

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

Herausgeber: Federation of Swiss Societies in the United Kingdom

Band: - (1921)

Heft: 25

Artikel: English views on Switzerland [to be continued]

Autor: Pierre, Jean

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-690896>

Nutzungsbedingungen

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist die Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Zeitschriften und ist nicht verantwortlich für deren Inhalte. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern beziehungsweise den externen Rechteinhabern. [Siehe Rechtliche Hinweise.](#)

Conditions d'utilisation

L'ETH Library est le fournisseur des revues numérisées. Elle ne détient aucun droit d'auteur sur les revues et n'est pas responsable de leur contenu. En règle générale, les droits sont détenus par les éditeurs ou les détenteurs de droits externes. [Voir Informations légales.](#)

Terms of use

The ETH Library is the provider of the digitised journals. It does not own any copyrights to the journals and is not responsible for their content. The rights usually lie with the publishers or the external rights holders. [See Legal notice.](#)

Download PDF: 03.02.2025

ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, E-Periodica, <https://www.e-periodica.ch>

demonstrating the unapproachable powers of the sun . . . and has been curing cases otherwise hopeless, perhaps after half-a-dozen operations, and making healthy and happy wage-earners of them."

* * *

The New Statesman (Oct. 15th) in a series of articles headed "Modern Sun-Worship" refers to Dr. A. Rollier as the High Priest, treating at his temple in Leysin nearly a thousand patients, housed in more than thirty clinics. After stating that "no peculiar virtues inhere in this place, that in some respects it must be inferior to many other places which might be and are not used for heliotherapy," the writer supplies the following brief description:—

"Leysin is a little place at an altitude of 1,450 metres in the Alpes Vaudoises. It is admirably sheltered from the north wind, and has long been a resort of consumptives. There, for personal reasons, it happened that Dr. Rollier began to practise his profession and to attempt the systematic use of the sun-cure in 1903. That is a long time ago, and here am I discussing the subject of heliotherapy as if it were a new discovery. If work like this had been done in the United States, it would be a household word, millionaire philanthropists would have endowed it galore, and it would have been copied everywhere. But it was done by a quiet man in a small country, and though visitors from afar have been to see his work and its lovely results, the Prometheus-Esculapius of Leysin is still almost unknown, even in the professional circles that are concerned with tuberculosis."

* * *

The discussion of technical questions which the "Electrification of the Swiss Federal Railways" has given rise to amongst experts in England is continued in *The Engineer* (Oct. 7th and 14th).

* * *

The early October number of *Vogue* gives a lavishly illustrated article on Ferdinand Hodler, the giant artist who during his life time was never popular amongst his own countrymen. "In every way a typical Swiss, by birth the son of a carpenter, rough, obstinate, and endowed with immense tenacity of purpose, he ranks as the first (modern) painter of his country, the art of which he has dominated for nearly fifty years."

* * *

Health and Strength (Oct. 8th) refers to the "splendid wrestling" at the Swiss G.S. (see *Swiss Observer* October 8th): "Molinari appears to be a newcomer, and was quite a surprise to many of us. He showed form which ought to bring him into the front rank of light-weights within a year, under skilled tuition."

FEUILLE D'AUTOMNE.

Les coteaux et les bois ont des brumes qui traînent.
Par le long des chemins, les ormes et les frênes
Erigent des troncs nus. Pas de fleurs. Pas de chants.
Dans les taillis déserts, dans le désert des champs,
S'allongent les ennuis des brouillards monotones,
En formes sans profils, en ombres sans couleurs,
En un rythme sans vie. Au soir de cet automne
Glisse un silence froid sur la nature en pleurs.
Oh! dans mon âme et par les bois, les mornes brumes!
Mais je t'évoque, ô Muse, et voilà que s'allume,
A mes horizons gris le flambeau des vermeils,
Que les éclats du cor acclament au réveil
D'un fastueux printemps, et que, par ton sourire,
Sont chassés les brouillards qui pleuraient en mes yeux.
O Muse, mon amante, aux accords de ma lyre,
Pour moi viens-t'en chanter les cadences des dieux!

HENRI JACCARD.

ENGLISH VIEWS ON SWITZERLAND.

By "Jean Pierre."

"How do other people see us?" is a question that never fails to rouse general interest in every country of the world. We Swiss are somewhat different, and are more anxious to know: "How do other people see our country?" This, no doubt, because we are, to say the least of it, intensely proud of our country, its natural beauties, and its institutions, but the reason may also, to a certain extent, be less disinterested. On the other hand, we are not so keen to learn other people's opinions about ourselves—our conscience may put some restraint upon our curiosity. Before the war praise and admiration for the natural beauties of Switzerland were general, and nobody dared to utter another opinion. But war has changed many things, and it is, therefore, doubly interesting to know how our country appears now to other people in the light of their war-time experiences. A good many of such impressions have been published in the English press during the holiday season which has just come to a close. A few of the more characteristic of these utterances will be reproduced hereafter.

As of old, foreign visitors to Switzerland are struck by the variety and diversity of sights and aspects, which are there, close together on such a small territory. A traveller writes thus in the *Nottingham Journal and Express* (Sept. 24th):—

"Switzerland, being a land of infinite variety—it provides you with railway officials who are always polite and gentlemanly that always look comic—you can never be tired of travelling in it. But Switzerland, unless you were told, would be a baffling country to identify. A man dumped into it for the first time from an airship might have six guesses and then be wrong. Dropped at Lugano he would guess 'Italy,' from language and scenery, at Zurich 'Germany,' for the same reasons at Geneva—'France,' if the lake gave no clue, and in the Rhone Valley he might guess, from the heat and the taste of the wines, 'Spain,' not to mention names such as Sierre and Montana."

The author of these lines liked the Rhone Valley—most likely on account of the wine that grows there, as can safely be inferred from the frequent allusions he makes to it while describing his journey from Visp to the Lake of Geneva:—

"The journey from Visp to the Lac Lemman was a period of torture, pleasurable torture. Italy can be hot, but the Rhone Valley seemed to me the oven of Europe. Despite the Rhone, the great valley down which one journeys seems thirsty and parched.

THE APPROACH TO SION.

It is a luxuriant valley given over to vines, and the river seems to have much freedom, for its bed is often a mile broad. Perhaps the heat is accentuated by the parallel lines of snow-capped mountains and the closer ranges of vast pine-clad hills.

Near Sierre, a name familiar on bottles throughout Switzerland, itself a quaint little place situated on a prehistoric landslip, one is on the verge of a tract as romantic as anything in Switzerland—the great 5,000 feet high plateau of Montana with its view of the Valais Alps from the Weisshorn to Mont Blanc. It is the haunt of consumptives—or a part of it, and one day, when the repute of its beauty in summer and its sports in winter are better known, it will be a Mecca for Englishmen—and consequently expensive. If any of my readers want to be romantically lost I recommend Montana.

Meanwhile, the train crawls down the broad sun-baked valley, and my companion, to console me, reads out from his guide-book that Sion, then approaching, was notoriously hot. It needed no guide-book to proclaim this truth; the place perspired. Nevertheless, the name Sion somehow conjured up scenes of romance—boars, barons and castles. The boars and the barons have gone, but the castles remain.

PRISON OF CHILLÓN.

On the heights to the north, silhouetted against the skyline, are the ruins of the castle of Tourbillon, erected in 1294; on the lower hill stands the old castle of Valeria, on the site of a Roman fort. They both looked very picturesque, the

guide-book spoke highly of them, and we took its word on the matter, for the heat quelled all curiosity. But I was not to escape from Sion so easily as I had hoped. What the Swiss too picturesquely call an "omnibus" train took us on to Montreux—being an omnibus because it stopped everywhere."

Martigny he greets with the exclamation: "What horrible joker named the town 'Martigny' and gave it a station without a tap—least of all a cocktail!" May God forgive the man this "horrible joke," because it was terribly hot, so hot that he was "almost beyond suffering and looked with deep envy at a lady's poodle vis-à-vis finding relief by lolling out its tongue."

With these remarks he leaves the Valais to enter the Canton of Vaud. Severed from the Fendant, Amigne, Dole, etc., a complete change overtakes him. He loses much of his humour and develops a quiet, serious vein. In Chillon he is not much impressed with Bonivard and the story of his sufferings, and finds that "six years in a dungeon was no uncommon experience of the 16th century, and that the hero nevertheless lived to the ripe old age of 74. The sight of the great lake and a cool breeze had, however, considerably revived him, as he was already able to quote Byron:—

"Chillon! thy prison is a holy place
And thy sad floor an altar—for 'twas trod,
Until his very steps have left a trace,
Worn, as if the cold pavement were a sod,
By Bonivard! may none those marks efface,
For they appeal from Tyranny to God."

In another paper, *The Christian World* (Sept. 22) this time, the same writer gives his impression of Geneva and the Lake. It is pleasant to read in these days an English word in favour of Geneva when there seems to be an organised drive against her and to be reminded that the town of Calvin, Rousseau, Madame de Staël, Amiël, Hodler, to quote a few names at random, is not a small provincial nest where one's mental horizon is bound to be reduced, as some would like to make us believe, but the home of many desperate, yet triumphant causes. But enough of this; the bubble has been pricked at the last meeting of the League of Nations, and let us hear what the writer has to say and how he describes Geneva when he approached the town on a beautiful summer evening:—

"On our left there was still a glimmer of sunset, and, belonging half to heaven and half to earth, almost indiscernible, rose the snowy outline of Mont Blanc and the bolder outlines of less distant ranges. And there was one sight on my right that filled me not with wonder, but with wondering. It was a long palatial stone facade facing the lake, the old hotel that was now the home of the League of Nations. Here was the reality, the actual symbol of all the aspirations that a few of us, altruists, who believe in the future of mankind, had brought, and were desperately keeping, into being. This League, and this home of it, have come out of the feelings akin to despair felt by those who looked upon the European conflagration as a threat to the whole of civilisation. A revolt against the insanity of war, and the enthusiasm of men like Lord Robert Cecil and General Smuts, backed by a large section of the public, have forced this League into recognition.

So that, as I looked upon that dark pile, without a single light, wherein a few days there was to be another world assembly, I reflected that this was perhaps the only concrete good that had come out of and remained to us of those nightmare years which have left Europe in ruin and starvation. Strange, if out of that building should come a moral force that will regulate the world and make war a dark chapter in barbarism. It is a lot to hope, to struggle for, but Geneva in her vivid history has been the home of many desperate and triumphant causes.

You will hear in Geneva, as elsewhere, strong criticisms of the League. It is stated locally that Geneva is not a suitable base. The strength of the Swiss exchange makes it an expensive Mecca for most nations, and its geographical position is such that it is almost a cul-de-sac for international transit and

communication. Be this as it may, Geneva has had the honour of seeing the League begin its work on its soil—the home, too, of the Red Cross Societies."

A writer in the *Blackburn Times* (Sept. 24) is a lover of historic reminiscences and associations, and if he did not describe himself as an "old Blackburnian" one would be inclined to think that he is an old Swiss who, after an absence of many years, makes a patriotic pilgrimage to the holy places of Switzerland. Already in Paris, in the Jardin des Tuileries, he remembers the Swiss Guard, who, after a stout defence, when everybody had already abandoned the unfortunate Louis XVI., only laid down their arms by order of the king. It is not without a thrill that we follow the traveller in his peregrinations through Lucerne to Sempach, Altdorf, Tellsplatte, etc.

"Next to it is the old Kapell Brücke, which is roofed over and painted with scenes from the lives of St. Leger and St. Maurice, and from Swiss history.

Among the chief places of interest in the town is the famous cathedral, with its two slender spires, built in 1506, and the magnificent organ, on which performances are given daily. The Lion of Lucerne is a magnificently conceived and admirably executed work of art, cut in relief on the face of the rock. It commemorates the death of twenty-six officers and 760 soldiers of the Swiss Guard who fell in the Tuileries Palace in Paris, in defence of the king and the royal family, in 1792.

The following day we went to Sempach, historically connected with a battle fought there between the Swiss Confederates and the Austrians, under Duke Leopold, in 1386. A small chapel contains a picture of the battle. Later we visited the birthplace of the heroic Winkelried at Stans, a pretty village situated amid large orchards. We saw the handsome monument erected to him, and on the fountain in the market place is a bust of the patriot.

Finally we arrived at the mountain village of Andermatt. After visiting the church and quaint village, we returned to Goeschenen on foot, following the winding roads as they twisted in and out down the gorge. A little distance down the gorge the Russian monument suddenly came into view. This monument takes the form of a cross cut in the side of the cliff, and was erected to perpetuate the memory of the Russian army which entered the village of Andermatt in 1799 and forced the French to retire. The construction of this portion of the road was one of immense difficulty, as the workmen had first to be let down from above by ropes to blast a foothold out of the rock. After taking several photographs we had to hurry along as well as we could on a scorching day in order to arrive in time for one of the few trains back to Fluelen.

At Fluelen we boarded a train which took us to Altdorf, celebrated as the scene of the well-known story in the life of William Tell. The spot where Tell stood is marked by a colossal statue of the hero in plaster (!), and the tree under which the boy stood is said to have been blown down, and now a fountain marks the spot.

The road from Fluelen to Tell's Platte, known as the Axenstrasse road, is most picturesque, as it runs parallel to the shore of the lake, thus affording visitors a magnificent view with the mountains beyond. It has been for the most part cut out of the face of the rock. A short walk winding down the cliff brought us to the ledge on which stands Tell's Chapel, built in 1368 and rebuilt in 1880 in its original form, in memory of Tell's escape from the boat in which Gessler was conveying him as a prisoner. The walls of the chapel are frescoed with scenes from Swiss history."

(To be continued.)

SOCIAL AND PERSONAL.

The Swiss Minister and Madame Paravicini have returned to London.

The marriage of Mr. Alfred Stauffer to Miss Elsie May, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Sidney C. Phillips, of Point House, Woodborough Road, Putney, S.W.15, took place on Saturday, October 15th, 1921, at St. Margaret's Church, Putney Park Lane, S.W.

Mr. Georges Dimier will show on Thursday, November 3rd, a series of photographs which he has taken during his recent holiday trip in the Swiss Mountains. (See Advert.)