

# The Swiss seen by a Swiss "l'art pour l'art"

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**The Swiss seen by a Swiss . . .****"L'ART POUR L'ART".**

"It just can't go on like that", said Maurice.  
 "There is exactly Frs.14.60 left in the till",  
 whispered Pierrot.

"Sad, very sad", concluded Noël.

This conversation took place one summer evening at No. 15, rue Guillaume Tell. Those present were the Editor, the Treasurer and the Publisher of the monthly magazine "L'art pour l'art", in ordinary life students at the Collège Helvétique. Three issues of this magazine devoted to the better understanding of the arts in Switzerland had been published to date, but the lack of public demand and the precarious financial situation made further publications very doubtful.

"We Swiss will never be an artistic nation", Maurice went on after a pregnant pause. "In our country Art is a huge labyrinth of misunderstanding and snobbery, of prejudice and pretence. Look at our fathers. If an opera or a symphony concert is broadcast they have it switched off straight away. Have they ever been to either? They have not. If we start talking about Klee or Picasso, they sigh and leave the room. Have they ever attended a lecture where a painter explains his pictures? They have not. My dear fellows, the situation is hopeless!"

"At least they are frank and do not hesitate to express their views, however wrong and illogical they may be", Pierrot interrupted, "the real enemies of art are the snobs, the people who do not enjoy art for

art's sake, but who regard art as a social function, as an opportunity for displaying their intellectual superiority. Look at Jean Barbay. When he gave his first piano recital the audience consisted of forty people. He was unknown, and the music he played was unknown. But the next day the Concert d'Abonnement was sold out. Why? Because a famous soloist played famous music."

"So the hard facts are that we Swiss only believe in orthodox and established art", Maurice continued. "Everything new and original is viewed with suspicion, with hostility even. We condemn without knowing. If only we would realize how much escapes us through lack of understanding!"

"Sad, very sad", said Noël.

"There is exactly Frs.14.60 left in the till", whispered Pierrot.

"It just can't go on like that", concluded Maurice.

*Helveticus.*

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