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A l'Editeur du "Swiss Observer."

Mon cher Editeur,—Vous me faites l'honneur de me demander un message de Nouvelle Année! C'est bien volontiers que je me rends à votre invitation, heureux de l'occasion qui m'est ainsi offerte de vous féliciter d'abord de ce que vous avez accompli jusqu'ici, et de vous souhaiter ensuite un succès grandissant au cours de l'année prochaine et de celles à venir.

Une grande Colonie aussi unie, aussi bien organisée que celle des Suisses de Grande Bretagne avait besoin d'un journal comme le "Swiss Observer" pour lui tenir lieu de trait d'union avec la patrie et la renseigner sur tout ce qui concerne sa vie propre.

C'est ce que vous avez admirablement compris, et grâce à vous, les Suisses de Grande Bretagne peuvent désormais suivre de plus près les événements en Suisse, tout en s'associant plus intimement avec ceux de leurs compatriotes établis ici. Ils ont maintenant un organe c'est à dire une possibilité de faire entendre leur voix, d'exprimer leurs désirs, leurs aspirations, d'échanger leurs vues avec des compatriotes dont les conditions d'existence sont semblables aux leurs.

Pour ma part, j'ai donc accueilli avec une grande satisfaction la nouvelle que le "Swiss Observer" paraîtrait hebdomadairement à l'avenir, et que vous alliez entreprendre une campagne énergique pour augmenter le nombre de vos abonnés.

Je vous en félicite et souhaite de tout coeur que vos efforts, votre persévérance, votre ténacité, toute helvétique, soient couronnés de succès!

Puisse le "Swiss Observer," toujours plus à la hauteur de sa tâche, nous donner dès lors chaque semaine, le tableau d'une Colonie unie, travaillant sans relâche au bien de la patrie, et s'efforçant de maintenir le bon renom dont les Suisses à l'étranger ont toujours joui.

Bon courage, mon cher Editeur, bon succès—Bonne Année!

Bonne Année également à tous mes chers compatriotes, connus ou inconnus, et puisse 1922 resserrer toujours plus les liens qui nous unissent!

Votre très cordialement dévoué

80, Holland Park, W.

J. BAER.

le 26 Décembre 1921.

HOME NEWS

Dr. Robert Haab, vice-president of the Federal Council during 1921, has been elected President of the Swiss Confederation for the year 1922 by 154 votes out of 179.

Born at Waedenswil 56 years ago, Dr. Haab can look back on a very successful career, having since 1894 held in succession various high offices in the Government of his native Canton Zurich. In 1911 Dr. Haab was appointed to the Board of the Swiss Federal Railways, where he displayed a keen knowledge of technical and administrative railway management—abilities which strongly commended his promotion to chief of the Department of Posts and Railways, when he was elected member of the Federal Council in January, 1918, after having held the post of Swiss Minister at Berlin during the year 1917.

It is a remarkable fact that Dr. Haab has been elected to the highest office of the Swiss Confederation without ever having been a member of either the States or National

Councils, which usually provide the stepping stone for prospective members of the Federal Council.

At a dinner which was given by his parliamentary colleagues and friends in honour of the new President elect Dr. Haab expressed in simple words his fervent wish to be able to devote all his strength and energy to fostering the interests of his country, coupled with the sincere hope that the Swiss people may succeed in surmounting the present paralysing economic and industrial crisis and enter upon a peaceful and prosperous new era.

The Government of Glaris has obtained powers from the Federal Council to order compulsory vaccination throughout the canton as a precautionary measure against further spread of the smallpox epidemic.

The sixteenth victim of the factory explosion at Bodio (Tessin) has just succumbed to his injuries at the hospital of Bellinzona after four months of suffering.

The Director General of the Swiss Federal Railways, M. Otto Sand, died in Berne on the 18th instant, at the age of 65, after a brief illness.

A novel form of propaganda has been chosen by the Tourist Bureau of Bedigliora (Tessin) which is issuing a series of twelve post-cards reproducing character studies by the artist painter Pirl of Bedigliora entitled "Old People of the Tessin," accompanied by the statistical fact that the Canton of Tessin produces the largest average of aged people in Switzerland. Out of its 160,000 inhabitants 5,000 are over 70, 1,300 over 80, and 90 over 90 years of age.

NOTES & GLEANINGS.

The Swiss winter season is being successfully advertised not only at home but in the English press and although the weather is too sunny and the snow fall insufficient there is little doubt that this year's season will prove to be a boom to our hotel industry. Quite apart from those who go for the sport, pure and simple, there is likely to be a welcome influx of fashionable visitors who believe "it is the right thing to do". Amongst the large parties who have already left London are the Lord Chancellor with Lady Birkenhead and Lord and Lady Beaverbrook who are staying at St. Moritz.

Montreux, according to *The Times* (Dec. 21st) is once again beoming a special favourite of English and Americans, the villas and houses on the Bellaria estate being now almost entirely inhabited by English people.

"Several of the hotels formerly popular with English and American visitors that have been closed of recent years have now reopened, such as the Belmont, at Montreux, and the Bonivard, near Chillon. Both have a good many visitors already, and their prospects for the season are favourable, as also are those of the other hotels in the district, and especially the establishments whose prices are moderate.

There is every indication that the coming weeks in the Swiss winter sport resorts, especially as regards the Engadine, will constitute an essentially "British" season such as has not been since the winter of 1913-14. This reversion to the pre-war constituents of the holiday population will be particularly noticeable at St. Moritz, which at one time inevitably suffered in English eyes owing to its popularity with the immense Legation maintained by Germany in Switzerland during the war, whose personnel was in the habit of transferring itself almost to a man to St. Moritz for the winter months. After the Armistice the Kurverein was faced with the delicate task of eliminating this element of its clientèle in the interests of those visitors who had,

after all, been its original discoverers and mainstay, so far as the winter season, at all events, was concerned, and the process, discreetly but relentlessly applied, has been rewarded by exceptionally heavy British bookings this year. . . . The Infante Alfonso of Spain and Prince Nicholas of Rumania will spend the next few weeks at Suvretta House, where other distinguished visitors will include Prince Mohammed Ali Hassan, M. Nicolas Titulesco (Rumanian Minister of Finance), Lady Pritchard Jones, Lady Dunn, and Sir Thomas and Lady Pink. . . ."

The *Birmingham Post* (Dec. 16th) in a long article deals with some of the difficulties of mountain hotels on which large sums have been spent in order to fit up these establishments—originally built for summer only—for winter trade. There is plenty of hotel accommodation at reasonable charges and "if anyone does not need wine nor many extras a Swiss winter holiday may still be enjoyed without undue expense."

* * *

Our Home (Dec.) refers to the attractions of and the many trophies to be competed for at Mürren, Wengen and Pontresina and exhorts young ladies to make a point of providing themselves with a suitable and "fashionable" outfit. Knickerbockers are the order of the day now and the amusing story is told of

"How the discarding of the skirt originated. It is said that a party of ladies, accompanied by a guide, had made one of the lesser ascents, but that one of them, finding herself entirely hampered by her skirt at every step, made up her mind at last to take it off, and walk in her knitted knickerbockers only. The guide was only mildly amused, as he put it down to another vagary of the 'mad English.'"

* * *

A lavishly illustrated article on "Where to enjoy the best winter sports" is published in *The Sphere* (Dec. 17th) and written by Ward Muir who having wintered in Switzerland upwards of twenty times has never witnessed anything like the drought (of snow) of last winter. In *Penny Pictorial* (Dec. 17th) Arthur J. Ireland describes the charms peculiar to the various sports; he is a great enthusiast and a perusal of his article will make a stronger appeal than a good many advertisements. He thus introduces his subject:

"It is almost impossible for stay-at-home English people to realise that winter may be a season of almost indescribable beauty and delight, such as it is in those enchanted spots in which snow sports are practised amongst the Alps. When snow falls in England it is generally churned into slush within a few hours, and even when it lies on the ground it soon becomes discoloured. Frost is generally accompanied either by fog or by piercing winds. With these unpleasant experiences in mind, it is no wonder that many people are inclined to doubt the truth of the winter sporting pictures which are published in the newspapers; for they seem to the uninitiated to represent views in a dazzling fairyland which cannot exist in reality.

Such places do exist, however, in Switzerland and elsewhere in Europe, as well as in Canada; but it is true that they are so like places in another world that it is difficult to credit the statement.

To travel from London, for instance, in winter to an Alpine winter resort is like making a journey from the gloomy nether regions to a white paradise. It is an ascent to an incomparable and indescribable wonderland of dazzling snow and brilliant sunshine. There is no necessity to wear wraps of any kind; for although there may be ten or fifteen feet of snow lying on the ground, and although the thermometer may register twenty or thirty degrees of frost, there is not a breath of wind to chill the atmosphere.

As far as the eye can reach the country is covered by a mantle of virgin snow, spotless and glittering in the sunshine, and below is the great "sea of fog" which cuts off from view the valleys and haunts of men.

When they are practised in such surroundings, and under such perfect conditions—which continue without interruption for three or four months—it is no wonder that snow sports have become popular. The lucky mortals who can flee to these

resorts are to be envied; and it is not surprising that they acquire a degree of dexterity on the ice and in the snow which those who stay in England can never attain."

The merits and relative attractions of ski-ing, skating and tobogganing are thrust upon the reader in such fascinating and irresistible language that the following from the *Daily Mail* (Dec 13th) on "How to fly to the winter sports" seems to be opportune:

"It sounds more like romance than stern reality. Yet it is within the powers of every Londoner to breakfast at home on a Saturday morning and six hours later be enjoying the thrill of a dash on ski in the heart of the Swiss Alps!

Such a wonderful achievement has now been made possible by a London-Paris air service connecting with the Paris-Lausanne week-end service recently inaugurated. We may, therefore, soon expect to see harassed business men, with a little cash to spare, leaving their homes on a Saturday morning to restore their jaded nerves "on the roof of the world," just as they now spend their week-ends in Wales or Scotland.

Lausanne itself, being at a low altitude, does not offer much in the way of winter sport, except in the case of a severe winter. But there is always excellent skating in the vicinity.

Should, however, mild weather necessitate a higher altitude, fast aeroplanes will be available at Lausanne to take the hustler in a few minutes right into the heart of the Alps. And as the arrival of the Paris plane has now been advanced to 2 o'clock, this will still leave the traveller time to get in a bit of ski-ing, or to practise his outside edge before it is time to dress for dinner. Such a variety of sensations within the short space of ten hours will irresistibly appeal to the sportsman.

Last winter an aeroplane service between Zurich and St. Moritz carried a large number of passengers for whom the ordinary train journey was either too slow or too prosaic. Frequent trips were also made between Lausanne and Gstaad. In addition to the saving of valuable time the trip over the frozen giants of the Alps offers the tourist one of the finest sights in creation.

Aeroplanes experience no difficulty whatever in landing on the mountains. At St. Moritz a large patch of the frozen lake is reserved, and the beaten snow makes a perfect landing place. Beaten snow was also employed for landing at Gstaad and Villars last winter with excellent results.

The Swiss have been quick to recognise the potential value of the aeroplane as an aid to winter sports, and air connections with all international planes are already contemplated. Passengers will thus be distributed to, and collected from, resorts all over the country with great rapidity."

* * *

"Where unemployed live in luxury" is a tale which is still running through the English press; the following variation appears in the *Morning Advertiser* (Dec. 19th):

"Switzerland has a great many unemployed, and the number is increasing, but many of them have found a way by which they can use their unemployment dole to such advantage that they can live in luxury.

The Geneva correspondent of the Central News states that the dole in Switzerland is six francs and 50 centimes a day, a sum which scarcely suffices for food. Payment is made fortnightly, and as soon as it is drawn the recipient of it crosses the frontier into Germany, where the daily sum he has received from the Swiss Government is worth 350 marks. From poverty he has reached such circumstances that he can settle down in a comfortable German hotel until it is time to get his next instalment, which it is necessary to do in person.

Those of a more enterprising and adventurous turn of mind go as far as Vienna, where the daily Swiss pittance works out at the rate of 2,300,000 crowns a year, a sum which, after deducting the railway fare, enables the unemployed Swiss to rival the comfortably-placed residents of the Austrian capital."

The Publisher will be pleased to forward free specimen copies of the *Swiss Observer* to likely subscribers whose addresses may be supplied by readers.