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# The Swiss Observer

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## HOME NEWS

In the canton of Grisons a strong movement is on foot, in order to reverse the recent popular decision which prohibited motor traffic throughout the canton; an initiative is being prepared, and it is expected that a new project will be submitted to the electors towards the end of June.

Romanshorn has returned to proportional representation as far as its municipal council is concerned. Only three years ago this system was rejected by a large majority, but last Sunday it found favour again with the voters.

A fire destroyed on Monday, March 2nd, the Grand Hôtel du Parc in Villars-sur-Ollon. The hotel was constructed in 1900-01 and contained 120 beds. The damage is estimated at Frs. 800,000 and the cause is attributed to some defect in the central heating apparatus, to remedy which the authorities had already some time ago given notice. The proprietors, M. et Mme. Dumont-Melly, have now been arrested on a charge of causing the fire through neglect.

The large stables attached to the army barracks in Bellinzona caught fire on Wednesday, March 4th, owing to a short-circuit and were completely destroyed. No men nor horses were lost, but the installation, including the immense stock of fodder, became the prey of the flames.

Through the bursting of a front tyre, while travelling at a great speed, a car belonging to M. Emile Maréchal, of Geneva, was hurled against a lamp standard in Morges; all the occupants were thrown out, but escaped with more or less serious injuries, except M. Vincent Falcy, who was picked up dead.

Queen Wilhelmina of Holland passed through Basle on Wednesday, March 4th, for a fortnight's stay in Switzerland (Glaris); she was received at the station by President Musy and Federal Councillors Motta and Häberlin.

A novel accident, which has now resulted in the death of Frau Muchenberger-Wenger, a visitor from Basle, occurred some five weeks ago in Thun. She happened to cross the aviation ground, when she was virtually run over by an aeroplane on the point of landing.

A Bümplitz restaurant keeper, Walter Dreier, from the "Sternen," has succeeded in defrauding during the last four years about ten Bernese banking institutions of the amount of Frs. 109,000. He obtained the money by forging the signatures of the supposed guarantors, who were, of course, unaware of their obligations. The fraud was discovered during a recent audit; the ingenious borrower had, however, already found means of temporarily evading arrest by escaping into Germany. Later reports state that Dreier has been traced to Bremen, where he has now been secured by the local police.

The editor of the *Bündner Volkswacht*, National Councillor Dr. Canova, has been fined Frs. 200 and costs by the cantonal courts for blasphemy and publishing degrading articles on the Catholic religion. Dr. Canova has lodged an appeal against this judgment at the Federal Tribunal in Lausanne.

A new agricultural college is to be established at the Wülflingen castle, near Winterthur, at a cost of Frs. 600,000.

## EXTRACTS FROM SWISS PAPERS.

**L'anniversaire de la République neuchâteloise.**— Certes, il est préférable d'être réunis autour d'un plantureux banquet que de faire, tels les glorieux citoyens de 1848, la traversée de la "Vue des Alpes" par 10 degrés de froid et un mètre et demi de neige.

D'ailleurs, c'est animés des plus chaleureux sentiments patriotiques que les membres de la Société neuchâteloise se sont réunis, autour d'une table bien garnie, au restaurant de l'Archevêque.

Près de cent cinquante Neuchâtelois ont donc fêté congrûment le soixante-dix-septième anniversaire de leur République et ils ont fait honneur à l'excellent menu, agencé comme on devine par M. Cohannier.

De nombreuses dames mettaient une note gaie parmi les graves habits noirs et la fête fut tout emplie de cette jovialité chère à nos confédérés jurassiens.

A l'issue du banquet, la partie officielle fut brève; aussi est-ce en peu de mots que M. Zeller, qui préside à la prospérité de la société, a remercié les assistants d'être venus si nombreux.

Puis M. Muriset, député, a souligné le caractère hautement patriotique de la date du 1er mars, qui restera dans les annales de Neuchâtel. L'orateur a brièvement fait l'historique de la révolution de 1848 et porté un chaleureux toast à la patrie.

Ensuite, de nombreux chants furent exécutés et, aux sons d'un orchestre d'amateurs, on dansa jusqu'au matin. (La Suisse.)

## NOTES AND GLEANINGS.

By "KYBURG."

### To-day's Startling Thought.

"The sum total of human achievement from the beginning to the end of Earth's planetary existence may probably be compared to the laying of one stone in the building of a mighty cathedral! Thus slowly, but surely, will the Spirit of God in mankind gradually and through countless aeons evolve until it reaches perfection and the whole life of Mother Earth is probably only a fleeting moment of that period, a slight incidence in that process of evolution."

### Childhood.

Lord Esher, in dealing with Sir Sidney Lee's Life of King Edward VII, relates the late monarch's lament: "I never had a boyhood!"

The *Daily Express* (9th March) says:—

The child hostesses of Mayfair are a distinct feature of to-day of life among the younger set. Children no longer hold parties on juvenile and simple lines. They are permitted to give receptions and "at homes" on the lavish lines of the entertainments held by their mothers.

There is little difference, indeed, between the preparation made for the reception of a circle of boys and girls not yet in their teens and one held for their mothers and fathers. Flowers and refreshments for both are on much the same scale.

The child hostess, still under ten, greets her guests with the air of a matron. Her hair is shingled; there is a touch of make-up on her face and of perfume on her person; she is dressed in an exquisite gown she has herself selected from a choice shown to her by a child mannequin.

She walks and talks with superb lack of self-consciousness that denotes a mentality trained far beyond her years.

Last week an elderly peer met with a rebuff from a child hostess who looked like a beautiful Paris doll. They were fox-trotting together, when in the middle of a dance she stopped and said: "I am fed up with dancing with you. I would rather dance with some one whose step suits mine."

While the *Patronne Sainte* of my household ticked me off the other evening, because my endeavours to bank up the fire seemed to be too much like playing with mud-pies!

Mud-pies! Pity those poor rich children of Mayfair! What do they know of the art of making mud-pies? What do they know of playing hide-and-seek among the alleys and little frequented passages of old houses, of the breathless adventures when fleeing from an annoyed and irate and, of course, utterly unreasonable (and therefore to be as utterly despised) man or woman whose afternoon nap has been rudely spoiled by the noisy hurried footfalls of the running children, seeking a safe place of concealment? What do they know of the joy of bombarding the old maronni-roaster's wooden hut across the square with well-aimed

snow-balls, and what of the excitement when one of those snow-balls actually dropped into the roasting pan just at the moment when the said maronni-man was lifting the cover to see how the brown fellows inside the pan were progressing? And what if one's clothes were a trifle dirty on reaching home? Mother, dear, certainly did scold and maintain that hers were the worst behaved children in the town! But as one's playmates next morning had similar remarks from their mother to report, much of the force of that accusation was gone. And now, with the knowledge brought by later years, one knows that no real mother would begrudge her boy or her girl the joy which can only be bought, it seems, at the expense of dirtying one's best clothes. Oh, to see healthy dirty children, with the healthy untidiness of unbounded energy, of untrammelled enjoyment of youthful exuberance in play! Alas, pity those Mayfair children! And pity their parents!

### Able Swiss Musician.

*Daily Chronicle* (27th Feb.):—

There were many points of interest in last night's Philharmonic Concert at Queen's Hall. The programme was directed by M. Ernest Ansermet, the Swiss musician, who is winning a big reputation by his repeated reappearances here. He is a conductor of real ability.

A work of Monteverdi commenced the concert, the Sonata "Sopra Sancta Maria," for strings, brass, organ and women's voices. The music, which has been rearranged by M. Ansermet, has an austere but compelling beauty.

After the classics came the turn of the moderns, Debussy, Prokofiev and Ravel. The Prokofiev concerto contains, like most of its composer's works, some dull moments and some very interesting music. The most original and effective movement is the brilliant, freakish Scherzo, with an extraordinary solo part in humoresque style. Congratulations!

### Swiss Banking.

It is hardly saying too much when I state that the report of the Swiss Bank Corporation has been greeted everywhere with a chorus of approval. Nearly all British papers comment at some length on it, and in view of the extremely interesting contents of the report I am not surprised. I do not know whether other banks issue publications regularly, as does the Swiss Bank Corporation—"Kyburg" is pleased to acknowledge here his pleasure at receiving these publications regularly—but I do know that for sheer wealth of detail, richness of interesting and otherwise not easily get-at-able financial information, they would be hard to beat. And what I like especially are the occasional charts, giving exchange movements and others at a glance. It is nice to be able to say something nice, and well-merited at that, of a concern which reflects credit on the Swiss name. I cannot, of course, suppress a facetious remark, and would add that I only wished that the concern in question would reflect, or rather "deflect," credit on a poor collaborator of this paper, because, as I tried to state before—[That will do; none of your old tricks, please.—Ed.]

### The Referendum.

The Earl of Selborne, K.G., in an article in the *Evening News* (26th Feb.) mentions the Swiss Referendum as the instrument by which Swiss electors were able to stop the Capital Levy. Yes, but when referring to our Referendum, British statesmen and publicists nearly always omit to mention the Initiative, which is a necessary complement to the Referendum. The two might easily be introduced into the British Constitution and the House of Lords stabilised and strengthened, but again, I think that the first measure which would strengthen the House of Lords ought to be the abolition of the hereditary right, not to be a lord—nobody much objects to that—but to have a right to sit in the House of Lords and to legislate. The right to do the latter two important things ought not to be hereditary, if the Upper House really is to gain respect from the whole electorate. I do not think that my remarks in the *S.O.* will carry much weight in this controversy, but as the question is often discussed between Swiss and Britishers, it is just as well that my countrymen should keep the essential facts clearly before their eyes. You can only help to convince others if you are able to give them all the facts!

### Tariffs.

The following highly interesting bit appeared in the *Yorkshire Observer* (26th Feb.):—

The President of the Halifax Chamber of Commerce (Mr. T. W. Benson) said that tariffs

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