

12 years Swiss Observer and why

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12 YEARS SWISS OBSERVER AND WHY:

Lord Palmerston on a memorable occasion expressed himself to the effect that "if Switzerland did not exist, it would have to be invented" and the same remark might be applied to the Swiss Observer who, — and I think I am quite right in saying "who" i.e., taking the lusty youngster to be a young boy promising a very healthy and interesting manhood — to-day celebrates his 12th Birthday.

There are still a number of Swiss in this Country and notably in and around London who remember the time we had no Swiss Observer, no weekly devoted to the affairs of the Swiss Colony in London and in Great Britain, no Swiss Paper published in England giving us the important news from home and forming a bond between the Swiss living in these hospitable Isles.

Those were the days when we had to rely on occasional newspapers sent us from home and when, in practice, we found that such newspapers provided too much reading matter and were often left unread and even unopened. I remember accumulating piles of the Neue Zürcher Zeitung, unopened and unread. Finally I made a great effort and cut out the articles I particularly wanted to read and that big bundle of articles littered up our drawing room at home until such time as she who presides over the amenities of my home put down her dainty feet and, alas and alack, those articles went into the fire, unread most of them.

With the birth of the Swiss Observer a great void was filled. The Swiss Observer, week by week, brings tidings of what happened at home, of all sorts of things. Elections to the Grand Council, elections to the Federal Parliament, votes taken upon new bills, all sorts of minor events and accidents, all these we now find presented to us, as concisely as possible, every Saturday in our own Swiss Newspaper published in London. Each week-end we commune with our homeland, we get to know what they are talking and thinking about at home, we get impregnated as it were by the spirit of Switzerland, we get our blood stirred by a tingling of the chords, oft dormant during the week, that unite us still to our HEIMAT and, thanks to the Swiss Observer, we feel Swiss, purely and only Swiss for a span of time, every week-end.

That alone, dear Readers, is worth a tremendous lot.

As our readers know, Kyburg feel EUROPEAN in the first place, i.e., thinks it most important to be a citizen of EUROPE.

But, in order to be a good citizen of the larger commonwealth of EUROPE, one must first be a good citizen of the smaller entity or country in which one is born. There is no doubt in my mind that that feeling of "home" that we all know and which has for much too long a time been exploited in the pseudo-sacred name of patriotism, is a feeling which has its root in the soil from which we spring. To feel purely Swiss for a short while now and again, is vitally important for Swiss living abroad, because they thereby renew their strength of the emotions which can only be got from contact with one's native soil and if such contact is impossible directly, the next best thing surely is to obtain it through a medium such as the Swiss Observer and in the manner explained above.

If we Swiss believed in decorating people who have deserv'd well of the Country, the founders of the Swiss Observer, would receive a medal of honour. To carry a paper like the Swiss Observer for 12 years on their shoulders, to get it out, week by week, mainly with the aid of purely honorary collaborators, is a task as difficult as one might well imagine. To shoulder on top of that the financial responsibility and the losses which during the first few years were inevitable, has put their patriotism to the highest test.

Of later years, the publisher has found a staunch and extremely valuable helper in our friend Mr. A. Stauffer, known to our readers as "ST." His articles have brightened up the paper a good deal and his biographical reminiscences have endeared him to the readers, the male readers as well, because he has shown himself to have been "one of us."

"ek" in his corner is always highly interesting and often extremely amusing. He shines especially when reporting meetings of the C.S.C., but also infuses us with a sense of inferiority when he discusses learnedly on musical and other cultured matters. Also, at times, he has been known to indulge in gentle leg pulling at the expense of

his more stolid and heavier — in a literary sense (where is your oft vaunted modesty? Ed.) colleague Kyburg.

Kyburg, of course, is the chappie who shows the Statesmen of the World where they are wrong and how they could improve human affairs, if only they followed his, Kyburg's, wise directions. When on his hobby-horse, "political economy" Kyburg has no feelings of mock-modesty. He thinks he knows and he does not care to hide his light under a bushel. He often tries to amuse, but is much too heavy and stodgy and when reading out his effusions to his wife, he is very rightly taken down a peg or two, nearly each time. All the same, it is the considered opinion of Kyburg, if it is of no one else, that his views on human affairs are fundamentally right.

I have mentioned a few of the collaborators of the Swiss Observer only and with great modesty have given Kyburg the fattest paragraph, (where is that trumpet?)

But what of our READERS? They, of course, pay a very small subscription which provides them with a weekly tonic for a whole year. Good value, to be sure. But why don't they, in their turn, DO SOMETHING for the Swiss Observer? Why do not they write articles for publication, letters to the Editor, etc., why don't they send in criticisms and complaints, so that we, the chosen few, could read them in our next issue and make them look the silly chappies they are? They are afraid, they fear our vitriolic comments on their efforts and rather than lay themselves open to retaliation, they stop their subscription if they are angry enough with us. What a spectacle!

Being 12 years old, the Swiss Observer feels strong enough now, or almost strong enough anyhow, to tick off anyone who thinks he knows better. In fact, the Swiss Observer is now entering into his years of "gamin" or "Flegeljahre" and our Readers had better look out!

There is one way by which our Readers may placate us. That is by getting new subscribers. I am informed that there are still several THOUSANDS OF SWISS who are not subscribers to the Swiss Observer, although they live in England. SHAME!

I think a Birthday gift from the Readers might well take the form of a resolution whereby each reader promises to find at least one new subscriber! If you, dear Reader, do that, you are serving a double purpose. Firstly, you help the Swiss Observer to carry on and to improve, and secondly, you help yourself, because you will in time receive more enjoyment from reading your Swiss Observer.

And remember, to help the Swiss Observer is a patriotic task! Patriotic in the best sense of the word.

Kyburg.

PLAYS AND FILMS: FILMS AND PLAYS.

There are novels, plays and films. This is a platitude. Some novels are good and make good plays and good films. This is rare. Good novels may also make good plays and bad films, or bad plays and good films. But all good novels do not make good or bad films or plays, and the possible permutations are practically unlimited.

Therefore, it is interesting to compare the film and the play based on the same story, and the following remarks have been inspired by seeing Mädchen in Uniform and Grand Hotel.

It is the more interesting to compare these two because, although they are essentially different, they are both supposed to take place in the same country.

Mädchen in Uniform made an exceedingly interesting film but was disappointing as a play. The reason for this result is the difficulty of representing situations which are typically German in character and thought by players who speak in another language and whose outlook, and noetical expression are totally different. In the film, we had the impression that we were watching events taking place in a German school, with German people thinking and acting like Germans, whereas, in the play we were watching English girls, talking as English school girls are supposed to talk and behaving like English girls, at the same time trying to make us believe that the play is taking place in Prussia. The result was a failure because there was an element of unreality which is not present in the film. The objection may be made that such an argument holds good for all plays which depend on the expression of noetical characterisation, which are essentially racial in their manifestations, and that it is only when the action might take place equally well in any country that the difficulty is overcome.

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