

**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:** - (1933)

**Heft:** 616

**Rubrik:** Notes and gleanings

### **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>**



got the original four thousand feet in my pocket, so to speak, and am I up ten thousand feet? Or do they count the original four thousand feet and am I only six thousand feet?"

"Don't be silly!" he laughed.

"I intend to be silly," I retorted. "I'm going!"

Until that moment I don't think he'd really believed me. Frankly, I hadn't believed myself. I'm not punny by any means, but I am thinnish, and if I fall I break. But now he became serious and gave me a lot of information. He told me a lot to avoid nine unpleasant things that might happen to me (if an avalanche descends on you, breathe on your knuckles to keep them supple, provided you're anywhere near your knuckles; and if you find yourself hanging from a rope don't get excited or you'll spin); and one nice thing that might happen to me — I might suddenly find myself face to face with a mountain antelope.

I thought that was enough, so reminded him of an appointment.

I spent the next week buying a rucksack and a pick-axe, but in the end I didn't take them with me because I thought it best to arrive in Switzerland quietly. Besides, I could probably buy them locally, and I learned how to say, "*Donnez-moi une saque de rugue et axe de pique pas expensive.*"

Then on the day before my departure, I rang up twelve people but couldn't get one to go with me.

I left the sea-level at Calais and gradually rose into Switzerland. Of course, I knew Switzerland would be high, but I'd had no notion it would be as high as all this. You're a thousand feet up before you begin, and all around you are thousands of other thousands of feet. And just as you're getting used to them and saying, "Well, that's all right," you close your eyes for a moment to think of home and open your eyes to find a completely new set.

At last I began to think that one of the sets must be mine.

"*Suis-je ici?*" I asked the original man with the beard.

"*Où?*" he inquired.

"*Je ne sais pas.*" I replied.

So he couldn't tell me.

Eventually seventeen blue-clad porters told me all at once, and I bounded out of my seat into Puissi-Ventreux.

Of course, this did not mean that I had really arrived either. Swiss mountains are never in the actual places you have to go to get to them, and Puissi-Ventreux was merely the village I had to get to to get to either Fuizzière or Chou-le-Buibon, if I had to get to either of them to get to Altfrau — which I probably didn't. Altfrau was my mountain.

"*Quoi maintenant?*" I asked the seventeen porters when I had got my breath.

They all shouted at me again. The difference between English porters and Continental porters is that the English porters never answer you at all, whereas the Continental porters answer you in dozens. They also point. These ones pointed to a mountain railway.

I wasn't very keen on the mountain railway. It went straight up, and I prefer those that go straight along. It went straight up two thousand feet, and then it got tired and poured me out into a mountain lift that took me straight up another two thousand feet and deposited me on a mountain shelf.

I supposed the mountain shelf was Fuizzière or Chou-le-Buibon, though it didn't seem to be anywhere. The one inhabitant informed me that it was Vitry-Jalouse.

"*Pourquoi?*" I demanded.

"*Parceque?*" he replied.

Then "*Où est Altfrau?*" I inquired.

"*Voyez!*" he answered, and pointed above us to an enormous white thing that in England would be just a cloud. I was given to understand that Altfrau was beyond that.

"*Pas possible!*" I exclaimed.

"*Pourquoi?*" he asked.

"*Parceque.*" I replied.

He invited me to enter a sort of a trap with a sort of a horse. Then he drove me rapidly along the shelf. As there was a comfortable six inches on either side of the wheels and the precipices were not more than four or five thousand feet, he slept while he drove, and woke up with a start when we had reached another mountain lift.

The official at the lift told me that the lift ascended to the Schnitzel Valley and that his mother had goitre. The combination finished me, and as the lift went down as well as up, I went down and stayed down.

And forty-eight hours later I was lying flat on the sea-level of dear old Brighton.

Where, I may add, I found my red-faced friend doing the same thing.

A different article by Thomas Hannan, M.A., evokes all kind of memories,

**Byron In Switzerland** "The Scotsman" 27th July.

On the north shore of the Lake of Geneva lies the little town of Ouchy. A house there, which faces the Lake, has a marble slab set in the wall to the left of the doorway, with this inscription:— "In this house, June 1816, Lord Byron wrote *The Prisoner of Chillon*, thereby adding one more deathless association to the already immortalised localities of the Lake. — T.M. The gift of a lover of Ouchy."

High on the mountainside above Ouchy is Lausanne, of which Ouchy may be called a suburb; and above Lausanne, much higher and near the Sauvabellin Wood, is Le Signal des Belles Roches, from which is obtained a magnificent view of the valley of the Rhône on the east, and the city of Geneva on the west. Geneva and Lausanne have been much in the public eye for some time now, and recently little Ouchy has had its moment of importance.

In January 1815, Byron married Anne Isabella Milbanke, and in January 1816 she left him and returned to her parents. Byron then went abroad. First he went to Ostend, whence he proceeded to Brussels. He remained there a short time, long enough to enable him to visit the field of Waterloo, and to obtain the inspiration which produced the magnificent series of stanzas in *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, beginning with the lines:

Stop! — for thy tread is on an Empire's dust!

An earthquake's spoil is sepulchred below!

These are the stanzas which contain the description of the "sound of revelry by night," the brain with the music of the dance, the tramp of men, the rattle of the wheels of the gun-carriage, the scream of the bagpipes, and the boom of the distant guns in a poetic confusion which is splendidly graphic.

From Brussels the poet proceeded up the Rhine to Bâle. Thence he continued his journey to Berne; and from that city he went on to Lausanne and Geneva. At Geneva he spent some time at the Hotel Secheron, and met Percy Bysshe Shelley. It was the first time that the two poets had met, and the two men, who were both very largely at war with the rest of the world, were so drawn to each other that a great friendship sprang up. They were practically always together, and on one occasion the Lake of Geneva almost anticipated Shelley's ultimate fate.

They were in a boat off Meillerie, which is on the French side of the Lake, opposite Lausanne; and Byron described the adventure in the following words:— "The boat was nearly wrecked near the very spot where St. Preux and Julia were in danger of being drowned. It would have been classical to have been lost there, but not agreeable. I ran no risks, being so near the rocks and a good swimmer, but our party were wet and incommoded."

This meeting with Shelley and his friends added one more to the scandals of Byron's life, while it also let to much innocent poetical enjoyment.

The poet's excursions around the Lake of Geneva are traced by allusions in his poems.

In *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* he sings:—

Lake Leman woos me with its crystal face.  
In another passage says:—

But I have seen the soaring Jungfrau rear  
Her never-trodden snow, and seen the hoar  
Glaciers of bleak Mont Blanc both far and  
near,

And in Chimari heard the thunder-hills of  
fear.

In writing "never-trodden snow," Byron, for his poetical purpose, chose to ignore the fact that the two Meyers had four years before conquered the Jungfrau.

#### The Scottish Mountains.

Anyone who knows the Lake of Geneva can imagine the joy with which the romantic Byron roamed from end to end of the picturesque neighbourhood. He had loved the mountains, and he dated his love of the mountains from a visit which he made to Ballater from Aberdeen in 1796 when he was barely eight years old:— "From this period I date my love of mountainous countries. I can never forget the effect years afterwards in England, of the only thing I had long seen, even in miniature, of a mountain in the Malvern Hills." In his ode to "Lachin y Gair" he sang—

Years have rolled on, Loch na Garr, since I  
left you,

Years must elapse ere I tread you again;  
Nature of verdure and flowers has bereft  
you,

Yet still are you dearer than Albion's  
plain.

The vividness of his Scottish impressions of the scenery is brought out in *The Adieu* —  
Adieu, ye mountains of the clime,  
Where grew my youthful years;

Where Loch na Garr in snows sublime

His giant summit rears.

Why did my childhood wander forth

From you, ye regions of the North.

With sons of pride to roam?

Why did I quit my Highland cave?

Marr's dusky heath? And Dee's clear  
wave?

To seek a Sotheron home?

#### The Lake of Geneva.

With sentiments such as these, and with a yearning after the mountains of his childhood, the Lake of Geneva and its surroundings appealed to him with a powerful call. From Geneva he could see the majestic Mont Blanc soaring into the sky to its height of three miles. When he and Shelley were in their boat they could see from many positions the snow topped Dent du Midi. To the north and north-west lie the mountains of Jura. On the northern shore of the Lake are the charming little towns so popular now as holiday resorts — Vevey, Clarens, Montreux, Territet, Veytaux-Chillon, and others. Byron knew their beauty, and sang of "sweet Clarens" —

Clarens, sweet Clarens, birthplace of deep  
Love,

Thine air is the young breath of passionate  
thought;

Thy trees take root in Love: the snows above

The very Glaciers have his colours caught.

Two of the towns go back for their origin to the days when they bore the Latin names of Lausonius and Viviscum. Lausanne does not occupy quite its ancient position, but stands high on the mountain side, whence the eye of Byron must often have crossed the lake to the grand summits of "La Haute Savoie." Seen on a summer day, with the air clear and the surface of the lake blue it is an entrancing sight. Seen after the first snow has fallen, when the period of misty dullness which precedes the frosty clearness of winter has not yet arrived, each peak of the almost innumerable mountains is picked out in white, distinct and near. The setting sun suffuses the whitened mountains with a rosy glow; the sky in the west assumes the hue of fire; and the lake becomes a sea of gold.

#### A Thunderstorm.

But the view is not always peaceful and rose-coloured. A thunderstorm on the lake is something to be remembered; and Byron saw the lake in a stormy mood. Some years ago I spent nine weeks in three visits in three seasons of one year, and I saw the lake in many moods.

On one occasion I stood a considerable height above Lausanne, and looked down upon the lake, where a great black cloud appeared on the western horizon, gradually rising, and giving place to a livid, lurid glow. The wind fell, until at last nothing seemed to stir, except the black cloud and the lividness, which slowly, very slowly, advanced along the lake from the Geneva end. Then suddenly the storm broke over the lake and the city.

There were no peals of thunder — it was a continuous rattle and roar, without intermission. The lightning played along the western horizon in front of the cloud, in blinding flashes without interval apparent to the eye. The spectacle suggested nothing so much as an advancing host of skirmishers in the clouds, their rifles blazing out fiery destruction before them.

Then the aerial conflict seemed overhead in a glare of light, and such hail fell as I had never seen before. That thunderstorm of October 1911 on the Lake of Geneva will long be remembered; the newspapers of the next few days declared that such a storm had not been known for thirty years.

#### The Prisoner of Chillon.

Byron's stay in Switzerland is most notable for the writing of *The Prisoner of Chillon*, which has given to the Chateau de Chillon its fame and interest. The story begins with words which have an uneasy movement, suitable to the mood of a released prisoner who has not for long had opportunity for words:—

My hair is grey, but not with years,

Nor grew it white

In a single night,

As men's have grown from sudden fears.

And then he unfolds the story. His hero's father had persisted at the stake for adhering to reformed Christianity. This father left six sons, all of whom suffered in turn for their faith. One was burnt at the stake; two fell fighting in the cause of their religion; the remaining three were cast into the dungeon of the Chateau de Chillon; and he who is supposed to tell the story survives alone, Bonnard, the eldest. It is a story full of poetry and pathos, as worded by Byron; and *The Prisoner of Chillon* is a monument of the genius of Byron, who invested his hero with such a halo. But it is not the historical account of Bonnard; and a comparison of poem and history is very interesting.

#### Bonnard's History.

François de Bonnard was the son of Louis de Bonnard, Lord of Lumes, and was born in 1496. In 1510 his uncle, Jean Aimé de Bonnard, resigned to him the Priory of the Monastery of St. Victor, which was close to Geneva. He was a Savoyard by race and birth, but a devoted patriot of Geneva. In 1519 the Duke of Savoy entered Geneva, and Bonnard left, but was betrayed by two friends, and detained in captivity two years at Grolée — not for his religion. Whether he escaped or was released, the story in French which Byron incorporated in the "Advertisement" to the poem does not say, but he continued his patriotic service to Geneva. In 1530, when on a journey, he was captured by robbers, who first despoiled him and then handed him over to the Duke. It was then that he was placed in the Chateau de Chillon, where he remained without trial for six years, until the Chateau was captured by the inhabitants of Bern.

He returned to Geneva, which was now free, and he received many honours, including a pension of 200 crowns and the house formerly occupied by the Vicar-General. He died in 1571, when somewhere about 75 years of age.

His father was not persecuted, so far as history tells; the record says nothing about brothers; and it does not even say that he was chained to a pillar. There are no foot-worn marks in the dungeons exhibited to the public, and he was probably comparatively comfortable in one of the rooms.

#### Mark Twain's View.

Mark Twain visited the Chateau, and recorded his impressions in *The Innocents Abroad*. He inclined strongly to the view that Bonnard ought to have been very comfortable. This does not detract from the beauty of Byron's poem, the story of which will always appeal to the lover of liberty, and will continue to send multitudes to Chillon to see the place of a heart-rending tragedy which has become real to sentiment though unreal to history.

I don't feel like writing anything of a controversial nature to-day. It's too hot and it's too near the happy holiday we have just spent. And besides, does not a holiday teach you that the World goes on just the same, day after day and that if everybody left off worrying for a week and left the worries to take care of themselves, they might perhaps sort themselves out by themselves and the happy returner from the holiday would find everything nicely ordered and placed, fresh and sweet. I often wonder whether this would not also be true of politics?

I hear from "home" that the 1st of August celebrations passed off wonderfully well. Some of the speeches made and which were sent to me are truly splendid and I should like to draw my readers attention most especially to a very deeply felt, well reasoned article by Conrad Falk which appeared in the Neue Zürcher Zeitung. I wish that every man and every woman could read that article.

From our Editor who was touring the Grisons, I have received a post-card from Berne telling me how wonderful it was. I bet he could direct a stranger to the "La Casa."

### CITY SWISS CLUB. Célébration de la Fête Nationale.

Dans son numéro de samedi dernier, le "Swiss Observer" a publié la lettre que notre Ministre, Monsieur Paravicini, avait adressée aux différentes sociétés de la colonie à l'occasion de notre Fête Nationale. Les lecteurs y auront vu que les circonstances du moment ont empêché, cette année encore, l'organisation d'une manifestation commune de toute la colonie pour rendre hommage une fois de plus à la sagesse de nos ancêtres, pour faire aussi acte de foi et témoigner notre attachement à la Mère-Patrie.

Alors que de Paris nous arrive l'écho de la réunion de la plupart des sociétés suisses sur la prairie de St. Mandé; de Berlin, que la colonie suisse de cette capitale a fêté le 1er août ainsi qu'elle le fait depuis des années; de Vienne, que deux cents

compatriotes environ ont répondu à l'invitation d'un Comité de la Fête Nationale afin de célébrer dignement ce jour d'anniversaire, l'on regrettera que la commémoration de la fondation de notre vieille République une et indivisible ait dû être laissée ici à l'initiative individuelle de chaque société de notre colonie. Ce que Paris, Berlin, Vienne ont fait se dira, sans doute, de bien d'autres colonies suisses dans le vaste monde. Et d'aucuns réfléchiront, non sans secouer la tête en signe d'incompréhension, qu'il n'y a pas bien longtemps, par un beau soir de juin, plus de neuf cents Suisses et Suissesses de Londres se réunirent sous un même toit pour entendre la voix du Pays, pour chanter les beautés de la Patrie, pour communier en un mot avec elle. Pourquoi cela n'est-il plus possible, six semaines plus tard, le 1er août?

Mais cela soit dit en passant. La tâche de votre rapporteur improvisé est de faire un compte-rendu de la soirée du City Swiss Club, au Brent Bridge Hotel, Hendon.

D'ordinaire, l'assemblée administrative mensuelle d'août, qui normalement devait avoir lieu ce soir-là, réunit à peine le quorum nécessaire; beaucoup de membres sont en vacances, d'autres ne viennent jamais été ou hiver, même parmi les fidèles on trouve, peut-être avec raison, que l'air du jardin ou de la campagne est préférable en août à celui d'un local de société.

Mais cette fois-ci, ceux que les affaires avaient retenus de ce côté de la Manche ne laissèrent passer l'occasion de faire cause commune avec leurs compatriotes du Club; accompagnés de leurs familles et de leurs amis, ils se rendirent à Hendon. Il devait bien y avoir plus de cent convives au dîner, pour applaudir d'abord le message patriotique du Ministre, dont le Président du Club, Monsieur Henri Senn, donna lecture, puis les paroles élevées de ce dernier, que nous avons le plaisir de reproduire ci-après:

Ladies and Gentlemen:—

I thank you all for having honoured this auspicious occasion.

Our meeting to-day coincides with our National day. A day when every Swiss at home and abroad thinks of his or her Country with gratitude and with that love and affection which fill the heart of every true citizen of our Confederation.

Our English Friends present here, through their association with Switzerland and the Swiss, realise the attachment we have for our Country and I hope that they will enter into the spirit of our festive mood.

In our Homeland at this very moment Beacons on all the Mountains throw their light of joy into the Valleys. Everybody in the Swiss dales is rejoicing. Music and song send their melodious sounds far and near. On the 1st August we Swiss show the World that we are proud to be Swiss. We are proud to belong to that small, independent and free Country in the heart of Europe. We are proud to belong to that Confederation which was founded on our glorious "Rutli" in 1291 by three valiant men.

We Swiss abroad feel more than ever on the 1st of August the ties which bind us to the soil of our Ancestors. Sweet are the memories of the happy days we spent in the fair fields of Helvetia. Tender thoughts go to those we love at Home. We feel that although in a strange but hospitable land our innermost hearts are still rooted in our mountain homes. Never let us forget, at home or abroad, the solemn oath of the three founders of our Confederation:—

WIR WOLLEN SEIN EIN EINIG  
VOLK VON BRUEDERN.

Let us abide by this. Let us especially in these difficult times give each other the hand and with Swiss faith and loyalty uphold the traditions of Helvetia.

Long Live Switzerland.

Inutile de dire que les toasts traditionnels furent honorés avec toute la ferveur coutumière et que, sous l'inspiration du Drapeau Fédéral, du message du Ministre et du discours présidentiel, les paroles du "Rufst Du, mein Vaterland" et du "O Monts indépendants" s'élevèrent plus solennelles que jamais en une parfaite harmonie de tous les coeurs et de toutes les âmes.

Une pianiste sympathique, Mademoiselle Montuschi, fille d'un membre passif très dévoué du City Swiss Club, voulut bien agréer cette soirée de plusieurs solos très appréciés et chaleureusement applaudis.

Pour une fois il faisait beau temps et tout le monde put jouir de la beauté et de la fraîcheur des jardins du Brent Bridge Hotel, avant et après le dîner.

Et la fête se termina, comme presque toutes les fêtes du City Swiss Club, par la danse, qu'égayait un lampion rouge à la Croix Blanche rappelant les scènes de maintes villes et de maints villages au pays.

J.Z.

### UNION HELVETIA CLUB. FIRST OF AUGUST CELEBRATION.

One of the most successful patriotic gatherings our Club held for a good many years, was fêted in a truly National spirit, by a good many of our Members and friends young and old, present on the occasion.

The rush for tickets was so great, that even the 250 supplied by our printers proved insufficient and we regret to state, that many of our friends had to be turned away for lack of accommodation. From the beginning the space for dancing was limited, but despite this, the whole gathering bore up to this ordeal splendidly.

A good part of the Programme and the Decorations are due to our indefatigable Committee Member, Mr. J. Sermier and Miss Sermier. Gaily decorated Lanterns of the 22 Cantons and a most artistic and appropriate background, gave the whole a truly National colouring. — Our Club-Band made every effort to enliven our old Swiss songs and tunes, followed by a few well selected songs given by Mr. L. Helrin and Miss Schulz, who were loudly applauded. The greatest applause, however, was reserved for the "National Display" given by 23 charming ladies, representing the HELVETIA and the 22 cantons. Carried out with wonderful accuracy, it fully merited the praise given, even by professionals, considering the short training of our amateurs.

Mr. A. Indermaur, President of the Administration and Chairman of the Board of Directors then concluded the official programme, with a well chosen patriotic address, mentioning many points from our past history. After thanking the ladies and artists for their excellent performance and all those, who contributed towards the success of the evening, he proceeded to read a letter addressed to him by our Minister, Monsieur C. R. Paravicini, details of which were published in the last issue of the "Swiss Observer." Our President expressing his thanks for the interest taken by the Minister in our Society, gave his assurance, that our Society could always be relied upon, and would take a pride to serve our National cause.

We also wish to express our due appreciation of a similar gathering held earlier in the afternoon, by the Students of the Swiss Mercantile Society, under the leadership of their able and esteemed Secretary, Mr. J. J. Schneider. A good many of the students joined us in the evening, which support our Management appreciated very highly.

The dancing and merrymaking continued unabated till 3 o'clock a.m., by which time the Management thought it expedient to call a halt, especially for the benefit of those who may be called to do their duty later in the day!

J. J. KELLER, Secretary.

### LE PARC NATIONAL SUISSE.

L'âme du peuple rhétique était si fortement attachée au culte de la nature qu'il fallut au christianisme plus d'un siècle et demi pour supplanter, dans cet abrupt pays montagnard, la croyance païenne qui dictait l'adoration des arbres. Le dernier arbre considéré comme sacré dans l'Engadine, un imposant sapin rouge, s'élevait près de San Guerg, aux environs du village de Scaufs, et fut détruit lors de l'avènement de la Réformation. *Tempus fugit.* Et l'amélioration des moyens de communications, le triomphe du chemin de fer, ébranla de plus en plus l'étroit contact des hommes avec la création. La transformation de l'âme humaine devint si complète que l'on se mit peu à peu à brûler ce que l'on adorait précédemment. Dès le Moyen Age, les autorités soucieuses de la protection de la nature dictèrent des règlements à ce sujet; certaines forêts furent interdites à l'exploitation et des asiles furent prévus pour le gibier, afin de parer efficacement à la destruction prématurée des plantes et des animaux qui faisaient la beauté du paysage. Le triomphe de l'âge de la science et de la technique toute-puissante qui a conduit à une exploitation à outrance de toutes les forces de la nature, ont donné au danger de pillage complet de certains éléments de la création, à la disparition de certaines plantes et de certains animaux plutôt rares un caractère de pressante actualité. Il est étonnant de constater que les Américains du Nord, hommes d'affaires par excellence, aient reconnu les premiers que cette exploitation de la nature devait avoir une limite; c'est ainsi que le premier parc pour la protection de la nature fut aménagé dans le pays du dollar. L'exemple fut suivi en Europe et dès le commencement de notre siècle les efforts tendirent, dans plusieurs pays, à créer des domaines semblables pour la protection, contre les attaques des hommes, des plantes et des animaux et pour leur conserver en même temps la vie et l'entourage que la création leur a fixés. C'est par la fondation d'une Alliance suisse pour la protection de la nature, en 1909, que la réalisation de ce projet fut entreprise en Suisse également. A la recherche d'un domaine approprié, aussi vierge que possible de toute aliénation, riche d'une faune et d'une flore très variées, assez étendu en largeur et