

Odds and ends

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Odds and Ends

After a three-year break the Swiss Federal Wrestling and Alpine Festival will be staged at Zug on 12th and 13th August. Although modern sports are constantly gaining ground and the number of football and athletic stadia keeps on growing, the old, tough Alpine-style wrestling still holds the interest of most Swiss. This is obvious from the rapid sale of tickets for the Federal Festival at Zug, one of Central Switzerland's historic little towns. Tubular steel stands will provide seats for about 20,000 spectators and there will be room for at least another 10,000 to stand in the circle round the seven sawdust wrestling rings.

For two days 260 herdsman and gymnast wrestlers — the winners of hard-fought eliminating bouts — will be throwing all their technical skill, strength and courage into the battle for the title of wrestling champion, or "king" as the winner is called in Switzerland. There is no lack of notable candidates for the "royal" title, either. Chief interest is centred on Max Widmer, the unassuming wrestler from Oftringern, Canton Aargau, who is champion of Fribourg. The Thun champion, Eugen Holzherr, of Basle-Bürschwil, a stocky, athletic figure, will also be trying his luck. The veterans will have their work cut out to withstand the onslaught of the victory-bent younger competitors.

Apart from the robust twosome wrestling contests, Herculean figures, mostly from the oldest Cantons in Central Switzerland, will be entering the lists to compete in another ancient Swiss sport, putting the weight, using the centuries-old Unspunnen Stone, which weighs 170 lb. And, of course, no event of this kind would be complete without the traditional yodellers and alphon players to put the spectators in the right festive mood.

* * *

A doctor and a young man met at a cocktail party.

"I want to thank you, doctor," said the young man, "for the benefit I have gained from your treatment."

The doctor looked at him blankly. "But I don't think you are a patient of mine," he finally said.

"No, I'm not," came the cheerful reply. "But my uncle was, and I'm his heir."

* * *

The open-air market women who have stalls in the tiny winding streets around the Place de la Palud, where a life-size medieval statue of Justice crowns a bubbling fountain, are now going to work in the Vaudois National costume. Twice a week (on Wednesday and Saturday) the market women, dressed in lace, billowing petticoats and elaborately embroidered aprons, make the old city look exactly like a 17th-century engraving. The rue St-François and the winding streets near rue Centrale are wonderful for the housewife seeking the extra-fresh vegetables, the choicest fruits, home-made syrups, honey and fresh eggs!

* * *

A psychiatrist was telling about a patient who believed in voodoo and black magic.

"He doesn't realize that all that mumbo jumbo is ridiculous," said the psychiatrist. "Voodoo is just a lot of superstition."

"You told him that, of course?"

"Oh no, not I," said the doctor.

"Do you think I want him to put a curse on me?"

* * *

The exceptionally fine "Hand Drawings of the Berlin Engravings Cabinet" have been assembled to make a grand show in the Graphic Collection of the Federal

Institute of Technology in Zurich. A novel theme and an original treatment are to be found in the exhibition entitled "Oskar Schlemme and the Abstract Stage" at the Zurich Museum of Applied Arts. It shows trends in stage design which were given exemplary expression in the work of Oskar Schlemme.

In August the Kunsthau in Zurich is exhibiting the works of the French sculptor, Henry Laurens, and thus affording an insight into a highly individualistic contribution to the development of modern sculpture. The Swiss Television, Radio, Gramophone and Electronics Exhibition, which will be taking over the halls of the Congress House in Zurich for the demonstration of a wide variety of new models, is a large-scale show intended to appeal to the man in the street.

* * *

George Criticos, 77, known to princes and millionaires as "George of the Ritz", who died recently, spent more than 45 years at the hotel, 17 of them as head porter. He retired last month.

While in charge of the inquiry desk, he once did a favour for the late Aga Khan and they became life-long friends. The Aga Khan, who called Mr. Criticos "The Honourable George", entrusted him with many business commissions and paid for his annual vacation for 35 years.

He once nearly threw King Boris of Bulgaria out of the hotel because the king, who was fond of driving trains, entered the hotel wearing grimy overalls. But he recognized the king in time.

* * *

In 1960, the number of students registered at the University of Lausanne reached a new record: 2,815 (an increase of 200 over 1959) of which 1,370 were foreigners, mostly from France (150), the United States (128), Greece (120), Germany (120), and Iran (80). Of the five scholarships given by the University, two were awarded to French students, one to a German, one to an Austrian, and one to an American. Summer courses were attended by 1,466 students of whom 1,207 came from 40 countries.

* * *

One day a six-year-old girl lunched at a neighbour's house. After her return, her mother inquired if she'd had a nice lunch.

"Yes, Mummy," was her answer.

"What did you eat?"

"Soup and a sandwich."

"What kind of sandwich?"

"I don't know. I didn't look inside," she replied.

* * *

At Seewen, between Arth-Goldau and Brunnen on the Gotthard Line, the "Finest Crystals of Our Alps" will be on show until September. Well-known crystal hunters have assembled about six hundred particularly fine specimens of widely varying shapes which they have found and brought down from the rocky heights.

* * *

In Sutton Parish Churchyard, Surrey, is this tombstone epitaph:

Here lies my poor wife,

Without bed or blanket,

But dead as a door-nail —

God be thankit!

* * *

After a run of four years in New York and another year in London, "West Side Story" will be featured in Lausanne (exclusively for Switzerland) from 18th to 24th September, at the same time as the 42nd Swiss Autumn Fair (Comptoir Suisse) to be held at the Palais de Beaulieu from 9th to 24th September.