

**Zeitschrift:** Helvetia : magazine of the Swiss Society of New Zealand  
**Herausgeber:** Swiss Society of New Zealand  
**Band:** 17 (1953)  
**Heft:** [8]  
  
**Rubrik:** Letter from Switzerland

### **Nutzungsbedingungen**

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist die Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften auf E-Periodica. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Zeitschriften und ist nicht verantwortlich für deren Inhalte. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern beziehungsweise den externen Rechteinhabern. Das Veröffentlichen von Bildern in Print- und Online-Publikationen sowie auf Social Media-Kanälen oder Webseiten ist nur mit vorheriger Genehmigung der Rechteinhaber erlaubt. [Mehr erfahren](#)

### **Conditions d'utilisation**

L'ETH Library est le fournisseur des revues numérisées. Elle ne détient aucun droit d'auteur sur les revues et n'est pas responsable de leur contenu. En règle générale, les droits sont détenus par les éditeurs ou les détenteurs de droits externes. La reproduction d'images dans des publications imprimées ou en ligne ainsi que sur des canaux de médias sociaux ou des sites web n'est autorisée qu'avec l'accord préalable des détenteurs des droits. [En savoir plus](#)

### **Terms of use**

The ETH Library is the provider of the digitised journals. It does not own any copyrights to the journals and is not responsible for their content. The rights usually lie with the publishers or the external rights holders. Publishing images in print and online publications, as well as on social media channels or websites, is only permitted with the prior consent of the rights holders. [Find out more](#)

**Download PDF:** 18.01.2026

**ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, E-Periodica, <https://www.e-periodica.ch>**

Growing in many valleys, along protected slopes and mostly on the shores of many lakes, are the homes of various excellent wines. Already during the Roman epoch, vineyards were cultivated in ancient Helvetia.

Wines should be stored at an even temperature all the year around and bottles must be laid flat so that the wine touches the cork. When serving wine you must observe two rules: Always chill white wine, but never add ice to it; never chill red wine, just serve it at the temperature of the room.

E.M.

(To be continued)

## JOHANN CASPAR LAVATER,

1741-1801

### A SWISS CITIZEN OF THE WORLD

(Concluded)

In his tireless efforts to find an issue to this conflict, Lavater laid himself open to bitter attack. A passionate and venomous polemic broke out over the question of the so-called "miracles," which were actually pure hypnosis and suggestion. In the end a number of physicians undertook to examine Lavater's hypotheses, investigated his "cures" and found that, beneath the surface mysticism, there was a sound core of truth which showed prospects of future development. Thus at a time when the world in general knew nothing about it, empirical psychology was coming to birth among a handful of experts.

Lavater never understood the rationalistic standpoint of the medical men of his time, and would have fallen a hopeless victim to religious delusions if he had not been saved by the two powerful roots of his personality—his patriotism and his world-wide intellectual understanding. At a time when the world had already pronounced judgment on him, in the last years of the eighteenth century, Switzerland was on the point of succumbing to revolution, civil war and foreign intervention.

The old Confederation had collapsed, and in the eyes of its bedazzled citizens, salvation could only come from beyond the Swiss frontiers. At this critical moment, Lavater pulled himself together, looked about him and at once grasped the moral danger that was threatening his beloved country. In spite of the scorn and hostility to which he was exposed, without heeding the criticism that was sure to come, and reckless of the actual danger to his very life, he spoke from the pulpit with all his old fire and eloquence, calling upon men to take thought and remember the oldest of Swiss virtues—the defence to the death of the freedom of their country.

A wave of devotion to the national cause spread over the country. Lavater did not remain alone. In every canton men arose who preferred an honourable end to a prudent fraternisation with a powerful oppressor. Lavater himself wrote an open letter to the Directoire in Paris, and publicly accused the commanders of the army of occupation of all the wrong they had done to a defenceless population. In those years of national struggle he fully made good all the sins against the European mind his misunderstood mysticism had led him to commit. Nor did Europe refuse him his due meed of admiration for his courage in the cause of his fellow-men.

When Lavater was struck down by a French bullet, and, after lingering for a year, was called away from the scene of his earthly struggles, it was not only his Swiss compatriots who followed his body to the grave. Even the French officers and all the foreigners in Zurich walked in the funeral procession of the man who had given the world the example of an unshakeable loyalty to his native land and of a spiritual fraternity encompassing all nations.

Mary Lavater-Slomann.

## LETTER FROM SWITZERLAND

### AN EXCLUSIVELY LAND-LOCKED COUNTRY, SWITZERLAND NEVERTHELESS POSSESSES A MERCHANT FLEET

An exclusively land-locked country, with no seaboard of her own, Switzerland would probably never have thought of creating a merchant fleet if circumstances had not forced her boldly to find a solution to the problem of obtaining supplies.

The difficulties encountered during the last war made Switzerland realise how useful it would be to have a merchant fleet sailing under her own flag. A Swiss maritime law was then drawn up, which came into force on April 9th, 1941, a date which can be considered as the veritable birthday of the Swiss merchant fleet.

When the war ended, it was unanimously decided that this fleet should be maintained and placed in the hands of private enterprise. Since the outbreak of war in Korea, it has even been found desirable to increase its size still further. This made it necessary to modify the existing maritime law. That is why a new Bill has been drafted and will very shortly be submitted to the Federal Houses.

This Bill placed the Swiss merchant navy under the supervision of the Federal Council, and makes the place of jurisdiction the town of Basle on the Rhine. The owners and builders must be Swiss, resident in Switzerland and with their main offices in this country. Similarly all share-

holders and partners in the owning companies must be of Swiss nationality. These strict provisions have been laid down because it was wished, should hostilities ever break out again, to avoid the neutrality of the Swiss flag being contested by the belligerents with any reasonable cause for complaint.

### Composition and Problems

At the end of 1949, the Swiss merchant fleet had a total gross tonnage of 61,000 tons on the seas. When the Korean war broke out in 1950, the Confederation asked shipbuilders to make an extra effort and double their tonnage with ships capable of sailing on any seas. In order to achieve this result, the Confederation agreed to grant reasonable loans, which made it possible for shipbuilders to carry out the programme envisaged.

Thus the Swiss merchant fleet today numbers some 35 ships totalling more than 630,000 tons. Out of these 35 ships, 20 have been built since 1948, which means that they are modern ships, equipped for travelling at fast speeds. Twenty-two of them have displacements of more than 6500 tons and are therefore suitable for sailing on the high seas.

Once a ship is launched, Swiss shipbuilders may run it in one of three ways, either as a tramp, a regular line vessel, or on a time-charter basis. Ships chartered as tramps go anywhere in the world, taking a full load for a destination indicated by the charterer. The regular line vessel has its obligations and must make a certain number of trips per year and all over the same route. The third possibility is the time-charter—where certain Swiss shipbuilders hire out the ships they have built to other shipbuilders who handle their commercial exploitation. The choice of one of these possibilities is a difficult one to make as fluctuations in freight charges are liable to be both sudden and large.

During the war, Swiss foreign trade overseas was carried on first and foremost under the national flag. In peacetime, Swiss importers and exporters are entirely at liberty to transport their goods under any flag they choose. The Swiss merchant fleet therefore works with the main international markets.

A serious problem for the Swiss merchant fleet is that of crews. At the present day, approximately a thousand men sail under the Swiss flag, only 25 per cent. of whom are Swiss nationals. Shipbuilders are working to train still more men, for it is of the greatest importance to prepare a nucleus of Swiss sailors against troubled times. It is also interesting to give the greatest possible number of young Swiss boys the opportunity of taking up a difficult but varied career.

## ZURICH AND ITS MUSEUMS

Zurich, the dynamic metropolis of Switzerland, has grown today to the stature of a great European city and for a variety of reasons attracts general attention. Its situation on the shores of a delightful lake at the far end of which the snow-clad alpine peaks rise in grandeur is in itself sufficient to lend enchantment to this town with its thousands and more years of history. This city of light, whose cleanliness and neatness have become legendary, enchanted the famous Italian sculptor Benvenuto Cellini, who cried: "Zurich, city of wonder, sparkling like a gem!"

Despite its extraordinary development during the past fifty years, this commercial, financial and industrial centre with its international character has retained its quality of a garden city built in the form of an amphitheatre round the bay of its lake, and it thus felicitously combines the amenities of a large town with the attractions of a holiday resort.

If modern Zurich presents the features of a "model town," frequently studied by town-planners from other continents, this is due not only to a town-planning programme drawn up at a very early date by the public works authorities but also to the lively interest evinced by the inhabitants of Zurich in the development of their town. Zurich is without doubt the only European municipality that, in an attempt to encourage architectural designs in harmony with the traditional setting and the natural beauty of the site, awards prizes for private buildings whose appearance helps to beautify the town.

(To be continued)

---

We are now in full swing with our production of First Class Continental Sausages, of which we produce some fifteen different kinds.

FOR ORDERS AND ENQUIRIES RING OR WRITE TO THE UNDERMENTIONED ADDRESS.

We are supplying Smallgoods to a large number of shops from Whangarei throughout the country to Dunedin, and on enquiry, we shall advise where you can obtain our Smallgoods.

NOTHING BUT THE BEST

**METZLER'S CONTINENTAL SAUSAGE CO. LTD.**

**536 Karangahape Road, Auckland**

**Phone 34-055**

---

CORRESPONDENCE: Please address to the Secretary,

MR. E. MERZ,  
P.O. Box 85, Auckland.

---

Printed by McKenzie, Thornton, Cooper Ltd., 126 Cuba St., Wellington.  
for the Swiss Benevolent Society in New Zealand (Inc.).

---