

The Swiss penal system

Autor(en): **[s.n.]**

Objektyp: **Article**

Zeitschrift: **The Swiss observer : the journal of the Federation of Swiss Societies in the UK**

Band (Jahr): - **(1932)**

Heft 540

PDF erstellt am: **11.09.2024**

Persistenter Link: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-689430>

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A TRAVERS LA SUISSE.

"Ich bin ein jung Soldat,
Von einundzwanzig Jahren..."

This, and many more familiar soldiering tunes were brought back to my memory, when I visited the Film Show of the Nouvelle Société Helvétique (London Group), which took place at King George's Hall, on Saturday, February 20th.

I need hardly emphasize the fact, that the N.S.H. could again register "full house;" surely a great compliment to this institution, which provides the Colony with one of its most popular entertainments. The first performance started punctually at 2 o'clock, Greenwich time, and I am grateful to the N.S.H. that, although they are a most patriotic Society, they have not yet found it necessary to adopt Swiss time.

Being myself an "old soldier," I was, of course, greatly interested in the pictures depicting various scenes taken from the every day life of our conscript army. The first picture took us to *somewhere* in Switzerland, where a "Rekrutenschule" of "Mitrailleurs," one of the crack branches of our army, was starting their training.

Right from the first to the last day, we were able to follow their daily routine work, and it was amazing to watch, how in a comparatively short time, efficient soldiers can be turned out; one would have hardly believed, that those men, who, paraded towards the close of their training before their Colonel, were the same men, who only a few weeks back timidly entered on their soldiering career.

A further film took us amongst the Army Medical Corps, somewhere in the vicinity of the Gothard, and here again, one got acquainted with the routine work of this special branch of our army; it was most interesting *f.i.*, to watch, with what great difficulties the wounded soldiers are transported in the Alps to field or base hospitals. Both military pictures had, as a back ground, our beautiful mountains, and the oh's and ah's from the audience, was proof enough how much they enjoyed and appreciated the wonderful scenery. The camp life, with its thousand and one frolics, caused much amusement, and when the "Chuchichief" started to cut up a huge Gruyere cheese, all the little spectators started to cheer — and your reporter woke up, from a little slumber in which he indulged for a few moments, having been kept up the previous night (or the same morning) until 3 o'clock, by the "Nightingales" of the colony.

A game of "Hornussen" was then thrown on the screen, and by doing some of the movements by "slow motion" it showed, that considerable skill is required; it is a game not unlike golf, without holes however, unless of course, the wooden ball hits one of the "fielders."

Then to give the little ones a special treat, Felix the cat made his appearance, and the happy laughter, and shrieks of joy of the youngsters, showed how much they appreciated this little diversion from the programme.

The popular President of the N.S.H., Mr. F. Suter, introduced each picture with a few words or explanatory remarks. Before the second performance began, which I had to attend too, having missed a part of the first, the President of the N.S.H. introduced Monsieur Charles de Jenner, Chargé d'Affaires at the Swiss Legation, who addressed the gathering as follows:

"We are indebted to the Nouvelle Société Helvétique and to their President, M. Suter, for the opportunity they have given us of seeing the Swiss film to-day.

The pictures we are going to see are mostly photographs of the Swiss Army. There are perhaps not a few amongst you who will think it "déplacé" to show us military subjects whilst in Geneva the Disarmament Conference is sitting. But besides the speeches from Geneva there are other sounds — unpleasant sounds — in our ears; the roaring of the guns in the Far East, which remind us of the fact that apparently the golden days of eternal peace are not yet come.

And then, ladies and gentlemen, if, as a result of the present Disarmament Conference every country would adopt our military scheme, no armies would be necessary at all. This may seem to you to be a paradox, but it is nevertheless true. The aim of the Swiss Army is never offensive. The Swiss Constitution says that the aim of our army is to maintain our independence. Our officers and men are, with a few exceptions, not professional soldiers. They are citizens who, during the greater part of the year, carry on their ordinary jobs, and who have not the slightest interest in putting their military knowledge on trial in an offensive war.

There are people who tell us that the huge sums we are paying for our army are useless, as we would never be strong enough to check an attack launched against us by one of the great powers surrounding our little country, and that therefore our army has no right to exist.

These people are forgetting very quickly. We have two instances within the last 60 years, when it was merely on account of our strong and well-equipped army that Switzerland did not become the battlefield of fighting powers.

There is still another reason for its maintenance. As you know, Switzerland enjoys perpetual neutrality. This not only gives us rights towards the powers recognising this neutrality, but it imposes a duty upon us to uphold this neutrality by our own will and by our own strength.

We will, of course, be glad when once we are in a position to use the 100 million francs for other more peaceful purposes, but everyone will agree that the moment has not yet come, and that we must be grateful to our leading men and to our army in Switzerland for doing everything in their power to keep us out of any conflict, as they have done up to the present.

If I had any qualms before, regarding, attending a show where military pictures were shown, whilst at home the Disarmament Conference is sitting, they were dispelled after having listened to the interesting speech, which put matters in the proper perspective.

The musical programme was safely in the hands of Mr. Newman, and no small part of the success of this Film Show is due to him.

Once again, I wish to thank the N.S.H., and especially its President, Mr. F. Suter, most heartily for the great joy they have given us, in allowing our thoughts to wander back to our beautiful homeland for a few hours.

ST.

CITY SWISS CLUB

En raison des circonstances, le City Swiss Club a jugé préférable, au double point de vue de l'utilité générale et du déclassement individuel, de restreindre mais non pas d'abandonner tout à fait son programme habituel de saison. C'est donc dans cet esprit qu'a été organisée la seule soirée dansante offerte à ses membres et à leurs amis cet hiver, à part — bien entendu — le Banquet Annuel, qui remplit en quelque sorte le rôle de manifestation officielle annuelle de la colonie et qui a eu lieu comme d'habitude au mois de novembre.

La soirée dansante, tenue samedi dernier au May Fair Hotel, a réuni une centaine de participants et a eu le même succès spontané et réjouissant de celles de 1930 et 1931.

Comme toujours, le May Fair avait fait les choses à la perfection; le "Garden Suite," abondamment décrit à cette place autrefois, demeure à jamais le lieu le plus sympathique que nous ayons eu jusqu'ici pour ce genre de réunions. Des fleurs et encore des fleurs, partout: sur chaque table, de magnifiques tulipes vieilles et arrangées très artistiquement ajoutent à l'harmonie des couleurs. Le menu, encore que simple, est de très bon goût. Autour des tables, à quatre, à six, à huit, même dix, c'est la gaieté, qui tout à l'heure va emplir le parquet de danse. Et que dire de neuf de l'ensemble Colombo, si effectif aussi bien dans le divertissement musical durant le dîner que dans ses généreux fox-trots, ses valseuses lentes ou viennoises, ses tangos, etc.? Deux "Paul-Jones," l'un au début de la soirée, l'autre vers la fin, ont un succès immédiat et prolongé.

Est-il surprenant, dès lors, que chacun de demander quand aura lieu la prochaine soirée, ou ceux qui savaient que ce ne serait pas avant 1933, de poser la question quand même comme pour dire: est-ce vrai?, montrant par là et combien dans quelle sphère idéale, bien éloignée des soucis, ces moments délicieux les avaient transportés? Espérons que cette douce illusion n'ait été détruite brusquement par le froid de minuit, mais ait duré en rêve au travers d'un repos bien-faisant, pour devenir cet agréable souvenir qui fait que chacune de ces soirées dansantes du City Swiss Club commence où la précédente a fini.

J.Z.

CITY SWISS CLUB.

RECEPTION DU "GRASSHOPPER CLUB" ZURICH.

Organisée à brève échéance, la réception offerte mercredi soir par le City Swiss Club au Grasshopper Club de Zurich, à l'occasion de la visite de sa fameuse équipe de football à Londres, a eu un grand succès. Il est vrai que le retour tardif de leur excursion à Birmingham pour voir le match de première division: Aston Villa — Sheffield Wednesday et les injonctions très strictes de leur entraîneur en prévision de leur match du lendemain contre les "Casuals," ne permirent aux joueurs mêmes, au dernier moment, de se rendre à l'invitation du City Swiss Club. Leur absence fut vivement regrettée.

Se présentèrent seuls les membres du comité et les représentants officiels du Grasshopper Club, au nombre d'une quinzaine. Cette réunion tout à fait intime se prolongea en conversations agréables, par petits groupes, jusque vers les onze heures.

Les honneurs de la réception furent faits par M. Georges Marchand, Vice-Président du City Swiss Club. La Légation de Suisse à Londres était représentée par M. le Dr. W. Rufenacht, Secrétaire.

M. Wild, notre compatriote et très sympathique propriétaire du Royal Court Hotel, Sloane Square, où la réception eut lieu, avait préparé un buffet magnifique, qui fit l'admiration générale et fut très apprécié. M. Wild a droit à toutes les félicitations.

Ajoutons encore que par un heureux hasard, le City Swiss Club fit accueil en même temps à l'équipe du Schlittschuh-Klub de Zurich, qui se trouvait à l'Hôtel et doit jouer différentes parties de "Ice Hockey" à Londres et en province.

SWISS CLUB LIVERPOOL.

The Swiss Club Liverpool has held its General Meeting, on which occasion the committee was re-elected. Mr. Léon J. Faivre will be the President for the ensuing year.

The Meeting decided, that, on account of the crisis, no Annual Banquet should be held, and that this function should be replaced by some social outings during the summer.

PERSONAL.

We regret to announce the death of the mother of Mr. Paul Hilfiker, Chancellor of the Swiss Legation, which occurred at Berne.

Mr. H. H. Baumann, lost his brother, M. H. R. Baumann, who was Proprietor of the Hotel Eden at Davos.

We extend, on behalf of our readers, our sincere sympathies.

THE SWISS PENAL SYSTEM.

A correspondent writes to the Editor of the Times, with reference to the Dartmoor problem...

"Now I am going to suggest that we should follow the example of Switzerland. There the two systems are absolutely divided. The prison remains, with all its harshness; but it is supplemented by a House of Detention, which is in marked contrast to the prison. For in the House of Detention everything is done to make the prisoners comfortable consistently with economy. All reasonable pleasures are encouraged. The result is that there is no effort to escape from the House of Detention, as any effort to escape would involve a return to the severity of prison life. This enables the House of Detention to be run on such economical lines that it costs the State little or nothing. The warders are very few. They are teachers rather than warders. As the place is worked on the military system, the warders stand in relation to the prisoners as officers. All non-commissioned officers are chosen from the prisoners themselves. And, as it is the custom to give educated prisoners guilty of frauds a short term of imprisonment and a long term of detention, most of the non-commissioned officers are educated men. Though it is customary to give a term of imprisonment followed by a term of detention, the Court can and does order detention at once in certain cases. For instance, take the case of a man who is repeatedly drunk. It has been shown that short terms of imprisonment have but little deterrent effect on an habitual drunkard. He is therefore confined for a long term of detention. Here not only is the habit of drink broken but the whole physical being of the man is restored. In the atmosphere of the House of Detention all reformative influences find a suitable environment; they are not impeded by the hampering effect of punishment. The constant locking of doors, the armed warders — all those things that are so necessary in our prison are absent.

Of course men of certain classes are never confined in the House of Detention but serve all their sentences in prison, such as that class we now term "gunmen," who are violent and dangerous criminals. This depends on the discretion of the Judge.

To give an idea of the difference of atmosphere of the House of Detention from our prisons, the governor of such a house assured me that on New Year's Day he received many letters from ex-prisoners saying how they owed their new start in life and their subsequent happiness to their enforced detention within the kindly walls of this house. In fact, the House of Detention is more in the nature of an asylum or hospital than of a prison.

Surely if Dartmoor is no longer used as a convict prison it might well be used as a House of Detention without any further expenditure; in fact, it would be an economy, for the number of warders would be far fewer than in the ordinary prison, and therefore to empty the prisons and fill the House of Detention would allow a certain diminution in the number of the prison staff."