

**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:** - (1936)  
**Heft:** 740

**Artikel:** A Yorkshirewoman in Switzerland a hundred years ago [the end]  
**Autor:** Green, Mollie  
**DOI:** <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-686970>

### **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:** 29.01.2025

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

posed of by simply pointing out that Switzerland's political neutrality in no wise implies moral neutrality. The great majority of the Swiss people applauded the Allied victory of 1918. For them it meant the end of four long years of anguish, privation, armed vigilance, and philanthropic effort. Neutrality for the Switzerland of the twentieth century is primarily a form of its independence. The Confederation, encircled by three or four Powers all of which on occasion try to draw it into its orbit, must remain friendly toward each without binding itself to any of them.

"The voluntary neutrality practised by Switzerland is also essential to its system of equality. In this way only can there be an equilibrium of twenty-two Sovereign States, three races, and three or four linguistic communities. Each of these communities draws part of its spiritual strength from the larger communities to which it is outwardly attached. Switzerland, as a nation, would perish if it could not refresh itself at the living sources of the great cultural traditions which its diverse races and languages represent. The French-Swiss mind looks primarily towards France, the Italian-Swiss towards Italy, and the German-Swiss towards Germany. Each of them feels that in its Swiss association it represents its own cultural homeland, while neutrality becomes a form of tolerance and opens the way for the interpenetration of Switzerland's three minds and three cultures, which are otherwise perfectly independent.

The foregoing was enunciated before Sanctions. The trouble is that it might also have been enunciated before the League of Nations. Like others, Switzerland is apt conveniently to overlook that in 1919 she signed things — undertook without reserve to join in collective action in certain eventualities. That the Confederation stands in special case, no one would dream of denying, yet its special case was no different in 1919 from what it is to-day. It will be for the Swiss themselves to experience whether a truer and a safer "neutrality" may not have resided in stricter fidelity to the League; also time will show whether, having acted as turntable in so many things — international transport and in-

vestment, to name two notable examples — Switzerland can likewise aspire to be a turntable in tremendous political happenings, whether she can hope to have the best of three worlds, now by indulging Fascism, now the Nazis, now France. The last lost no time in firmly dissenting from the present comfortable reading of "neutrality." Since, of course, the logical deduction must be that the Confederation would similarly decline to fulfil its signature were Sanctions one day applied against a contiguous Germany.

The numerical picture of Switzerland's three cultural entities leaves no option but such deduction. In a population of 4,000,000, 71 per cent. of citizens are German-Swiss, 21 per cent. French, and a little over 6 per cent. Italian (the tiny balance is Romansch). M. Moffa justifies the non-application of full Sanctions by the presence in the Confederation of under 200,000 of Italian origin. How much more so would he be obliged to be lenient towards a sanctioned Germany, with well over 2,500,000 of German origin in the Confederation!

Over-simplification must be fought ever, yet it does seem that a searchlight can be successfully enough switched on to Switzerland, revealing a good deal of her present state, if one contemplates her current "neutrality" action as having been the outcome of three major influences. Firstly, a deep distaste for change of any kind. Secondly, the desire of a people *très commerçant* to remain "in" with all three client-neighbours of such high purchasing potentialities. Thirdly, Governmental disinclination to bear down on Fascism in view of specific domestic phenomena.

We all have our besetting sins. Ours, seemingly, is hypocrisy, France's, vanity, Germany's, bullying, Italy's, self-dramatization. Switzerland's may well be middle-class stogginess that declines all change. "As few jolty as possible." No jolting over Sanctions, for instance. "As we were!" You see this distaste for change all over the place. In manners and morals as well as in politics and economics, experimentation is avoided. Office-holders are mostly kept on till their deaths or voluntary retirement.

## A YORKSHIREWOMAN IN SWITZERLAND A HUNDRED YEARS AGO.

By MOLLIE GREEN.

(Continued).

Slept at Schaffhausen on the 30th, and proceeded to Constance on Sunday the 1st instant ... Wednesday the 4th inst. Strolled over the convent of Münsterlingen, drank some excellent wine in the cellar (the long vaulted cellars full of huge casks that hold 5 or 6,000 bottles, are worth seeing), and shook hands with the lady abbess ... mounted the hills (magnificent views of the lake) to the beautiful and romantically situated little town of St. Gall. The abbey church is the most beautiful Grecian (Corinthian) church we have ever seen — the view from the top of Freudenberg (immediately above the town of St. Gall) is magnificent. In fact we admire St. Gall exceedingly.

... Left Trogen for Rheineck, to see the junction of the Rhine with the Lake of Constance, and then came here (2 leagues further) to see this lively little capital of the lake, a pretty village — the emporium for corn from Suabia, and for all the traffic of the lake. We meant to have come from Rheineck by water, but the lake was too rough — 'tis literally like a sea — the waves splashed against the carriage as we drove along. The road from Trogen to Rheineck is so mountainous, we walked 5 miles out of the nine, the ascents and descents being really tremendous — but, literally, our eyes are always more tired than our legs — the scene changes at almost every step, that our visionary powers have, absolutely, no rest. ... The people seem to meet together, all hereabouts, to sing, in an evening and really sing, all in concert very well — they sing or gurgle the Tyrolese air — if you can imagine this beautiful air sung in a *beautiful, vox-humana, turkey — cock-splutter*, perhaps you can have some idea of the Tyrolese air as executed by the throat of a German-Swiss peasant — quite little boys and girls do it alike well."

Miss Lister and her friends pursued their journey through the Valley of the Rhine to Coire, and were "on the tiptoe of expectation" to see the "celebrated baths of Pfaffers," as Miss Lister expressed it. "The frightful gorge leading to the source of these baths" she continued, "is said to be unique in Europe. You would have laughed to see us mounted — such horses! such saddles! We had a guide at each horse's head — not more than needful — I could not have believed that horses could climb such a road — in many places about a yard wide — steep, wooded rock on one side; a frightful precipice down to the foaming Tamina on the other — we passed through the valley of Valens, and, having ridden an hour and a quarter, could ride no farther — the mountains so steep, that, tho' the path was

cut in traverses, it was almost impossible to walk steadily down it — after walking 25 minutes, came down upon the baths — the valley at the foot of the mountains which are, surely, seven or eight hundred feet high, almost perpendicular on each side — just broad enough for the narrow river and the line of buildings capable of accommodating two or three hundred persons, high and low, well packed above and below — no flat ground about the baths — the bare rock behind appears quite perpendicular ... In the long passages within the building, are shops ... But all was nothing to the frightful passage to the Tource — ten minutes' walk thro' this frightful gorge or cavern, over a couple of planks (very occasionally three planks in breadth), without any guard on the side next the water, wet and slippery with the dropping from the rock — deep below, the foaming rapids of the Tamina; — above a lofty cavern, (high as the highest point of Castleton cavern), feebly lighted by two or three little breaks — the light from above — one false step, and you are lost. Never in my life, did I see anything of the kind so appallingly fine ... We are off for the Splügen ... crossed the Splügen mountain (the much talked of new road into Italy, begun, as well as that over the St. Bernardino, in 1819, and finished in 1825) and descended by one of the most frightfully magnificent roads in Europe into the fine valley of Chiavenna. ... We had delicious figs, apricots, pears, gooseberries and cherries."

The three English travellers then went through the Tyrol and on to the Italian lakes. Then they returned to Geneva, stopping on the way at Clarens. "... we were much pleased with the village of Clarens, and sat an hour in the house where Lord Byron would be taken, and spent two or three days. A young lady who went the other day, kissed his bed twenty times. The house his lordship had at Cologne, near here, seems to have the loveliest situation hereabouts. Lady Byron went to the house at Clarens, but the old woman was from home, had taken the key of the room with her, and her ladyship could not see it. Lord Byron seems to have been much liked by the people around him. The old woman told us, she had cried like a child when she heard of his death. We were almost horrorstruck on taking up a Lausanne Gazette at Sion (on Wed. the 22nd inst.) to read the account of the death of Mr. Canning. All Switzerland (protestant Switzerland!) they told us, had wept over him as the best friend of Switzerland, of Europe, and of liberty!

September 11th, Berne. "... the people are civil — the shopkeepers take no advantage of strangers — persons and things are alike neat and clean — the city — the country — the cottages — the costumes — all are picturesque and charming ... We were at Hoffwyl yesterday, and

There is much to be said for a country of such levelling in all things as Switzerland shows, with its wide distribution of wealth, its civic discipline deriving from the play of a genuine class equality, its (late-come) religious tolerance, its fraternising institutions bringing all lavers together for patriotic, sporting and musical festivities, its unique mingling of race and language under the one flag. "No change" enthusiasts point to it all as the inheritance that must be shielded at every cost. Yet there is another side to the story.

Switzerland's vaunted "innate conservatism" can be fearfully injurious, as is being currently demonstrated in the case of two o'erspreading national problems: remaining on gold and the railways.

Under the demand of the great banking corporations which sprang from the fat years, the Government must stick to its fetish, but in so doing it must needs order still further deflation to meet a Budget deficit of £4,000,000. (That may not sound much, but it is a quarter of the national income, the equivalent of £182,000,000 with ourselves.) New taxes, further compression of State salaries, further administrative cuts — the usual trio has just been ordered once again.

As for the railways, which are State controlled, there are losing £7 a minute. Their present debt is over £200,000,000, and it mounts daily to the tune one can imagine. The railways have long been a notorious scandal of over-staffing, duplication, unheard-of wages, and resultant sky-high fares that drive all who can on to the roads. But the sumptuous trains with their posh staffs run on, over the most expensive, electrified, and mountainous system in Europe. Largely empty.

One would think something might be done about those trains. Well, an opportunity occurred last September when a referendum was taken on the revision of the Constitution. The Revisionists wanted to do something about the railways but lost the day by 501,000 votes to 194,000. I was in Bale that Sunday and watched the figures go up in the Marktplatz. Admittedly much else was under judgment: I am coming to that. But what other country would not have

exceedingly interested. M. Fellenberg's second son showed us all over, and was most attentive. You remember what a noise was made by Mr. Brougham's letters on the subject of this school.

If you have any letters for me from Mariana, will you forward them to Geneva, post restante there. We shall be obliged to return here — stay a day, and then hurry to Geneva whence we shall take the diligence for Lyons — stay one day there, and then make the best of our way home."

Only seven years elapsed before the charm of Switzerland lured Miss Lister to Geneva again.

"1834, July 1st. Geneva. We are very comfortable, have a very good apartment, and have a beautiful view of the mountains — (the river, the handsome bridge, finished six weeks ago, the quai, so improved with large, good, arched, stone buildings, that I should not know the place again) — are just under our windows ... Our luxury is mountain strawberries of which we make half our breakfast and almost all our dessert ... Things are not very cheap here, as you will suppose from our strawberries at breakfast this morning, costing four francs! — the same would have (cost) 30 or 40 sols (1½ or 2 francs) in Paris ... Great particularity about passports here, too — they say it is in consequence of the late business at Lyons.

July 22nd ... These 17 days upon muleback, making what is called the grand tour of Mont Blanc, have quite cured us both. We have really done great things — people would hardly believe us if we told them. We made Chamoni our headquarters, and were quite sorry to leave them. We mounted George (i.e. their coachman) on the baggage mule and left Eugénie with the carriage at Salenche, about twenty miles from Chamoni — large carriages not being able to get nearer. George did very well, and we enjoyed our mountain wanderings exceedingly. We traversed the principal passes immediately around Mt. Blanc, over snow and ice, and rock and precipices — such scrambling as nobody ever saw for four-footed animals in England. Of course, our hotels were not always magnificent. The friend who accompanied Miss Lister on this expedition then continues the letter, describing the places where they slept. "At Mottets we slept between the cows and the hayloft and at the village des Ferret there were two rooms, for us, guides, George, and the poor widow with eight children. We thought at first that George must sleep at the foot of our bed, but a bed was at last contrived for him in the room with the family ... (!!! Ed.) ... the people were very civil and attentive and we were really very tolerably comfortable, and I assure you these little adventures not only served us to laugh at, at the time, but they made us feel the comfort and value afterwards of a good hotel."

The End.