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EDITOR'S POST-BAG.

The Editor,
"Swiss Observer",
London.

London,
March 13th, 1954

Dear Sir,

Those of your readers who single out articles dealing with the controversial subject "Votes for Swiss Women" as being partly to blame for the apparent lack of interest taken in the "Swiss Observer" should remember that no paper can possibly be of continuous interest to everybody at the same time, and that many readers may well be interested in women's franchise. I myself am bored to tears by reports, however well and amusingly written, of banquets and other social functions. These I skip and seek out articles of greater interest to me. So far I have not been disappointed in this little paper. Time may dim my enthusiasm but Time alone will tell.

Realising how bored many of your male readers must be by this particular subject, it had not been my intention to pursue the matter further. However, while it was a privilege to have had one letter published, I would deem it an even greater privilege to be allowed to take up your correspondent, Mr. W. Stettbacher, on points which he made of possibly more general interest. But before doing so I would like to point out that his observation that Swiss women do not appear to want the vote is merely a repetition of what has already been said by others before him.

Firstly, then, he is under a misapprehension if he thinks that anybody in this country is actually "worrying" about the vote for Swiss women. The difficulties in bringing this about were mentioned in various articles and suggestions made by 'onlookers' as to how they might be overcome. If Swiss women do not want the vote they need obviously not accept it. But that is all there is to it.

Secondly, is it not the 'sensible' women who just *would* be most interested in the vote? Is it not finally upon the women of neutral as well as of belligerent nations that the effects and aftermath of war fall most heavily? Even in peace-time is it not the women who, when things go wrong, have to shoulder the worries and responsibilities of men's failures and mistakes? Surely not even the most ardent of anti-feminists would deny this? And how *can* any modern educated woman blind herself to events around her? No attempt to do so can lead to mental frustration and consequent unhappiness in marriage and work. In any woman a 'bovine mentality' (as expressed so aptly and delightfully in the "Daily Telegraph") is unthinkable.

Your correspondent then goes on to say that he himself is none the worse for having been disfranchised all his life. Probably not. Residence in this country has very likely afforded opportunities denied to him in Switzerland together with freedom from many responsibilities which must be borne by other citizens. It is to be hoped that his complacency does not forsake him when the Income Tax demand note is pushed through his letter-box, for the most voiciferous denunciations of unpopular measures thrust upon an unwilling community often emanate from those who (in modern jargon) 'just couldn't care less' about the franchise, and judging from the heated political arguments which apparently appear in Swiss 'locals'

one would expect a much heavier poll at elections than is actually the case.

The next point is one on which I am bound to agree. The illiteracy among many of our young men and women voters is indeed deplorable. But is this any reason for denying or depriving intelligent women of the vote? And if Britain is no better governed because her women have the vote it must be remembered, in measuring women's political achievements against those of men that the latter have had a long lead, more than just a few hundred years, in fact. And where have they landed us?

Finally, the present uprising of women has been compared with the trend in modern art and condemned as crazy. In this connection I recall a visit to the Tate Gallery when I was completely overwhelmed by the splurge of crude colours and grotesque shapes in the room devoted to examples of contemporary art. There I beheld a piece of so-called 'sculpture' which, to a Philistine like myself, resembled nothing so much as a mass of twisted metal. Greatly to my amusement, two young male art students were also gazing at this masterpiece with a look of knowledgeable solemnity upon their faces. It was labelled quite simply 'WOMAN'. Twice I walked round this contraption to see what they could see, or thought they could see. No good. For a few days I pondered over this until, remembering that modern art is supposed to be admissible of any interpretation which occurs to the beholder, I decided that modern women could be crazy or perhaps — an unknown quantity?

Yours faithfully,
Freda L. Daley.

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EDITOR'S POSTBAG.

March 20th, 1954.

The Editor,
"Swiss Observer",
London.

Dear Sir,

Returning from Switzerland I read with interest the correspondence about the Vote for Swiss Women.

Being a "Romand" I have a different conception perhaps from some of my compatriots but I must repudiate the misguided ideas of Mrs. Frida Daley. I came here as a convinced féministe but England altered my views at least as the vote for women is concerned. True, men in Switzerland are in some ways the masters, but is it not exactly what a woman likes in a man? I know for certain that what a man admires in a woman is not her political ideas but her femininity, and I have no doubt about it that the charm of a feminine woman is far stronger than a vote and its influence greater.

As to our Swiss women "being still sufficiently behind times to regard marriage as the end-all of their existence", dear, dear, . . . dear! You might have the vote, Mrs. Daley, but we men in Switzerland still have this delightful joy of taking our hats fairly low when we meet a lady, we even kiss her hands and I know hundreds of husbands who bring flowers and perfume to their wives! We might not give them the vote but we give them our seats in a bus because we still believe that gallantry and courtesy are the most beautiful things we can offer as a tribute to our Ladies, we even have the courage to admit that it is due to their unshown but so decisive influence that we achieve some good and know also success.

All this might sound unfortunately strange and very much "of the past" in England, and it is therefore only right, dear Lady, that while we are still the victims of our Swiss Ladies who call us their masters you, at least, should have the right to vote. Old fashioned, are we? If you knew how good it is. Do go to Switzerland, there are a lot of very happy women there!

Yours truly,
Alfred Renou.

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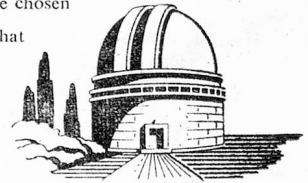
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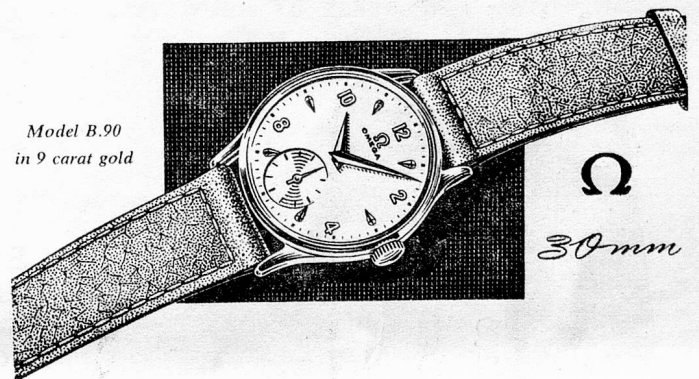
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