

Mr. John Knittel and some of his critics

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Rousseau's philosophy, on the other hand, constructive, too, in a wild kind of way, is constantly influenced by his unconscious recollection of the city State in which he was first brought up. Calvin has had ample justice done him as a philosopher, but he has not perhaps received his due as a man of letters. In this he compares with our own Cranmer, and with many other men whom the dust of controversy has obscured. A competent authority has placed him next to Rabelais among the prose-writers of the time of Francis I. In this respect, again, we can compare him with Rousseau, whose various gropings after a better system of things we are so anxious to condense into some sort of a system that we are apt to forget the beautiful directness and simplicity of the style he employs."

* * *

Another work recently published and favourably commented upon is Mr. J. B. Winter's *FROM SWITZERLAND TO THE MEDITERRANEAN ON FOOT*. The author, who is a well-known Brighton physician, describes a five hundred-mile walk from Sierre to Cannes in the winter of 1919-20. The book will prove most interesting to the climber and specially to those who wish to imitate this novel manner of spending one's holiday. Mrs. Winter accompanied her husband on his lonely tour which we venture to suggest as worthy of emulation by honeymoon couples in particular.

* * *

According to the *Daily Graphic* (Sept. 22nd) the party which intends to make another attempt next year at the conquest of Mount Everest is going to be trained in the Swiss Alps in order "to be drilled into every trick and "phase of mountaineering, under the most rigorous conditions."

* * *

Prominent reference has been given in the English press to a report that in Swiss cotton factories the 54-hour-week is being worked. This bare statement should have been modified in so far that the workmen in several trades have preferred to work longer hours in lieu of having their wages proportionately decreased.

* * *

The appearance in Switzerland of some banknotes which have never been officially issued has created a mild sensation. These notes probably belong to the same faulty series which some time last year was destroyed in the furnaces of Messrs. Waterlow in the presence of official representatives of the Swiss National Bank. However, what strikes us as most remarkable in the matter is the fact that Sir William Waterlow, whilst travelling in Switzerland, should have discovered quite by accident one of these notes. According to London reports these notes (about 350 of frs. 50) are supposed to have been abstracted from the safe of Messrs. Waterlow, but the following communication, issued by the Swiss National Bank throws very little light on the matter.

Es wird bekannt, dass 50-Frankennoten der Schweizerischen Nationalbank (mit dem Holzfällerbild von Hodler) in beschränkter Anzahl widerrechtlicher Weise in Verkehr gebracht worden sind. Allem Anschein nach handelt es sich um Noten, die vor ihrer Ueberlieferung an die Nationalbank entwendet und nach Einsetzung der Unterschriften "Hirter," "Bornhauser" und "R. de Haller" zur Zirkulation übergeben wurden. Als solche Fälschungen sind ohne weiteres alle 50-Frankennoten, die neben der laufenden Nummer die Serie "4 W" tragen, anzusehen. Im weitem sind sie erkenntlich an der unscharfen und verblassten erscheinenden Ausführung der Unterschriften. Um ihnen ihr neues Aussehen zu nehmen, sind sie überdies, nach den bisher zum Vorschein gekommenen Exemplaren zu schliessen, vor der Ausgabe zerknittert worden. Die Nationalbankstellen sind angewiesen, solche Noten bis auf weiteres gegenüber gutgläubigen Einreichern einzulösen unter Feststellung der Identität der Einreicher. Kassenstellen und Privatpersonen werden dagegen ersucht, vorkommenden Falls solche Noten im Verkehr zurückzuweisen und von allfälligen Verdachtsmomenten, die Anhaltspunkte für eine weitere Untersuchung geben könnten, unverzüglich der nächsten Polizeistelle oder dem Rechtsbureau der Nationalbank in Zürich Mitteilung zu machen.

Mr. JOHN KNITTEL AND SOME OF HIS CRITICS.

II.

The wide publicity given by the critics to Mr. John Knittel's new play and the magnetism of Moscovitch's name are combining to attract considerable crowds to 'The Torch.' The following are further Press opinions on this play:—

The *Glasgow Herald* remarks:—

"The author, Mr. John Knittel, has written a part to which a clever actor can do justice. 'The Perfect Lover,' produced about two years ago, was a charlatan play, in which Mr. Moscovitch did no better than any other actor might have done. In 'The Torch' he created an atmosphere, just as the author created a character. It was a happy combination of skilful writing and happy acting. 'The Torch' should shed its bright gleams on the stage at the Apollo Theatre for quite a long time. After an orgy of bad performances a dramatic critic is in danger of losing perspective and praising unduly something which is not altogether bad. Yet 'The Torch' seems to be altogether good."

From the *Nottingham Guardian*:—

"'The Torch' offers Mr. Moscovitch a fine opening for broad and impressive acting, and the revolutionary, Communist, semi-political flavour of the piece endow it with a unique and arresting interest. We have been flooded with namby-pambyness, and I feel sure a large section of Londoners will welcome stronger matter at the hands of a most capable exponent."

The *Sunday Times* makes a forcible objection to the use of the honoured name of Winkelried for the degenerate children:—

"There is one decidedly curious side to this melodrama. The leading characters in it are Jurg Winkelried, his two degenerate sons—one a loafer, the other a Communist, a seducer, and an all-round blackguard—and their sister, the old man's daughter, who is in love with a lazy servant-man on the farm. These people are presented to us as lineal descendants of the great Swiss hero, Arnold von Winkelried, whose self-sacrifice did so much to win the renowned victory of Sempach, in which the Austrians were defeated more than five hundred years ago. The scene of the play, too, is laid at the little town of Sempach—a place consecrated by the name of the hero whose monument, close to the church, is to-day one of its proudest ornaments. It has been said that the author of the play, Mr. John Knittel, is himself a Swiss. If so, he has shown an odd way of honouring one of the greatest of his country's sons. . . . If the author has no authority for giving us such a picture of the degradation of a noble name, his action has really been extraordinary. If he has any authority for it, he would have better served the honour and dignity of a brave country and an illustrious family by keeping it to himself instead of thrusting it into the glare of the footlights."

The *Westminster Gazette*, under the heading "A New Dramatist," declares Mr. John Knittel "hall-marked" English!:

"'I'm not the captain of this ship,' says Abel Winkelried to his father when he tries to rouse the old man's dying pride in the family name in the last act of 'The Torch.' 'I'm not the captain of this ship, you are. If you'll stick to the bridge, I'll stick to the boilers.' Here we have a drama in a foreign and a restrained area, a setting to which the art of Mr. Komisarjevski has done far greater justice than a Swiss background usually gets out of its own country, written with a regard for national history and character only possible to a true-born Swiss and indelibly hall-marked as English by this one little slip in his dialogue. Mr. Knittel is not an Englishman, but 'The Torch,' though it is a serious play of purely Swiss life in a Swiss town in 1922, is not a translation from the German original, but a play written in English for the English stage by an author who has made a deliberate choice of a foreign language as a medium through which he intends to deliver his work to the world."

From the *Newcastle Chronicle*:—

"Mr. Maurice Moscovitch is back in London with a play which might have been specially written for the purpose of enabling him to give a full display of his great emotional and dramatic power, and an exceptionally warm greeting was given

to him and 'The Torch' at the first night at the Apollo. Mr. John Knittel, the author, furnishes many violent contrasts and some exceptionally vigorous scenes, but he lacks the art of finished stagecraft, and is apt to strain situations."

The *Western Morning News and Mercury* describes the first night:—

"'The Torch,' the new play at the Apollo Theatre, was witnessed by a large and distinguished audience. Maurice Moscovitch, the Russian actor, knows his public, for as soon as the doors opened 'full house' boards told their own tale. The story is very old, simple and full of emotions. Equally volcanic was the audience. They shouted, raved, cheered, whistled."

From the *Nation* comes bewilderment:—

"I profess I am unable to criticize the play at the Apollo. If the extraordinary family, whose gambols in this world of sense it illustrates, had appeared in a moon of Jupiter, or the Valley of the Roc's Egg, I could not have been more dumb-founded than by their appearance of existing in Switzerland, and by their adventures in that divine but unexciting land. Mr. Moscovitch has been given one or two chances of showing the natural force and dignity of his incomparable manner, and he makes the most of them. With this I retire into the silence begotten of pure amazement."

From the *Illustrated London News*. At last! One witty critic who likes the last act!

"It is a pleasure to see these reformed characters led in by the ineffable Abel Winkelried, The father embraces as many children as his arms will hold, while strong sons lift their young arms in gestures expressive of hope and faith. The whole was oddly reminiscent of the 'Swiss Family Robinson,' and one expected to see a flock of mountain goats, if not a real chamois or two, gambolling round the performers. But not so much as a cow put her head out of a stall to add her voice to the general applause."

Taken at random:—

"A thrill of the first magnitude."

"A tremendous opportunity for large-scale acting of the old romantic type."

"'The Torch'—well, I like it, and the part gives me great opportunities; the strength of it appeals to me; I have worked hard at it, and I believe in it."—MOSCOVITCH.

"The burgomaster takes to the woods and the mountains, where, unhappily, we do not see him. We should like to admire a Swiss burgomaster on a Swiss peak."

Mr. J. Knittel wishes to give all his compatriots, resident in London, an opportunity of seeing his play at moderate prices.

We, therefore, have pleasure in announcing that a reduction of 50% on all reserved seats will be allowed during next week's run of "The Torch" at the Apollo Theatre to anyone presenting at the box office the coupon printed below:—

"THE TORCH"

JOHN KNITTEL.

"Swiss Observer" Subscribers' Coupon

entitles holder to one ticket at half-price in all reserved parts of the Theatre during the week commencing October 2nd (except Saturday).

Ordinary prices of seats:—

Stalls	...	...	10/6	tax extra
Dress Circle	...	...	7/6	"
Upper Circle	...	...	5/-	"

S.O.—29. 9. 22.

REFORM OF THE CALENDAR.

To the Editor "The Swiss Observer."

Sir,—By courtesy of the Secretary of the London Chamber of Commerce, my attention has been called to the very interesting articles on this subject in your issues of 25th March and 1st April last. My thanks are due to the writer for his very generous appreciation of my modest brochure "Bank Holidays Fixed—Father Time Interviewed."

It is quite true, as he remarks, that I was unaware of the very considerable progress already made towards realizing this reform, nor of the name of Professor Grosclaude, the author of the pioneer Geneva scheme. That I was not alone in this ignorance is proved by the fact that although many newspapers both in London and the Provinces referred to my proposal—amongst others "The Times," "The Daily News," "The Financial Times" and "The Statist"—no reference was made to the author of the Swiss scheme, nor indeed to any other proposal, except in one instance to the Swiss and American plans in general terms. Furthermore, such well-known public men as Dr. Clifford, Dr. Orchard, Mr. G. Bernard Shaw, Mr. W. A. Appleton, Mr. T. E. Naylor, M.P., Sir Francis Harrison Smith, Bart., R.N., and several others who wrote to my publishers with approval of the proposal, made no reference to any other, evidently regarding it as new.

I now recognise that practically the only new feature of any importance in it is my suggestion that the Intercalary Day should be Christmas Day, but I expressly pointed out in my pamphlet that this is not an essential feature. Indeed, as I have since written to the Chamber of Commerce Journal in a letter published in that journal on 30th June last, it is not only possible, but desirable in view of the attitude of the Churches, for Calendar Reformers to promote legislation for the adoption of an unchangeable and perpetual Calendar, without any alteration of existing Church festivals, in pursuance of the resolution adopted unanimously by the International Chamber of Commerce in 1921. If this step be taken, it is more than likely that the Churches would then gladly avail themselves of the opportunity thus presented to them of co-operating in the appointment of fixed anniversaries for what are now moveable festivals, and which must so remain as long as the Calendar exists in its present form.

But before initiating legislation, Calendar Reformers must agree between themselves as to the best scheme. Twenty years and more have gone by since Professor Grosclaude propounded his scheme! Each of the various authors of other schemes believes, quite naturally, that his own is the best. It will only be by all Reformers obtaining a full knowledge of all proposals, and hearing arguments for and against, that any agreement on any particular scheme can be arrived at.

In my letter before referred to an appeal was made to all to sink minor differences and join forces to make a combined push for this great reform in the interests of commerce throughout the world. In an editorial note, the Editor of the Journal was good enough to refer to this appeal as an excellent one, and added: "Possibly a round-table conference would be the best means to this end."

In pursuance of this suggestion arrangements are being made for an informal conference on the subject in London some day in October of those who are interested in the Reform. The main object of this conference would be to decide on a plan of campaign. I am convinced that once this first step can be taken of bringing together the sponsors of various schemes, all having the one common object of a Reform of the Calendar, but also keeping an open mind as to the method and details of carrying that object into effect, it will be possible to devise such an effective plan of campaign as will overcome the "pure inertia" which, as Bernard Shaw has said, is really the only obstacle to the carrying out of so desirable a reform.

May I solicit your valuable assistance by publishing this letter and inviting suggestions from any of your readers who are interested.

Yours faithfully,

London, Sept. 21st, 1922.

W. ARNOLD.

FOYER SUISSE.

We understand that the Council of Management of the above concern is at present negotiating for the purchase of extensive premises in the immediate vicinity of Russell Square. Full particulars will be forthcoming as soon as arrangements permit.