

Ubi bene ibi patria

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UBI BENE IBI PATRIA.

(The following addressed to the "City Swiss Club" has been kindly placed at our disposal for publication.)

This hackneyed classic may be applied with some force I believe when considering the difficulties confronting the Swiss Colony of London, and in particular the City Swiss Club in their efforts to obtain recruits among the Swiss born here.

The parentage of the Swiss born here is to be found on the father's side in the young Swiss who for very many years have been leaving Switzerland with the idea of improving their chance in life by a shorter or longer sojourn in England, of studying new business methods, of learning the language and generally of gaining all round valuable experience for the future.

And while we must not dogmatise from the particular to the general position it is at least arguable that most all these emigrants had at the back of their minds the hope that they would at some time return to their homeland.

It was just the same in olden times when it belonged to established custom and practice that a handcraftsman when he had finished his apprenticeship at home perhaps under his father, should sally forth as a handwerksbursch to this or that foreign country and spend a few years in foreign employment going from one town to another, "auf die Walz gehen" as it was called. Some did not return: one or the other married a daughter of his employer or found another wife but most of them returned and set up in business for themselves with the cachet of Ausland experience.

Similarly up to the last war the young merchant or banker travelled to the far corners of the world to make his fortune or at all events to fill his locker with good useful shot and shell, to help him along upon his return to his home. Most often did we find those Auslandschweizer returning who had resided in far off places, perhaps in the tropics and which bore no comparison with the special amenities vouchsafed to residents in Switzerland.

In parenthesis, it may be stated that many of these had amassed considerable riches which they hope to enjoy in their otium in a "civilized" country.

Reverting back to England as a kind of finishing school for the young hopefuls and enterprising who come over it is clear that conditions of life here are much more akin to conditions in Switzerland and that from this point of view it need not surprise some of us whilom emigrants stop here; we like life here.

To amass riches in this country is admittedly not so easy as it may have been in the East or in the Brazils or South American States but one may prosper financially without becoming a "Nabob" uncle from America" and England is a grand place to enjoy a well-earned competency, free and untrammelled just as in Switzerland.

But of course there are other and greater reasons which keen us here: there is for instance wedlock with an English woman.

The question may then arise what are the environments of such an Anglo-Swiss household?

Probably only English is spoken: the son will go to English schools, play games with English boys and in time will go out with an English best girl friend.—

Apart from an occasional holiday-trip to Switzerland the ties of this younger generation with it are of the slenderest.

Summing up while there is as a rule no difficulty about the first generation providing "bons Suisses" the likelihood is that the second generation is lukewarm for the reasons indicated.

What should we do about it?

Perhaps we could come to a gentleman's agreement with Master Cupid that he will ban mixed marriages between the Swiss and other Nationals!

Less jocose is the suggestion that we might establish Swiss Schools in the same way as the German Colony had them up to the outbreak of the great war: there was such a school in Islington and there was another for the Elite of the colony at Forest Hill; I believe there was also an Italian school in the Soho quarter.

But it must be borne in mind that these schools were only possible because they were located where a big aggregate of German respectively Italian Nationals resided in a comparatively small area; I do not know of any similar packed colonies among the Swiss in London.—

Another point may be made perhaps with more force behind it: before the great war the German colony had two important rallying centres, the one for the young being the Gymnastic Club in its own premises near St. Pancras Station and the other the Athenaeum Club for the City Merchants.

Can the Swiss Colony rise to something of this kind? albeit the size of our Colony is far smaller than the German Colony was.

Lastly I come to the question which, in my opinion, affects the Swiss born in this country more than any other: the military taxes. Some of us in order to foster the recruiting of "bons Suisses" registered our sons at our home-towns and made them Swiss in name and liable for this tax. These youngsters had no say in the matter and when the time came for paying the tax some of them jibed and advanced controversial arguments against paying it. In war conditions especially they found the tax disturbing and illogical. I do think that the Swiss Colony of London should urge the Swiss Government to abrogate the military tax so far levied upon Auslandschweizer.—

I regret that I have not been able to put anything more constructive before your Committee — the first generation can I fear do very little towards creating a second Swiss generation because the future belongs to the young and they will have a say in the matter. We must be realists.

After the war nationalism in the old sense may be less and less a force and we may become more and more cosmopolitan or internationals.

J. J. E.

(Amongst the foreign schools might also be included the Lycée Français, one of the chief activities of the Institut Français. Ed. S.O.)

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