily forgotten. The whole range of the Mont Blanc with its Needles and its mighty glaciers towers above one in imposing splendour.

Here, for ninety-nine out of a hundred visitors, acquaintance with the giant of the Alps begins and ends. Watching the play of light and shadow on the fields of everlasting snow, comfortably seated on the terrace of an hotel, absorbing a long, cool drink, or facing the hardships and perils of a two or three days' ascent in order to reach, weather conditions and endurance permitting, the summit, are two very different things.

For centuries Mont Blanc was inaccessible even to the hardened natives of Chamonix, intrepid hunters of the chamois and the marmot. Avalanches, the extreme violence of the winds in the high altitudes and the intense cold were foes against which the means of those days were not capable of fighting. It was only in 1784 that Balmat and Paccard, both from Chamonix, finally succeeded in reaching the summit, in a very exhausted condition. The