

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: - (1931)

Heft: 499

Nachruf: Obituary

Autor: C.S.

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: 11.12.2024

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

OBITUARY.



RUDOLF OBERHOLZER †

Born 15th September
1859, in Zurich,

Died 23rd. April 1931,
at Hornsey, London.



The death of Mr. Rudolf Oberholzer is a grievous loss, not only to the Swiss Colony but to the whole of the gymnastic world of Switzerland and England. Without exaggeration he was the finest all round athletic Switzerland ever produced whose cleverness and talents were appreciated in Switzerland, France and England, especially in the latter country where he rose to fame and where he lived for 47 years.

In England the name Oberholzer was a name with which to conjure and which came to the lips wherever gymnasts foregathered. Trained as a young man of 20 as an electrical engineer, he left Switzerland on behalf of his firm to go to Paris in 1880, where he immediately became the idol of the Swiss Gymnastic Society in Paris, and his pre-eminence caused him to become leader of that Society almost at once.

In 1883 he married in Paris Miss Marie Horat of Glaris. Ultimately his family consisted of two sons and three daughters who are living to-day.

In September 1884 he came to London and was in the employ of an engineering firm at Woolwich. Almost immediately he sought the company of Swiss gymnasts here and before long he was introduced to the famous old club in St. Pancras Road, the "German Gymnasium" which at that period was the finest physical institute in England. He astonished all athletes and teachers belonging to that Institute with his marvellous

physical prowess, and a short while after his first visit to the "German," he received an offer from the committee to turn professional teacher at their Institute with a remuneration of £75 per annum, an unheard of salary in those days for giving instructions during a few evenings in the week. He accepted this appointment and this was his stepping stone to becoming the best known gymnast and teacher in Great Britain. Other Institutes sought his services during spare hours and he attended The Birkbeck College, The High-bury Gymnasium, the Swedish Training College, and The Dartford Training College, and consequently gave up his original profession as engineer altogether and devoted his whole time to gymnastics and physical drills. In spite of the amount of work which Mr. Oberholzer had to do, he always found time to remember his own countrymen and he was one of the founders of the Swiss Gymnastic Society in 1889, at Charlotte Street, W.1, where his services and advice were for ever at the disposal of any compatriot. Mr. Rudolf Oberholzer was the first to introduce into England the pommel horse, an instrument until then unknown here.

In 1896 he was appointed Director for Physical exercises at the Northampton Polytechnic Institute, Clerkenwell, and it was in this capacity that he remained until his retirement in 1928. His ways and manners soon gained the hearts of every man and woman gymnast who came in contact with him, and before long he was the teacher of teachers, the first expert on any point referring to physical culture.

It is well acknowledged by all the authorities here that no better man could possibly have been found for the training of the British Olympic teams and it was he who coached the teams and visited Stockholm 1912, Antwerp 1920, Paris 1924, and Amsterdam 1928 with the chosen few whom he picked from hundreds of gymnasts in England, to represent their country. Until 1912 when Mr. Oberholzer was entrusted with this work, no British team ever succeeded in being among the first three winners at any Olympic games, but he achieved it.

Mr. Oberholzer assisted A. F. Jenkin in compiling the book which is now regarded as a standard work for gymnastics in this country and he trained endless winners for amateur championships during his activities at the N. P. I. among whom can be found two or three of his own nationality.

He was the founder of the Gymnastic Teachers Institute of England and he was a Fellow of the British Association of Physical

Training and he was known as the "Grand Old Man," no doubt due to the fact that even at the age of 55 he was capable of not only telling the youngsters but of actually showing them how to do the most difficult moves on any apparatus.

His successes as amateur gymnast before he turned professional are too numerous to mention, but his greatest feat undoubtedly was when in 1880 he was first in the "Kunst" as well as first in the "National" competitions at Lausanne. Two years previous to that he was second in both these competitions at St. Gallen. He was crowned with laurels dozens of times, some of the most important being at competitions in Germany, such as Breslau, Leipzig, Munich, and Hamburg, and last but by no means least was his feat of gaining sixteenth laurel at the age of 45 at the Federal Gymnastic Fête at Zurich in 1903 when he represented the Gymnastic Society "Schweizerbund" of London. No man of that age has ever equalled this.

In 1928 when he retired on his 68th birthday, the Mens and Womens Gymnasium clubs of the N.P.I. with whom also quite a number of Swiss participated, gave him a farewell dinner at the Midland Grand Hotel, and the poem which was written for him on that occasion and sung to the tune of Ol' Man River by the whole assembly may be a suitable ending to my small endeavours to do justice to the well beloved.

"OL' MAN OBIE"

There's an ol' man at Northampton Poly,
There's on ol' man whom we love so well,
That's why we're all here to-night to greet him,
To wish him good-bye and to say farewell.

Chorus

Ol' man Obie, that Ol' man Obie,
We all know nothin' till he say somethin',
His word goes rollin', it keeps on rollin' along,
He turns out winners from raw beginners,
And tho' we're hopeless, he'll find good in us,
His work keeps rollin', it keeps on rollin' along,
You and me, we sweat and strain,
Till Obie makes the move quite plain,
With theory sound, a master's skill,
Then comes the words "Fall in for Tri-ll."
I gets weary and tired of tryin',
Until "WE did it," the Ol' man's cryin',
We always do it, with Obie standin' along.

Where's the Ol' man at Northampton Poly?
Where's the ol' man we love to see?
Show me the Gym, with a man like Obie,
That's the ol' Gym, where I longs to be.

C.S.

"Die Engländer am Zuericher
Sechselauten."

I am delighted to inform our readers that "Kyburg's" passionate outburst in our last number, concerning the apathy of our subscribers, to take an active part in collaborating with us, has been nobly answered.

His sincere and fully justified appeal has at last born fruit, and has gained the S.O. two youthful collaborators. It is most refreshing to see youth stepping into the breach, where people from whom we might have reasonably expected support, have failed us.

We intend to publish the narrative of our young friends, in Feuilleton form, under the above title in three or more instalments, and we propose not to divulge their joint authorship until the last instalment. We will however publish their photograph in our next issue, as a well merited reward for having given a shining example that the spirit of "William Tell" is still alive.

ST.

Dear Editor,

The beautiful pictures of Switzerland shown by the Nouvelle Société Helvétique during the last year or two to us young Swiss people here in London have given us the keen desire to visit Switzerland in order to see if it was really as nice as the pictures. We managed to extract from our Daddy the promise to take us to Switzerland for a trip, if we had good reports at school. We did our best and apparently have succeeded; our Daddy could not postpone the voyage any longer and took us for a short trip to Basel—Zürich—Berne and Lausanne, leaving it to us to do some more extensive trips at a later date when we earn our own money. We have seen so many nice things in Switzerland, that it will take us some time to sort it all out. This is what we are trying to do now. One other condition our Dad made before starting, was, that we should write an article for the Swiss Observer on our return. We promised rather light-heartedly, as a matter of fact we would have promised anything in order to induce our father to take us for the trip, but we find now that it is far easier to make promises than to keep them. However, we will do our best and with your kind assistance we hope to give other Swiss children big and small here in London, who have admired the Nouvelle Société Hel-

vetique films with us, the benefits of our experience recommending them most heartily to get their parents to take them also for a trip whenever occasion arises.

Dad tells us that you possess a great blue pencil which you use very freely, and that there is even a possibility, that in order to save printing ink, labour and other items very expensive just now, we might find, this our journalistic endeavour in the wastepaper basket of the Editorial Office. Well, of course, this part of the performance is not under our control, but we rely on your generosity not to kill outright our first effort of a journalistic career and aspiration to fame. Our destiny is for the time being in your hands and we await your verdict with the calm, appropriate to young Swiss people, born in the land of Calm and Superiority.

We first intended to travel by motor car at Easter but were prevented from doing so, also we thought it might be too much for our Dad to drive us there and back; therefore we decided to go by rail and left Victoria on the 14th of April by the 2 p.m. train, via Folkestone—Boulogne. The channel crossing on board the "Maid of Orleans" was quite a good one, which apparently is not always the case, as we found out on our return journey.

The French customs examination passed off fairly quickly and after the French Passport officials had decorated our Passport with a stamp saying "ne peut pas occuper en France un post Salarié," we went on board the train for Basel and were soon on our way through France towards Switzerland. Between Boulogne Ville and Boulogne Mer, Rudy dropped his notebook out of the window and therefore the notes made for the description in the Swiss Observer had their first serious shock. Fortunately someone picked up the book and put it on the step of the carriage. This was rather clever of the Frenchman and we were able to recover it at Boulogne Station before the Train really started its journey south east.

We went via Etapples, Laon, Rheims, Châlons sur Marne, chaumont, Belfort, Mulhouse and Bâle.

My Mammy asked the Wagon Restaurant attendant if we children could get a meal at half price, but he said no, and we had not only to pay full price, but after the dinner the attendant said he was obliged to charge a supplement for my little brother as he had eaten more than anyone else.

There were not too many people in the train; we had two compartments and had it not been for the excessive heat and for the fact that the conductors came several times during the night to look at our tickets so as to make sure we had not lost them, we would have had a very peaceful night. Everyone complained about the oppressive steam heating of the train, but the conductors after a lengthy discussion and a lot of gesticulations said that nothing could be done and we had to put up with it. There was also a good deal of shouting at various stations.

About 5 o'clock in the morning we noticed that the landscape had changed considerably from the chalk of England and the Cement Works of Northern France. The houses were different, some of them had already the "Chalet Suisse" type. Dad explained to us that Alsace was somewhat similar to Switzerland, particularly in the part we were travelling.

We arrived at Basel as provided, the train was up to time, and the Customs Officer did not even make us open our trunks, they trusted us right away as Swiss citizens should be trusted in their own country, and we felt at once that now we owned a part of the land we were visiting for the first time.

We adjourned to the Bahnhof Restaurant to have our first Continental breakfast. This we enjoyed very much, especially the "Brötchen and Honig" were exceptionally good, either because we were hungry, or because it was something new—anyhow we enjoyed them immensely, most likely for both these reasons.

The Bahnhof is a nice building, but the pictures on the walls of the Restaurant are awful, the colours are rather crude and the figures, well, better say no more about them.

By the time we had finished our "Restauration" it was 7.30 and still too early to go to the Mustermesse, therefore we went for a tramride round Basel. The first trip we took was to the Badische Bahnhof where we wanted to buy a Plan of Basel, so that we should not get lost. There was none to be had and we had therefore to find our way by asking questions to all and sundry.

Unfortunately by this time it started to rain and the best thing to do was to return into a tram car and drive about until the Mustermesse was open. That is what we did and so we saw a good deal of Basel.

TO BE CONTINUED.