

Miscellaneous advertisements

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notable victory against our compatriots, according to the *Morning Post* of 11th inst.:—

The match between the British Universities and Swiss Universities started at Wengen on Saturday with a straight race from the Lauberhorn to the sawmill above Inner Wengen. Snow conditions and the weather were perfect. The teams were five side, starting at intervals of half a minute. Escher, of Zurich, started first, but was soon overtaken by Mackintosh, running superbly. Dobbs ran at top speed to the slope straight, keeping his ski in old tracks. Mackintosh had a bad fall below "The Bumps."

Dobbs, of Cambridge, three times British champion, finished first in the excellent time of 6 min. 19 sec. Mackintosh, of Oxford, was second in 6 min. 30 sec. Walter Amstutz, of Berne, the Swiss captain, who won the race last year, was third. Schumacher (Berne) was fourth, Escher (Zurich) fifth, McConnell sixth, H. Ford (Cambridge) seventh, De l'Orsa (Zurich) eighth, Dr. Morland (London) ninth, and Kummerly (Zurich) tenth. The British Universities won by 15 points to 10.

The Slalom Race was held to-day at Mürren. Mackintosh was first, Amstutz second, Dobbs third, Schumacher fourth, McConnell fifth, Kummerly sixth, Ford seventh, Escher eighth, De l'Orsa ninth, Morland tenth. Snow and weather were again perfect. The British Universities won by 14 points to 11. The final result of the match was, therefore, that the British Universities won by 29 points to 21. This is the first occasion on which a British ski team has defeated a Continental ski team.

The Swiss University team was thoroughly representative on the results of the Swiss University Students' Championship won last year, in which Amstutz secured the first place, Escher the third place, Kummerly the fourth, De l'Orsa the fifth. The match was followed by a very successful Anglo-Swiss dinner. Mackintosh wins the Anglo-Swiss Challenge Cup for the best performance in the race. Amstutz won the cup last year.

Swiss Avalanches.

During the thaw on Monday night miniature avalanches came down from many roofs in our vicinity, reminding me of the rumbling noise produced by real Avalanches in Switzerland. Over there they seem to have had one or two already and one particularly of a serious nature. The *Daily Mail* (13th inst.) reports:—

An enormous avalanche of powdery snow fell without warning on the village of Netstal, in the Canton of Glarus, covering the streets to a depth of several feet.

The air pressure produced by the displacement of the mass was so great that the inhabitants were unable to leave their houses during the fall.

The chief thing always is that no human lives are lost. That has, happily, also been the case at Schimberg, where, according to *The Times* of the 9th inst.—

Although the landslide on the Schimberg is stationary now that rain has ceased falling, the geological experts who examined it believe that it will be impossible to keep it where it is, and that will move again as soon as a new rainfall occurs.

Part of the village of Ittental is doomed. If the landslide moves eastwards it will block up the river, and the centre of the village will be flooded. If, on the other hand, it goes northwards, it will destroy at least nine or ten farmhouses.

It is reported that another landslide near Ragatz, in the Rhine valley, has destroyed a bridge and covered several fields. The main road near Naefels, Canton Glarus, has been obstructed over a distance of 40 yards by a mass of earth and rocks, which have caused damage to fields and forest.

A big wolf, which last week attacked a sheep-dog on Mont Salève, near Geneva, was killed on Wednesday by local hunters. No wolves had been seen in that region for over a century.

An interesting bit of news, also in *The Times* (Jan. 13th), is the following *re*

Levels of the Lake of Geneva.

The Lake of Geneva seems to be menaced by a new convention which France proposes to conclude with Switzerland in regard to the water level *régime*.

By the convention of 1884, which is still in force, the two countries fixed at 60 centimetres the difference of level between the low water mark of 1.10 metres and the high water mark of 1.70 metres in ordinary years, and at 90 centimetres during leap years. All constructions along the lake have been made on these bases, and that water *régime* was no obstacle to navigation. France now wishes to make use of the water of the Lake of Geneva for industrial purposes, and she proposes to raise the difference of level to 1.20 metres, with the low water mark down to 70 centimetres and the high water mark down to 1.90 metres. This means that low

water level would be 16 in. lower than at present and high water mark 8 in. lower, and in consequence navigation would be suspended during nine months out of twelve, and would only be possible during the summer months when snow is melting in the mountains.

The French proposal is arousing numerous protests on the Swiss side of the lake, and it is hoped that the coming negotiations will result in an agreement on another basis. If not, all embankments, quays, landing piers, and sewers would have to be rebuilt, and this would mean an expenditure of several million francs. Moreover, the steamship navigation company, which is giving a winter and summer service on both sides of the lake, would either have to lengthen its landing pier from 50 metres (164 ft.) to 150 metres (492 ft.) or stop its services during the greater part of the year, thus leaving a number of villages without means of rapid communication.

It may be added that the thaw which began on Dec. 20th and the abundant rainfalls which followed had at least one good result: that of filling the Swiss lakes and rivers, the level of which was very low. At the end of November, the level of the lakes was insufficient to assure the supply of electrical power during the whole winter. The situation is much better now, and it is expected that there will be no stoppage or reduction in the production of electricity.

By the way, and to change the subject, as it were, I do wish our Ticinesi would write more often to *The Swiss Observer*, so that the language of Dante would be better represented. I don't know whether other readers feel the same as I do, but I should be surprised if most of them were not delighted each time there is a bit of Italian in our columns. Not that I am a scholar in Dante's language, but, like most of my compatriots, I know sufficient Italian to comprehend the written word and even to appreciate the beauty of the spoken one. Besides, each time I read or hear Italian, I am reminded of the time when it was my good fortune to help guard the railway lines down Biasca way and to sample the Nostrano and other good things and to make friends with our delightful compatriots on the southern side of the St. Gotthard. So, please, cari Ticinesi, roll up and send in contributions to the Editor and make a bit of propaganda for your beautiful language, your charming people, and your majestic canton!

To add a bit of Ticino news, which really brought the above thoughts to the fore in my mind, *The Times* of the 7th inst. says:—

It is reported that the Officine Elettriche Ticinesi, of Bodio, has been authorised to export up to the end of 1931 a maximum of 400,000 kWh per day to the Società Lombarda per Distribuzioni di Energia Elettrica and the Società Idroelettrica Piemontese Lombarda Ernesto Breda, of Milan. From the end of 1931 to the end of the concession the quantity of energy to be exported will be reduced to a maximum of 304,000 kWh per day.

Otherwise, still in thought down at Lugano, the town of Italian character and Swiss cleanliness, of bright shops, splendid hotels, polite tram conductors and splendid mandoline-and-brass bands, the town where at night the jolly steamers rest in the bay like ghostly boats, where the searchlights from behind Gandria stab across to Caprino, picking up a boat here and there, and where, on still nights, the whole length of the promenade along the lake is filled with music, applause and gay laughter, and the voice of the Prima Donna at the Kursaal is wafted across the bay down almost to the so aptly named Paradiso—yes! thinking of Lugano and its beauties and its gloriously peaceful aspect, I am reminded that Schiller says in his "Glocke":

"Es kann der Frömmste nicht in Frieden leben,
Wenn es dem bösen Nachbarn nicht gefällt."

In other words, our Swiss authorities are hard put to these days to prevent the development of bad feeling between Switzerland and Italy under the Mussolini *régime*, and latest news from that quarter are not at all encouraging.

Another bad neighbour, fortunately somewhat a distant one, is Russia. In this case it was, of course, extremely unfortunate that the murderer of Vorovski was allowed to go unpunished, and the verdict threw a peculiar light on the Swiss penal system at the time. However, the Russians are naturally trying to make more political capital out of the incident than is justified, and the struggle has now developed to such an extent that I find the following in the *Manchester Guardian* of the 12th inst.:—

The Disarmament Conference.

The quarrel between Russia and Switzerland is being followed with great concern in Berlin, because it threatens to do incalculable harm to the coming Disarmament Conference. The Russians, although willing to attend the Conference, are reluctant to send a delegate to Switzerland. The reasons for this will be clear to everyone who remembers the circumstances in which Mr. Vorovski was murdered at the second Lausanne

Conference in May, 1923. He received wholly inadequate protection from the Swiss authorities, and the murderer was allowed to go unpunished. Russia broke off all relations with Switzerland and has not resumed them since.

The "Izvestia" now publishes a leading article, which is quoted in the German press, saying that if Russia does after all send a delegation to Switzerland, no special guarantees for its safety will be considered adequate. The "Izvestia" demands that there be "a situation in which formal guarantees are granted as a matter of course in the same way as they are granted to representatives of the Soviet Union in other countries." In other words, what the "Izvestia" demands is that the Swiss Government shall formally recognise the Russian Government.

If Russia does not attend the Disarmament Conference, then the results of the Conference are bound to remain illusory as far as Eastern Europe is concerned. For Germany the problem of disarmament necessarily and vitally involves Eastern Europe, especially Russia and Poland. That is why the quarrel between Russia and Switzerland is taken more seriously in Berlin than it would seem to be taken in London and Paris.

The "Vorwärts" is of opinion that if this quarrel is not speedily settled it may paralyse the progress of international disarmament for years to come. The "Vorwärts" suggests mediation and writes: "Neither Switzerland nor Russia can have any interest in wrecking the movement for disarmament. The proper mediator between them would be a power which can claim to have the greatest interest in international disarmament and whose relations with both these Powers are friendly." What the "Vorwärts" means to suggest is that Germany should offer to mediate between Russia and Switzerland. The importance of this suggestion is clear.

I have never been able to understand the Swiss attitude towards Russia's recognition. It has always seemed to me, and still seems to me, that the very best thing which can happen to Russia is to let fresh air and light into Russia. As long as you cut them off, they must fester and rot, but as soon as fresh air and light is let in, the more noxious forms of their Government won't have an earthly chance to maintain themselves. It always has been and always will be so. And stubborn sulkiness has never won political battles yet, nor ever struck a blow for Liberalism and progress.

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