

# A Swiss play in London

Autor(en): **P.L.**

Objektyp: **Article**

Zeitschrift: **The Swiss observer : the journal of the Federation of Swiss Societies in the UK**

Band (Jahr): **- (1922)**

Heft 67

PDF erstellt am: **01.05.2024**

Persistenter Link: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-690303>

## **Nutzungsbedingungen**

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Inhalten der Zeitschriften. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern.

Die auf der Plattform e-periodica veröffentlichten Dokumente stehen für nicht-kommerzielle Zwecke in Lehre und Forschung sowie für die private Nutzung frei zur Verfügung. Einzelne Dateien oder Ausdrucke aus diesem Angebot können zusammen mit diesen Nutzungsbedingungen und den korrekten Herkunftsbezeichnungen weitergegeben werden.

Das Veröffentlichen von Bildern in Print- und Online-Publikationen ist nur mit vorheriger Genehmigung der Rechteinhaber erlaubt. Die systematische Speicherung von Teilen des elektronischen Angebots auf anderen Servern bedarf ebenfalls des schriftlichen Einverständnisses der Rechteinhaber.

## **Haftungsausschluss**

Alle Angaben erfolgen ohne Gewähr für Vollständigkeit oder Richtigkeit. Es wird keine Haftung übernommen für Schäden durch die Verwendung von Informationen aus diesem Online-Angebot oder durch das Fehlen von Informationen. Dies gilt auch für Inhalte Dritter, die über dieses Angebot zugänglich sind.

On the 9th of September Paul Schweizer, Honorary Professor at the University of Zurich, celebrated his 70th birthday. This prominent citizen of Zurich is the author of many important historical works.

\* \* \*

Frau Maja Matthei, the authoress and poetess, completed her 50th year on September the 6th at Zurich. One may recall, among the recent works this gifted woman has produced, her novel "Die Stadt am See," which depicts the beautiful scenery and life of Zurich; "Von Alltag und Sonntag"; and "Die guten Willens sind." Frau Matthei is also an active social worker and has edited several family magazines.

\* \* \*

#### Athletics.

At the international competition for putting-the-weight at Colmar, Swiss athletes gained three first prizes out of five events. The names of the winners are: Henri Graf, Berne; H. Fleuty, Chaux-de-Fonds; and Hermann Muser, Basle.

\* \* \*

#### OBITUARY.

Professor Johannes Messchaert died last Saturday at a Sanatorium at Küssnacht where he had gone to recuperate after an operation. Messchaert was born in 1857 at Hoorn in Holland; he was trained as a singer in the conservatoriums of Berlin and became the most celebrated bass of his day. He retired at the height of his fame and devoted himself to teaching his art, which united a rare perfection of technique and musical interpretation. Those who were fortunate enough to hear him in full possession of his vocal powers will never forget his rendering of Loewe's ballads or Brahms' songs; and the Conservatorium of Zurich was proud to possess him for the past few years as their leading teacher of singing.

### EXTRACTS FROM SWISS PAPERS.

**A Lavaux.**—Dimanche, par une journée toute ensoleillée, il faisait chaud pour parcourir le superbe vignoble du Dézaley de la Ville de Lausanne, d'Oron, d'Epesses et de Cully. La récolte, franche de maladie, est superbe; le raisin traluit déjà et par-ci, par-là, certains parchets promettent une riche vendange, que l'on peut estimer à 2000 litres la pose dans les bas de Cully, 2500 litres dans les vignes du Dézaley et de 2500 à 3000 litres dans les vignes d'Epesses et sur les hauts. Si l'on est favorisé de quelques semaines chaudes, le raisin va finir de se dorer et Lavaux pourra maintenir sa réputation pour la qualité de son vin. Le raisin est plus gros qu'à La Côte et tout fait prévoir que les vigneronns de Lavaux seront un peu dédommagés en 1922 de la maigre récolte de 1921, en partie anéantie par les gelées de mai. ("Journal d'Aubonne.")

\* \* \*

**Un congrès de la danse.**—Le congrès de l'Académie chorégraphique suisse a été tenu à Neuchâtel, sous la présidence de M. G. Gester. Quarante-quatre membres avaient répondu à l'appel du comité.

L'assemblée s'est levée pour honorer la mémoire de MM. J. J. Muller et L. Galley, de Glaris et Fribourg, tous deux membres honoraires de l'Académie, décédés au cours du dernier exercice.

Il a été donné lecture d'une adresse de M. André de Fouquières, souhaitant au congrès suisse une entière réussite. Les Académies étrangères unies officiellement à celle de Suisse, ont également fait part de leurs vœux.

Mlle. Régner, de l'Opéra, dirigeant une des premières écoles de Paris, a dansé quatre danses de sa composition.

Le congrès a examiné la concurrence faite aux professeurs établis par les maîtres d'occasion, fonctionnaires, employés, artisans etc. et des démarches seront faites de toutes façons pour sauvegarder les intérêts des membres de l'Académie.

("Gazette de Lausanne.")

**Une périlleuse excursion.**—Trois voyageurs s'étaient engagés mercredi après-midi dans les gorges de l'Aar, à Meiringen. La pluie tombait serrée; la rivière était grosse et commençait à charrier de fortes billes de bois. Hâtant leur retour, les trois excursionnistes trouvèrent une partie de la galerie enlevée par le courant; cherchant une autre issue, le même cas s'était produit en amont de ce torrent démonté. La caravane se trouvait donc isolée, n'ayant pour dernier secours que les escaliers du "Lamme," sans autre issue qu'un entonnoir de rochers.

Un de nos compatriotes, qui faisait partie de la caravane, recommanda à ses compagnons, un Anglais et une jeune Anglaise, de s'abriter sous une grotte et d'attendre les secours qu'il allait chercher. Après plusieurs tentatives et de vigoureuses varappées, agrémentées de nombreuses glissades et d'une pluie diluvienne, il atteignit cependant un sentier qui lui permit d'aller à Meiringen chercher du secours; une colonne partit aussitôt, munie de cordes, et rentra vers les 7 heures du soir avec les deux rescapés.

L'Aar a débordé à tel point que la ligne de chemin de fer a été submergée et un service d'automobiles, rapidement organisé, a permis de transporter les voyageurs jusqu'à Interlaken, où, malgré le retard, le train de Berne les attendait encore.

("La Suisse.")

\* \* \*

**Des nègres qui parlent le schwyzerdeutsch!**—Dans un journal d'Argovie, un de nos compatriotes établi en Amérique raconte l'épisode suivant:

"Aux environs de Tampa, dans l'Etat de Floride, près du golfe du Mexique, je devais visiter une école de culture de palmiers, dirigée par un sieur John César. Ayant donc pénétré dans la cour, j'avisai deux nègres qui s'y trouvaient et leur demandai si M. César était à la maison. Ces derniers répondirent dans le plus pur dialecte argovien! Vous jugez de mon étonnement. J'eus l'explication de cette énigme deux heures plus tard, lorsque le propriétaire rentra avec sa femme. M. John César m'expliqua qu'il avait quitté, il y a 30 ans, le canton d'Argovie. Les nègres et les Indiens de la plantation sont à son service depuis leur enfance. M. César leur a toujours parlé l'allemand de son pays; c'est ainsi que des nègres de la Floride parlent le dialecte argovien."

("Tribune de Genève.")

### A SWISS PLAY IN LONDON.

On Tuesday night the Apollo Theatre brought out a four-act play, "The Torch," by John Knittel. The author was educated in Basle, but has spent a great deal of his life in England, and introduced himself to the public last year by a first novel, "Aaron West" (published by Hodder & Stoughton) which, by the way, subsequently appeared as a serial in the "Basler National Zeitung." To say the important thing right at the beginning, "The Torch" had an enthusiastic reception on its first night. The success, of course, was due to a very large extent to the powerful representation of the principal character, Jurg Winkelried, by Maurice Moscovitch, who has been out of London for over a year and re-appeared for the first time on this occasion.

The play itself, which was produced by Theodore Komisarjevski, the former producer of the Moscow Art Theatre, combines in a curious way Swiss feelings with English stage traditions. The action is very complicated, and I wonder whether one ought not to call the play a melodrama. There are moments where the real tragedy appears, but there are others where you do not feel so convinced of it as you ought to be. Jurg Winkelried, a descendant of Arnold Winkelried and Mayor of Sempach, is the dominant character. He has a great deal of trouble with his children, whose mother died ten years previously. His daughter, Suzanne, runs after the stable boy; his son, George, has become sub-editor of a Communist paper in Lucerne; his son, Henry, has had to drop his university studies because he could not get on with his professors, and now he wanders about the house doing nothing, and all of them have forgotten the tenth anniversary of their mother's death; only Abel, the eldest, who farms in America, has sent his father a letter on this date. All of them decline to accompany the Mayor to the Sempach battle celebration, where he will have to carry the traditional Torch alone. Money matters are loudly discussed, political animosities—deepened by the presence of two Communistic friends whom George has brought home with him—bring about hard words upon both sides, and when Jurg finally shows the undesirable guests, who have abused the honour of his country, out of his

house and calls George's lady friend a prostitute, the unnatural son goes so far as to give his father a blow. On this Jurg loses all his self-control, and in despair and sorrow he seizes the Torch and sets fire to the barn and the house. This dramatic end of the act, which would suffice for the end of a play, was the sign for extremely hearty applause and innumerable calls for Moscovitch. In the second act we see how Jurg quickly resigns as Mayor, to the sorrow of his fellow-councillors, who hold him in high esteem. But the chalice has not yet been drunk to the dregs. His friend Veitel rushes in and announces that his daughter, Margaret, has committed suicide because she was expecting a child of which George Winkelried was the father, and he had refused to marry her. Jurg Winkelried calls back a solicitor to whom he had refused to sell his land a moment before, and gives him the whole lot for 100,000 francs, and of this he sends 30,000 francs to Veitel as a small consolation. Veitel has, it must be mentioned, had a loan of 25,000 francs from Jurg Winkelried, and in his despair he had just confessed to having lost it through speculation. Jurg has now left only what he needs to pay off his debts, and as a poor man he must go out into the world. The third act shows a different milieu altogether. We are in the room of the editor of the "Red Flag" at Lucerne, where we hear the amiable remarks which the different comrades fling at each other. George works ten hours a day, but has not even a bed to sleep on. The atmosphere becomes even more electrical when Jurg Winkelried suddenly turns up and succeeds in having an interview, under two pairs of eyes, with George. He announces the news of Margaret's death and compels him by the aid of a revolver to write down a confession stating that he had seduced Margaret and promised her marriage. Winkelried, after having crushed the insolence of his son, leaves with this document in his pocket with the intention of having it published in order to save the honour of the dead girl and thus repair to a certain extent the damage brought about by the action of his son. The scene in which Winkelried forces his son's stubbornness to relent by counting ten, revolver in hand, was probably the most impressive of the evening, and a storm of applause arose after the curtain fell. The last act brings peace after all the turmoil. The model son, Abel, has come back from America, to the great surprise of the old Jurg Winkelried, who now leads a solitary life and does not want to see his children any more. Abel finally brings about a reconciliation, and when Jurg agrees to see his children there is no need to look far for them—for they are just round the corner. To make the happiness complete Abel has bought back all his father's land. Suzanne has married her stable boy; George has dropped Communism and has started to read the Bible; and Henry has been a clerk in an insurance office—if only for a week. Still, the family seems at least to have risen to a more decent standard than in the first act, and we leave them with the hope that they will improve still further.

A few remarks from the standpoint of a Swiss visitor may be of interest. Jurg Winkelried was very well played, but Moscovitch could not, of course, go beyond his natural limits, and certain passages were spoken exactly as a Jewish paterfamilias would do in real life, but not a Lucernois from Sempach. There was too much sentimentality here and there. On the other hand, the town councillors, Moser, Gschwind, Ruf, and Weber, were in make-up as in acting excellent and seemed so Swiss that I often expected them to continue in Luzernerdütsch. This also applies to the minor rôles of the solicitor, Holt, the policeman, Rossli, and the old Veitel. Also Winkelried's sons were very good, especially Henry and George. The only part which was entirely badly played was that of Alma Dalia, the lady Communist, who overdid her coquetry tremendously. She was not a Communist at all, but a prima donna. The Winkelried picture on the wall was genuine, but the Alps were far too near, and it looked as if Sempach were in the Canton Unterwalden. There has never yet been a play produced in Switzerland dealing with the conflicts aroused by Communistic aspirations of the younger generation and the traditional echo of the older one. From this point of view alone this play will certainly not fail to interest many of our compatriots. Judging from the success which Moscovitch had in the title rôle, the play may have a very long run here. Still, one never knows, and it would be advisable to see it within the next week or two.

P. L.

## NOTES & GLEANINGS.

We are pleased to note that several papers, notably *The Times*, have published correspondence with reference to the unsatisfactory and discouraging conditions prevailing in the TRAIN SERVICE FROM SWITZERLAND, especially the Basle-Laon route. Those who cannot afford the luxury of a wagon-lit are often subject to annoyance and vexations which can only result in deterring would-be travellers in future. The outward journey is not so bad, as one generally manages, with the help of some palm-oil, to slip into the seat one has booked beforehand in London; coming home, however, is nothing short of a tragi-comedy. The arrangements in the Alsace portion of the Basle station are a discredit to this otherwise admirably regulated railway junction. In the hope of success in the fight for a seat in the overcrowded train, people congregate long before the advertised time of departure and, while the train is being leisurely examined by the French Customs officials, are kept lingering in a primitive waiting-room, the overflow of which is enclosed on the platform, like wild animals in a cage. On a given signal the gates are opened, and a sort of football scrimmage is the result. Not everybody reaches the goal, and for the first hour of the train journey the conductors are busy in collecting the "also-ran" in the corridors in order to squeeze them into compartments where the complement seems capable of compression. The carriages of the Compagnie du Nord are most uncomfortable, without side-rests, straps or elbow partitions, and being perched four abreast for twelve hours is not an experience one covets to repeat. It is a pity that the French railways show so little respect and consideration for the comfort of their clients. The Laon route has outrivalled the Ostend-Brussels line only on account of the quick transit, but from every other point of view the Belgian route is the more attractive. The difference in the time occupied from London to Basle is, of course, considerable (21 hours against 16 hours), but it seems to us that this service could be considerably accelerated by reducing the stops at the intermediate stations to a minimum, as has been done on the Laon route.

\* \* \*

Many interesting reports of holidays spent in Switzerland have again appeared in the English press. *The Primitive Methodist Leader* (Sept. 7th) records the doings of another church party similar to the one referred to in our last issue. *The Sheffield Daily Telegraph* (Sept. 4th) praises the charms of the Lake of Thun and Spiez, which latter place the writer considers an ideal centre to make headquarters.—A RECENT ASCENT OF THE MATTERHORN is circumstantially described in the *Western Morning News and Mercury* (Sept. 2nd) by the Rev. J. J. Haworth, B.A. Although no thrilling moments are chronicled, we reprint the major part of the article which gives such a minute and detailed description of the ascent as will convey a vivid idea of the climb to those who have the eager will and desire to achieve it, but lack the power or opportunity to make the attempt at gaining a closer acquaintance with this giant amongst the Alps:—

"It was a novel experience to start at 2.15 a.m. on July 8th an attempt to climb the Matterhorn, aided by three tiny lanterns and the half-light of a full moon which was ceasing to shine. The moon did not help us much. She was going down westward under the deep shadow of the mountain, which loomed big and black at that hour."

The route we took was the usual one from Zermatt—the ridge facing eastward. Seen from a distance this ridge appears sharp, even knife-edged. In reality it is not so, not at any rate where the climbing is done, though the ridge is touched

The Publisher will be pleased to forward free specimen copies of the *Swiss Observer* to likely subscribers whose addresses may be supplied by readers.