

Notes and gleanings

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HOME NEWS

Two new Bills were submitted to the electors of Chur (Grisons) during the week-end. The first one had for its purpose the gradual reduction of the number of licensed houses (restaurants, inns, etc.) and the limitation of same to one per 200 residents; this Bill was accepted by a small majority and will necessitate the closing, within the next three years, of 14 existing restaurants. The second Bill provided for the publication of the assessment registers and was rejected.

During the last twelve months 4,947 Swiss emigrants have settled down in non-European countries, an increase of 613 as compared with the year 1925.

The number of inhabitants to the end of last year of the town of Zürich is given as 212,584, a further increase of about 5,200 during the last twelve months.

The damage caused by the Murren conflagration of November 18th-19th has been officially assessed at Frs. 892,870.

The Appenzel criminal courts have sentenced the former borough treasurer of Herisau, Heinrich Ruegg, to 3½ years' penal servitude for having embezzled over Frs. 75,000, of which about Frs. 17,000 have been recovered.

In memory of his friend, the late Col. Bolland, M. Ed. Sandoz-David (a former director of the well-known chemical factory at Basle) has handed to the Vaudois Government the sum of Frs. 20,000, to be used chiefly for cancer research work.

Prof. Dr. A. de Quervain, one of the official observers at the Swiss Meteorological Institute, died in Zürich at the age of 50; he was a brother of the well-known Bernese surgeon, and gained fame by his scientific explorations of Greenland in 1909 and 1912.

NOTES AND GLEANINGS.

The Spahlinger Treatment.

This controversy still rages unabated in the *Daily Express*, and there is no immediate prospect of Mr. Spahlinger "producing the goods." However, the great London daily has evidently made up its mind to probe the matter to the bottom. The letters published from well-known English practitioners, whilst generally sympathetic, dwell on the unjustifiable secrecy observed by Mr. Spahlinger. I reprint a typical letter from Dr. E. Graham Little, M.P., in the issue of Jan. 8th:—

The articles which you are publishing regarding the validity of the claims made for the Spahlinger treatment are of special interest to me, inasmuch as my parliamentary constituency includes such a large and distinguished section of medical voters.

Some remarks which I made upon the Spahlinger treatment at the Hunterian Society in November last have brought me letters containing much first-hand information upon the subject.

I would point out that:—

(1) The material used and the methods of preparing it have been kept rigidly secret by M. Spahlinger, although the method has been before the public for the last twelve years. It is difficult to understand the motives for this secrecy, which is so repugnant to the practice of the medical profession throughout the world.

It would be obviously ridiculous for M. Spahlinger to claim that no bacteriologists other than himself are skilled enough to understand and to follow his methods of preparation. The consequent restriction in supply of the material is surely a grievous wrong to humanity if the treatment is in fact as efficacious as it is claimed to be.

(2) The impossibility of obtaining the material except from M. Spahlinger's laboratory prohibits the testing of its effects upon any large scale, and only tests upon a large

scale can prove its efficacy—or worthlessness, as the case may be.

When the drug known as "606" was introduced to the profession by Ehrlich, although it was patented (an exceptional course to be taken by a medical man) and its composition and preparation were not further disclosed than the patent laws required, the drug itself was immediately placed upon the market and its qualities tested all over the world.

(3) The Swiss Government, one of the most enlightened in Europe in its care for the public welfare, has given no countenance or assistance to promote the use of the Spahlinger "cure." Swiss patients undergoing this treatment, if they exist at all, are the rarest exception; the great majority of patients are foreigners.

(4) Very large sums of English money have been pouring into the "Spahlinger Fund" a nebulous entity for which large subscriptions and donations are invited and received, but no account is rendered of the purposes to which these sums are put.

Vaccine therapy, a designation which must include the Spahlinger treatment, was inaugurated, and has been extensively developed, under the direction of its principal inventor, Sir Almroth Wright, at my school, St. Mary's Hospital, during the last twenty years. The whole expense has not approached the sum which the "Spahlinger Fund" has derived up to date from English sources alone.

Notwithstanding the protracted period which has elapsed since the Spahlinger method was first bruited abroad, the number of cases treated by it has been far too few, and as long as his present solitary attitude persists must remain far too few, to afford the necessary scientific foundation for judgments upon the efficiency of this treatment.

The results, favourable or otherwise, in so small a series of cases as have been reported, are completely insufficient to form a decision from a scientific standpoint; it must be emphasised that special caution is needed in such a disease as tuberculosis, which undergoes such surprising fluctuations in its normal evolution.

While the production of the material is limited to one laboratory it is impossible to make such a wide and independent test of it as is obviously called for. Unless and until the fullest revelation is furnished of the laboratory methods employed, the British public would surely be well advised to suspend their judgment, and, which is more important, to withhold any further subscriptions to the "Spahlinger Fund."

In the meantime Mr. Spahlinger has made a feeble reply to Sir Warden Chilcott's challenge in which he states *inter alia* that his formula "will be published the moment he thinks publication advisable," promising at the same time an early visit to England. On January 11th the following reply to Dr. Little's letter above quoted was published:—

I quite agree with Dr. Little that no further public money should be subscribed towards my treatment. I dislike intensely this kind of charity. It was I who asked Mrs. Brunner to discontinue her appeal, which had been started without my knowledge. It was I who last week asked Sir Warden Chilcott not to start a subscription with the £1,000 which he so kindly offered to give.

Dr. Little objects that I have kept my methods secret. But those who have thoroughly investigated my work have advised me not to publish the detailed formulae until the value of the results already achieved has been admitted by everyone. That there is still a great amount of scepticism is shown by the fact that only those who have used my sera and vaccines speak in favour of them, whereas those who have never used them—such as Dr. Nelson, Dr. Little and others—seem to believe that they are of no consequence.

As for Dr. Little's remark about the Swiss Government, I may say that my first cases were treated in London hospitals, and since then, in gratitude for the moral and other support I have received from England, I have treated virtually only English patients.

That the expenses of my institute are necessarily so heavy that much more than the sums given me has been absorbed can be demonstrated without the slightest difficulty.

I have given up my life to this work. The lives of others dear to me have been similarly devoted. If my achievements are to be so easily

ANNIVERSARIES OF SWISS EVENTS.

January 23rd, 1656.—Beginning of the first Villmergen War in consequence of a split of the two religious parties concerning the revision of the Confederate League. A patriotic endeavour to re-unite the divided religious camps failed, and the old Borromean League was renewed. Zürich, under General Rudolf Werdmüller, marched against Rapperswyl and invested the strongly fortified town, which was successfully defended. Berne, led by Sigismund van Erlach, invaded the Freiamt, encamping near the village of Villmergen; though 7,500 strong—but undisciplined—they were routed on January 23rd by a Catholic force of 4,600 men from Lucerne and the Freiamt, led by the standard-bearer Christopher Pflyfer.

January 24th, 1639.—Jürg Jenatsch, then Governor of Chiavenna, is murdered during a banquet by a troop of masked men, the deed being instigated by Rudolf Planta as the result of a blood feud. His body was buried the next day in the episcopal cathedral of Chur. Jürg Jenatsch, whose life was devoted to the liberation of the Grisons, is immortalised in one of the novels bearing his name, written by C. F. Meyer.

January 25th, 1798.—Last Diet of the Old Confederation, when a solemn federal oath was sworn at Aarau in the hope of frightening away the French battalions, which were standing ready to invade Switzerland.

January 26th, 1653.—Unsuccessful peasants' rising against the patricians. Ostensibly caused by a trifling incident—certain coins were declared by the Lucerne government to be no longer legal tender though the holders had been given no opportunity of changing them into good money—the rising started in the Entlebuch and spread through the canton of Lucerne to the cantons of Berne, Solothurn, Basel and Aargau. A People's League was formed as opposed to the "Lords' League," and Nicholas Leuenberger, of the Emmenthal, was appointed president (Obmann) while Hans Emmenegger, of the Entlebuch, was chosen commander of the forces.

discredited, I should be glad to burn my "secrets," go back to the Bar—for which I am fully qualified—and lead for the first time in fifteen years a life owning an ordinary man's share of sunshine.

There are three points which strike me rather forcibly. First of all Mr. Spahlinger resents, as unauthorised, the appeal made on his behalf by the late Mrs. Roscoe Brunner and presumably by others; it is, on the other hand, not disputed that the large sums thus placed at his disposal have been accepted and used by him to develop his theory and formulas. He therefore owes his financial supporters some sort of a balance-sheet and what is actually claimed by them is that Mr. Spahlinger should formulate conditions under which the treatment could be tested in this country by the Ministry of Health or some other unbiased authority. The second point is the facile way in which he explains the apathy of the Swiss Government, as if any public body could afford to ignore such an epoch-making discovery in the sphere of national health. Thirdly, his tragi-comic remark that "if his achievements are to be so easily discredited he should be glad to burn his secrets and go back to the Bar" is reminiscent of the tactics of a schoolboy who could not have his own way in the playfield. The *Daily Express* is extremely charitable in its critical comments, which are as follows:—

The letter from M. Spahlinger published in the *Daily Express* to-day, is a rather dramatic document. The bacteriologist around whom such a highly important medical controversy rages declares that if his achievements are to be "so easily discredited" he will burn his secrets and go back to the Bar. It is proper to make allowances for the nerves and the temperaments of scientists and research workers, strained and troubled as they must be in the task of discovery. But, making all such allowances, we would urge M. Spahlinger to recognise that burning his secrets and returning to the Bar would not make a fitting conclusion to the years he has devoted to investigation.

If M. Spahlinger has discovered a method of defeating the great white scourge, if he has found a means whereby hundreds of thousands of lives may be saved and a great weight of human anguish lifted, then, however tired and discouraged he may be, both his duty and his proud privilege must be to give his secrets to the world rather than to burn them.

A Winter Picture.

The following alluring account appeared in the *Evening Standard* (Jan. 10th) from the pen of Sir John Foster Fraser:—

I do not know how many thousands of Britons, Germans and folk from God's own country are in this little high-perched valley of the Alps. There is, however, a considerable mixed congregation of us.

Nobody within my earshot has gone into rhapsody over the beauty of the snow-sprayed mountains, the glorious sunshine, or even the startling green, blood-red and duck-egg blue opalesque sunsets, the neglect of the latter being probably because they come at an unfortunate hour—just when people have finished tea and are settling down to a couple of hours' bridge before dinner.

The chief worry of most people when they arrive is how they are going to get "sleepers" to return to Paris or Boulogne ten days or a fortnight hence. That is the problem. The sleek concierge shrugs his shoulders and promises to do his best. A crowd in the lounge is thrown into perturbation on the rumour there is a waiting list of at least fifty for the luxe train each evening. It seems only a few of us are content to be here without being in a perpetual fluster about getting home.

The hardest-worked men are the special photographers in St. Moritz and neighbourhood, stalking celebrities. The manner Lady Urlica Lightfeather will poise on her new skates—she is still rather wobbly on the ice—shows there is still a lot of graciousness in our aristocracy.

It does not matter who wrote that a pleasure is always enhanced by the knowledge somebody is without it. It is worth noting that most English people in the Engadine give a little wriggle of satisfaction when they read you are having murky weather in London. And it is perfectly true that dour, drab-garbed business men become as frivolous as undergraduates when they get out here. They blink with the glare of the sun on the snow, will not believe that there are ten degrees of frost, because they feel so warm in their ski-ing kit—peaked cap, special square-toed boots, with gaudy, overlapping socks—they allow themselves to be strapped to those slippery sticks, feeling that on their first attempt to glide like a bird down a hillside they will flop into a hole like a dead hen pitched into a crate! It is rare fun, all the same.

These high jinks in the Alps are wonderful levellers. Yesterday afternoon I encountered a noisy father and four noisy children luge-ing—bawling for way to be made as they slithered on their toboggans into the village. He is a very important City man, and the last time I saw him he was sedately presiding over a company meeting. At a fancy dress ball the other evening I came across a melancholy-visaged clown with a vermilion nose sitting on a window-sill. He is a peer of repute.

Everybody knows English people invented Switzerland. I've been wondering a little, however, what folk of other nationalities here think about the calm arrogance with which the English take the lead in nearly everything, whether it be arranging contests on the Cresta run, fixing up ski contests—allowing, rather contemptuously, Scotsmen to have some voice in curling matches—and on nights of high festival, junketting and late dancing, taking control of the whole business. I noticed that at a big party a night or two ago nice people of other lands sat on one side and just watched us. If, however, they had been reared in the idea that the British are a solemn, stand-offish, unimprudent lot we deceived them before two o'clock in the morning.

A few Germans as well as many English are "just crazy" about ski-ing. A favourite afternoon sport is for some youth or girl to get mounted on a horse and scamper at full speed along the snow-covered roads, whilst one or two friends are ski-joring: trailing behind on their ski and with a rope fastened to the slim harness.

There are a lot of plump herrs and fraus and blossoming fraulcins in this valley, and they all wear horn-rimmed goggles and wrap themselves up Arctic fashion, and, after lunch, recline in bedizened sleighs drawn by gaily caparisoned horses jangling bells, and so go for a drive. They all look very prosperous, and those I have encountered in the Maloja road rather somnolent. It seems to be the rule for the English and Germans to keep themselves to themselves.

Nearly everybody out here seems possessed of a double dose of vitality. They ski, skate, bob, luge, play ice hockey or curl most of the

day, and then devote part of the night to vigorous dancing with Charlestoning and the hectic sport. But why doesn't someone invent a Swiss dance, the Sils Slide, or the St. Moritz Medley?

Safety Rules for Ski-ers.

Many have been the comments on the recent disaster to a ski party reported from the Tyrol: Mr. E. C. Percy, the President of the Ski Club of Great Britain, publishes the following golden rules in the *Morning Post* (Jan. 5th):—

The ski-running novice leaves the practice slopes for the mountains as soon as he can, and sometimes without realising that a knowledge of the way does not qualify for leadership. It cannot, however, be too strongly emphasised that at least one member of every party should have some knowledge of the conditions affecting avalanches.

The Ski Club of Great Britain has issued warnings in the past, based on long experience, but a repetition of some simple rules for safety may encourage the avoidance of unnecessary risk without interfering with legitimate cross-country touring.

(a) All slopes steeper than 25deg. are liable to avalanche.

(b) When a Föhn (hot wind) is blowing avoid all steep slopes.

(c) Steep slopes are dangerous after a fall of new snow until the new layer has coagulated with the old. This usually requires 48 hours.

(d) Do not trust steep slopes facing south or south-west, and avoid overhanging snow cornices.

(e) If you have to traverse a dangerous slope, leave considerable distances between individuals.

The peeling away of quite a small area of snow—only worth calling a snow-slide—may cause an accident, and, therefore, in his own interests every skier should study the fascinating arts of snow-craft and mountain-craft.

Avoidance of risks from avalanches is such an easy matter in ordinary low-level cross-country ski-ing that it would be a thousand pities if ignorance of the simple rules given above endangered holiday parties.

Romansch Revival.

From the *Morning Post* (Jan. 7th):—

Switzerland may soon have a fourth official language if the plans of the General Assembly of Romansch Societies meet with success.

The official languages of Switzerland at present are French, German and Italian, but the Grisonites, and their scholars, such as the celebrated Dr. Nay, have decided to perfect, with all possible speed, an elaborate vocabulary of the complete Romansch language as it is now spoken.

After a period of instruction in the schools it is believed that their mother tongue will be so developed that it will be possible to assure its perpetuation by making it official. There is considerable opposition among Federal authorities to its inclusion, but there is no antagonism to the desires of the Romansch population to perpetuate their language as well as customs.

The Romansch language, which is an interesting survival of the Roman occupation of Rhetia during the later Empire, is spoken by about 35,000 people in the Canton of Grisons. It is divided into two dialects, Romansch and Ladin, spoken respectively in different districts, and is derived directly from the spoken Latin. Whilst quite a distinct language it is, of course, akin to French and Italian. The Romansch Societies have been very active in keeping it alive.

Illegal Marriages.

The technical irregularities at the local registry office of Zurzach lend themselves to humorous interpretation; here is what the *Evening Standard* (Jan. 11th) says about the matter:—

An extraordinary situation has arisen in the little Swiss town of Zurzach involving a large number of young couples.

The local marriage registrar was relieved of his post over two years ago for various misdemeanours and the post was entrusted to his son. The son, however, allowed the father to continue to officiate. In his unauthorised capacity he "married" a large number of couples.

Eventually the position was discovered and the authorities have now declared that all the marriages so solemnised are illegal and the couples concerned must go through another ceremony in order to legalise their position. In many cases there are children and a great deal of unhappiness has been caused by the tragic announcement.

In some instances, however, piquancy has been added to the situation by the refusal of one or other of the parties to go through a further ceremony, a union which has turned out unhappily being conveniently discovered to be null and void.

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