

Swiss contribution to America and to the world [to be continued]

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

Objektyp: **Article**

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

Band (Jahr): **- (1934)**

Heft 675

PDF erstellt am: **08.08.2024**

Persistenter Link: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-693523>

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Tuesday 4th Sept. — Niesen.

As the weather was still lovely we decided to go on the Niesen. From Mülenen a cable-drawn carriage took us in thirty-three minutes to the top, which is 7,000ft. above sea level. It was an unforgettable experience to travel sheer up the mountain-side. The cable seemed dangerously frail, but we reached the summit in safety, and retraced our path with respectful awe. We had snow at close hand, and were soon in the thick of a furious snow-fight. Through the kindness of a friend in London we had dinner at the top of the Niesen. There was not a cloud to mar our view. We could see the Wildstrubel, Blümlisalp, Jungfrau and many other snow mountains. Most of us realised there for the first time the meaning of the word "Panorama." The sight was magnificent.

On our return to Mülenen four private cars waited for us and took us to the Blue Lake, which I had heard described as the jewel of the Alps. We first walked along a shaded path, past great boulders, and then came to the lake. I was never so surprised in my life, as when I saw that the water actually looked emerald green in parts, with blue streaks and sapphire shades in others. It really has to be seen to be believed! The water was crystal clear and we could see the bottom of the lake with ease, even in the deepest parts, where lay petrified tree-trunks with branches edged by a vivid emerald streak. Someone threw a coin into the water and we watched the fish rush to bite it as it twinkled and sparkled to the bottom. We were very loath indeed to leave the lake, but were in some measure compensated, for we went back to the cars by an enchanting rocky path. Thus ended one of the most memorable of our excursions.

Wednesday 5th Sept. — Spiez.

Rest-day. — We contented ourselves with swimming or sun-bathing till dinner-time. We had been invited to tea at Spiez, and met there about twenty Swiss children, with whom we were soon firm friends. They had brought us gifts of fruit and sweets, and we were delighted, especially because of the spirit that prompted them. Very reluctantly we said good-bye to our Swiss friends, and returned home by train.

Thursday 6th Sept. — Justis-Valley.

Up at 6 for an excursion to the Justis! From Spiez we crossed the lake by steamer. The morning was still young and everything bright

and fresh. In Gunten we all got into a char-a-banc which, after a truly delightful ride, stopped about half-way up the mountain. We climbed up the valley and on the way tasted some cheese at an old farmhouse. The scenery occupied our attention. A little mountain stream bubbled its way between stones and pine trees, and on either side the valley was overhung by tremendous masses of rock. We decided to stay there for the day. At lunch-time we made a fire close to the stream, and cooked a real Maggi soup. Afterwards some children attempted to bridge the stream, while others explored the immediate vicinity. The more energetic of us went higher, and three boys attempted to climb the Beatenberg, a steep slope consisting of loose stones. Naturally they became stuck, and a cry arose: "Mr. Fischer to the rescue!" This was accomplished successfully, without starting any big avalanches of stones. On their return we discovered that time was pressing, and we raced back for the boat at Merligen.

Friday 7th, Sept. — Blumenstein.

First: cleaning boots and packing rucksacks, for this is our last day in Switzerland! We endeavoured not to think of the fact that we must soon say good-bye. We roused our drooping hearts and went swimming. We discovered the joyous fact that three of us, non-swimmers on our arrival, would leave swimmers.

We were due to leave Gwatt at 9 p.m., and so we accepted a last invitation from Blumenstein, near Thoune. It was in the nature of a final ride by char-a-banc. At our destination we walked along the bank of a stream, and came upon a waterfall. We were dampened with the spray flung up by the water, as it dashed against the rocks. It was an imposing sight. On our way back we passed an old church, and were soon enjoying the tea provided by our friends. To our surprise the table, attractively set out under the trees, was covered with a swarm of buzzing bees. Bread and honey was the lure that had brought them from some neighbouring hives. We plucked up courage and sat down. Bees must have consciences which prick them, for they soon stopped stealing our honey and left us in peace. Strange how this incident cheered us! On the way home we beguiled the time by singing. After a final plunge in the lake, to refresh us for our long journey, we had supper and then boarded the train for Calais. Our Swiss friends accompanied

us to the station, and with a last cheer and "adieu" Gwatt and the "Châlet Switzerland" lay behind us. It had been a really wonderful holiday. Everyone regretted leaving. If only time would stand still! But alas, time flies!

Saturday 8th Sept. — London.

Back in London once more, amidst the scurry and bustle at Victoria Station. We are all sunburnt and our parents scarcely recognise us.

Our chief impression, apart from the scenery we had enjoyed, is the kindness and courtesy of our dear Swiss people. May we see them again soon! Finally, I may observe that we enjoyed this lovely holiday through the efforts of Mr. W. Fischer. He has the heartfelt gratitude of us all.

Ernie Gasser.

(Sunday School of the "Schweizerkirche.")

The first article appeared in the Swiss Observer on Sept. 8th. Back numbers can be obtained at the Offices of the Swiss Observer, 23, Leonard Street, E.C.2.

PERSONAL.

The Children, past and present, and Friends of the Sunday School of the Eglise Suisse, have been able to realise a cherished wish to commemorate the unremitting work of its much loved friend and founder, the late Madame Suzanne Hoffmann-de Visme.

A memorial executed by Sir William Goscombe John, R.A., will be unveiled on Sunday next, the 30th September, at the Eglise Suisse at the close of the morning service.

We feel sure that the many friends of the late Madame Hoffmann-de Visme will wish to take part in this simple ceremony.

* * *

We extend our heartiest congratulations to our countryman Mr. A. Schorno, on his appointment as Manager of the catering Dept. of the London Zoo, which will take effect from January 1st, 1935.

Owing to the retirement of the present Manager, the council has taken the opportunity of amalgamating the catering departments at Whipsnade and in London. M. Schorno who has held his post at Whipsnade since January, 1932, has made a reputation for catering there, and we wish him every good luck in his dual position.

SWISS CONTRIBUTION TO AMERICA AND TO THE WORLD.

Address by Hugh G. Grant, *attaché European Division, U.S. Dept. of State, at 3:00 p.m., Sunday, July 29, 1934, before the Swiss Societies of Washington at the home of Mr. and Mrs. H. J. Bieber, Four Corners, Maryland, on the occasion of the celebration of the Swiss National Festival.*

I am glad to be here to-day and I deem it a privilege to represent the Department of State on the occasion of the Swiss National Festival in celebration of the six hundred and forty-third anniversary of Swiss Independence. It is a pleasure to make this personal contact with the representatives of a country for which I have always had the greatest admiration. George Washington with his hatchet and the cherry tree and William Tell with his bow, arrow and the apple were my favourite boyhood heroes. I wielded my own bow and arrow often to the great danger of my companions in emulation of the great Tell.

I am reminded of an international broadcast from Tokyo, Japan, in 1931 of Colonel and Mrs. Lindbergh, in the course of which the distinguished wife of the famous Colonel declared that her girlhood conception of the Japanese was that they were people who "walked upside down upon the earth." As a school boy, fond of geography, I pictured the Swiss as a people who spend all of their time in merry-making and skiing down the snow covered mountains. It was not until years later that I learned the truth about Switzerland, of the sturdiness, thrift and industry of her people, of the centuries of heroic struggle for individual freedom and national independence, of the remarkable contribution of this little country to the ideals of Democracy.

The achievement of Nationality and the establishment of a Democratic Republic by the Swiss, which had its origin in the Independence movement of 1291, which you celebrate to-day, constitutes a remarkable story unique in the history of nations — a story of individual trials and sacrifices, of heroic deeds of both men and women, of bloodshed and of war throughout two centuries. In the annals of many battles with neighbouring enemies the decisive victories of Morgarten in 1315, of Sempach in 1386, of Näfels in 1388 and of Grandson in 1476 stand out as notable examples of the prowess of Swiss arms. The pages of Swiss history are dotted with the tales of heroic deeds, of men imbued with the zeal for liberty. Where is the Swiss who is not

familiar with the thrilling story of Winkelried, the bold knight from Unterwalden who at the battle of Sempach, upon the realization that his Swiss compatriots could not advance against the closed ranks of the Austrians bristling with spears, cried out, "I'll open the way for you, confederates!" and seizing as many enemy spears as he could grasp in his arms pulled them down with his weight upon his own breast and thus made a gap for his countrymen to penetrate the opposing ranks, resulting in victory for the Swiss.

The Swiss Independence movement was inaugurated by the men of Schwyz, Uri and Unterwalden, mountainous districts bordering on Lake Lucerne (Luzern). To these forest men belongs the honour of being the pioneers in the centuries of struggle to free the Swiss land from foreign rule and to lay the foundation of a united Democratic Swiss Republic. On the chapel of Küssnacht there is displayed the couplet commemorating the birthplace of Swiss freedom:—"Wo Demuth weint und Hochmuth lacht, Da ward der Schweizerbund gemacht,"

which may be translated:

"Where humility weeps and pride laughs with scorn,
Is the spot where Switzerland's union was born."

At the end of the two hundred years of struggle with the Habsburgs the Swiss confederation became an asylum for republican ideas in the midst of monarchical and feudal Europe. Whereas in neighbouring states, the aristocracy, and the hereditary princes maintained their authority, in the land of the Swiss the burghers, the peasants — the common folk — held the reins of government.

To the three original cantons there were added nineteen bringing the total number up to twenty-two in 1815 when the Swiss Confederation and Swiss neutrality were recognised and proclaimed by the famous Congress of Vienna. The year 1848 and 1874 are also landmarks in the history of the Swiss Republic, a new federal constitution being introduced in the former year and revised in the latter. The document of 1848 transformed the Swiss Confederacy of independent States into a Federation of twenty-two Cantons. The document of 1874 completed the centralization of authority and to-day Switzerland is a Federal Republic, in which the Cantons are sovereign so far as their sovereignty has not been limited by the federal constitution.

And the remarkable thing about this unique development of confederation and subsequent federation is the fact that it has been brought about by people of three or four distinct races

speaking different languages, French, German, Italian and Romansch. Certainly no one will deny that Switzerland presents one of the finest examples in all history of the Democratic Ideal. As Eugene Ramert has declared, "Switzerland exists because the Swiss people will it, their only incentive is the freedom they enjoy. Other countries exist by the bond of race and blood."

The organisations represented here to-day are unique in that they comprise citizens who hold allegiance to two great Democracies, the Republics of Switzerland and of the United States of America. It is of interest therefore in this brief study to take note of some of the striking points of similarity in the political organizations of the two countries. I said a little while ago that Switzerland is a Federal Republic of Cantons that are sovereign insofar as they are not limited by federal constitution.

The Swiss Constitution like the American is a grant of powers, the federal government having only such powers as are granted to it. We have in America forty-eight states which are paramount within their own reserved fields of jurisdiction. The same is true of the twenty-two Swiss Cantons. Both countries have written constitutions. The federal government in each country consists of a Legislature, an Executive and a Judiciary and in each country the federal legislature is divided into two houses, in the United States, the Senate and the House of Representatives, in Switzerland the Council of States and the National Council. The Swiss Council of States, or upper House, contains two members from each Canton, the United States Senate has two representatives from each State. Each Republic has a President and a Vice-President. In striking contrast to the Presidency of the United States however, the Chief Executive of the Swiss Republic is plural, a Federal Council elected by and acting for the parliament. Switzerland is the ancestral home of the initiative and referendum. In the revised constitution of 1874 the referendum was extended to federal law which makes it possible for thirty thousand Swiss voters by petition to prevent the federal Legislature from adopting a measure until the people have had an opportunity to pass on it. The initiative applies to the Swiss Canton governments and it may be used also as a means of proposing amendments to the Federal Constitution. In America the referendum was first utilized in the adoption of State constitutions after the Revolution and has been extended in recent years to ordinary law making in several of the forty-eight States of the Union.

(To be continued).