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The Swiss seen by a Swiss . . .

"DEUTSCHSCHWEIZ v. SUISSE ROMANDE"

When I was at school, I used to get beaten up regularly once a month for laughing at my French-speaking friends, who weren't able to utter a single sentence in German, save "Dubischtumm". Of course, that didn't alter the point at issue. It is an acknowledged fact that our friends in the "Suisse Romande" take the least possible interest in languages other than their own. By way of contrast, the thing for well-bred northern girls to do is to spend a year in places like Corgémont or Villars. They usually come back after ten months, with a change of hair-style, and knowing less French than they did before.

A friend once told me that, if he could marry again, he would make sure to choose a "Romande" this time, for the two years of plain food he had already endured were just about as much as he could bear. This statement is rather unjust, and little did he say about his meal always being on the table when he came back from work.

It is said that one dresses very smartly on the shores of Lac Léman, but it is also said that Zurich is a very fashionable town. So we will be prudent and leave it at that.

We will not start to compare qualities, either, for how can you weigh the charm, gaiety and unconsciousness of the ones against the solidity, seriousness and efficiency of the others? Why is it that expressions like "die fräiche Wältsche" and "ces Suisses Teutons" are in existence? Do you think it is because the "Vaudois" cannot forget a certain day in 1536, when Bernese troops, under the command of Hans-Franz Nägeli, occupied the Canton of Vaud and hoisted their flag on Chillon Castle?

And I feel quite sure that the two Federal Inspectors, who ventured to hold an inquest on a black-marketing deal in Bulle, remembered the days of Morgarten, when they were on the point of being stoned by a furious crowd of bearded "Gruyériers".

However, the Bernese troops retired, the Federal Inspectors didn't get stoned, and since the flag of the "Jurassiens" has been officially recognized, everybody should be happy and satisfied.

Helveticus.

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ANGLO-SWISS DAY AT THE 32nd "COMPTOIR SUISSE" AT LAUSANNE.

The "Comptoir Suisse", which opened its doors for the 32nd time last month at Lausanne, was visited by an official delegation from this country.

To mark the occasion, the British visitors were invited to a dinner, on September 19th, as guests of the Management of the "Foire" at the Hotel Rive Reine at La Tour de Peilz.

Amongst the party, were the following: M. Patrick, Stratford Scrivener, British Minister in Berne, M. Henry de Torrenté, Swiss Minister in London, Sir Frank Nixon, President of the London Chamber of Commerce, Mr. A. Brown of the Institute of Incorporated Practitioners in Advertising, London, Mr. Cronshaw, President of the British Colour Council, London, Mr. E. Bower, of the Board of Trade, Mr. E. T. Lambert, British Consul General at Geneva, Mr. Whitthall, British Vice-Consul at Montreux, M. A. Maret, Président du Conseil d'Etat vaudois, Monsieur Failetaz, Directeur Général du "Comptoir", M. Masnata, Directeur de L'OSEC, M. Parker, Directeur Général de Nestlé, etc., etc.

Speeches were made by M. Failetaz, who extended a cordial welcome to the British guests, M. A. Maret, M. Scrivener, the British Minister, M. A. Brown and M. Henry de Torrenté.

We are pleased to re-produce our Minister's speech given on that occasion:

Mr. Chairman and Gentlemen,

Although my acceptance to be present amongst you to-night has been given with genuine pleasure, I could not help the suspicion that I have been invited in order to "sing for my supper". This is a penalty which one often has to pay; in Switzerland even more than anywhere else, then our capacity for speeches is mountainous. I would not be surprised if Mr. Scrivener's memoirs will not enlighten us on this point one day.

But in spite of such duties and in spite of the fact that I had to curtail my holiday, I assure you, that I find it delightful to assist at this meeting, which has been specially arranged to bring together British and Swiss authorities on commerce and trade. Such meetings between our two countries are, of course, quite unnecessary, if their purpose were but to further good relations between Great Britain and Switzerland. They are useful and desirable, because they give us a chance to tell each other what good fellows we are. All men are apt to purr, when invited to take part in a meeting of a mutual admiration society. Even Swiss stolidity and the British lust for understatement are bound to weaken before such treatment as the "Comptoir suisse" have prescribed for us to-night.

I regard myself as quite a solid link between Switzerland and Great Britain. This refers not so much to my physical properties as to an attitude of mind, a mixture of detachment and that queer feeling of being "at home", which most Swiss experience who live in Great Britain. Never has it been the slightest disadvantage to anyone, to be a Swiss in London. There is so much one can admire in your country and admire without envy.

Just see how differently you deal with complicated problems that agitate the public mind. We mobilise the whole political machine, with drafts, and bills, and party meetings, with speeches, sessions, conferences — until the thing goes down the drain on a referendum vote — your Parliaments, your Government, with customary, admirable "sang-froid", hand over the problem to a Royal Commission, and everyone is pacified.

There are many such differences, but I suppose my mission is really to prevent misunderstandings which might arise from them between us, and I would entreat my fellow-guests, as well as our generous hosts, to bear in mind that even friends are easily misunderstood.

I believe it was Mark Twain who told the story that if you entered the Swiss Parliament and shouted; "Waiter", every M.P. would get up and say: "Yes, Sir". I can assure my English friends that this imputed spirit of servility is non-existent in my country. It is not many centuries ago since we were regarded the most doughty fighters of Europe, and unkind princes were heard to say: "No money, no Swiss". But even if our business instincts were developed early, I would remind you also, that one of our present writers, when referring to camp visits made by the Swiss Red Cross during the recent war, reversed the saying and declared: "No Swiss, no money". So, in spite of the odium as hard-headed businessmen, we are also known to possess kind hearts.

I must, however, admit that we are a bit slow and sometimes even dense. We, Swiss, maintain that this peculiar quality becomes progressively more pronounced, the nearer we approach the administrative centre of our country. His Excellency Mr. Scrivener is no doubt best placed to judge the truth of this opinion. In mitigation of this doubtful claim, I would, however, refer him to the famous answer from a Bernese officer, whom the illustrious "Roi Soleil" approached with the words: "Ah, Monsieur, one says that you resemble me. Has your mother ever been to Paris?". He answered simply: "No, Sire, but my father was".

The British, too, of course, have their peculiarities. I need not remind you of those famous headlines, after the 1918 war, which greeted Londoners one foggy morning. "Continent isolated!" was the war cry of this paper. This view

is matched by the statement a young compatriot of mine, made on his first evening in London. In all naiveté he said: "You know, Sir, what strikes me most, is that everybody, even in the streets, speaks English. (Of course he did not know London.)"

One of the earliest Swiss travellers to Great Britain related the queer custom which decrees that after dinner the ladies should withdraw, whilst the gentlemen regather round the hospitable board for nuts, tobacco and wine. He found this strange, for in his view the ladies of England were so much better than the wine.

However, it may interest my compatriots to hear of a compliment paid our people in connection with the Swiss contribution to the Great Exhibition of 1851. The official report commented on our effort with these words: "Notwithstanding the geographical disadvantage of Switzerland, the inhabitants have, through their contribution to the Exhibition, incontestably proved to all the assembled nations of the earth what could be effected by energy, economy, industry and patience".

Those words are words of praise indeed.

I only hope, that what our English friends have seen to-day, will convince them, that at least energy and industry still exist in Switzerland. I fear the dinner which we shared to-night cannot be called a typical proof of economy; but at least you all have shown that patience, still, prevails, by listening so good-humouredly to my few words.

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