

The Swiss seen by a Swiss : "Kantoenligeist"

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PROPOSED ALTERATION OF RULES

Our members will have noticed some commercial advertisements appearing in Helvetia. For these advertisements substantial donations have been made towards our funds, thus helping to cover printing expenses.

However, to act in conformity with the Society's Rules, we have to amend part of paragraph 2, reading: "The Helvetia shall provide space for letters to the Editor, for questions and replies of general interest and SPACE FOR FREE ADVERTISEMENTS APPROVED BY THE COMMITTEE." This paragraph the Committee now wishes to alter, so that we have the right to charge for such advertisements. All of our members will know that the expenditures for printing and distribution of the Helvetia have doubled according to the balance-sheet recently published. It is, of course, the Committee's problem to find ways and means to cover these increases by additional income.

Any objection by members, regarding alteration of the above rule, should communicate with the secretary.

Meantime we ask any member interested in advertising to write the secretary. The charges will be quite reasonable.

THE SWISS SEEN BY A SWISS

"Kantonligeist"

To start off this short essay on a subject with which we are all very well acquainted, admittedly or not, I can think of nothing better than a short conversation I overheard one day in a tramcar of Switzerland's capital. A local trader, who was obviously a great admirer of our national hero of the wheel, said: "Gall Du, der Kubler het ne wieder mal zeigt was d'Schwyzzer choi." Replied his friend: "Goppel ja, de Fardi ischt halt en Zurcher!" This reply, which is by no means only typical of an inhabitant of the Canton of Zurich, seems to set the whole problem and to answer it at the same time.

"Kantonligeist," if an adequate description can be given at all, is a harmless and friendly competition between Cantons, an urge to shine in front of one's neighbour who has the misfortune to be born in another part of the country, and lastly the satisfaction of being a little different by either dialect, tradition or outlook. It is a never-ending source of amusement for the many and a cause of extreme annoyance to the few.

It may lead to heated arguments, but never does it result in public disorder or civil war. "Kantonligeist" is on no account to be taken seriously, for if it were, a "Bunter Abend" on Saturday night or a "Quart d'heur Vaudois" would be impossible to listen to without switching the programme off. Newspapers don't help matters, either. The majority of jokes contained in the space reserved for this purpose are sure to

have some connection with the subject under discussion.

Talking of jokes, who doesn't know the little tale according to which a crocodile, sent as a gift from the Basle Zoo to the one in Zurich, died of anger and frustration within the hour of its delivery, having realised that the biggest mouth was no longer his. Well, it is quite obvious what the story is referring to, but do the people concerned mind? Not a bit! On the contrary, they hit back.

And what about the eternal state of war between the honourable cities of Geneva, Lausanne and Neuchatel, each trying to convince the others that the French spoken by its inhabitants is purest? Nobody feels in the least offended, one just nods, smiles, and keeps believing in one's own point of view.

All these examples are but an imperfect illustration of what "Kantonligeist" means and will always mean to the Swiss: it is a part of his national character without which he wouldn't prove a worthy son of Wilhelm Tell."

(To be continued.)

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