

Zeitschrift: Helvetia : magazine of the Swiss Society of New Zealand
Herausgeber: Swiss Society of New Zealand
Band: 18 (1954)
Heft: [4]

Artikel: What is Switzerland?
Autor: [s.n.]
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-942634>

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: 10.12.2025

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

Due to change of residence, Mr. W. Risi has resigned as president and Mrs. Risi as executive member of the committee. It was with great regret he had to take this step, remarked the president, and he wished the club further success.

Mr. Nolly presented the balance sheet for the year, which revealed that the club reached firm foundations. Mr. Nolly, owing to pressure of work, declined nomination as secretary for the ensuing year.

The club decided that it should have a correspondent who would contribute items of interest for publication in the *Helvetia*. Several suggestions, relative the Swiss Benevolent Society were discussed during the meeting and certain recommendations are to be forwarded to the committee of the society.

The principal event of the evening was the election of officers for the ensuing year. These elections, conducted in a most pleasant atmosphere, showed the following result:

President: Mr. John Steiner.

Vice-president: Mr. J. Kaiser.

Secretary: Mr. F. Imhof.

Executive: Messrs. C. Chamberlain, W. Fluhler, J. Fohn, A. Kalin (Normanby), E. Kurman, D. Luond, M. Steiner, C. Wyss, and Mesdames Imhof, Schupfer and M. Steiner.

Correspondent: Mr. A. Schicker.

At the conclusion of the meeting a hearty vote of thanks was accorded the retiring president; Mrs. Risi (executive) and Mr. Nolly, secretary. As an appreciation for his outstanding work for the club Mr. Risi was elected as their patron.

The successful and enjoyable evening concluded with a tasty supper, served by the ladies, after which many enjoyed a game of "Swiss Jass."

A.Sch.

"A Little Place"

Home is just a corner of the world
that's sent us to make sweet
A place for smoothing out the way
for tired hands and feet.

A little place for tenderness
As well as joy and song,
A little place to cheer and bless
and help love's song along.

A place for toil, a place for rest
A little place for prayer,
A corner where we do our best
and joys and sorrows share.

A place where everyone can play
his part however small,
But home that is not full of love
is hardly home at all.

—M. Eversley.

Notice to Members

It has been suggested by one of our lady members to commence correspondence among compatriots in New Zealand, with a view to creating friendship and interest among Swiss residing in this country. Those interested are requested to kindly communicate with the secretary, who would arrange the necessary contact between the parties concerned.

WHAT IS SWITZERLAND ?

When tourists arrive in Switzerland, they generally compliment us about the cleanliness of our country, and they realize that people, houses, shops and everything else looks wealthy; they admire the quality of our railway and telephone systems. They see that the standard of living in this country is high, and they may easily believe that Switzerland is not only lovely, but also a naturally rich spot in the midst of Europe.

Unfortunately, this is not true at all. We have no coal, no oil, no minerals. We have only beautiful scenery, rocks, ice, snow and water. Even the soil is not naturally a rich one.

More than 20 per cent. of the country are snow, ice, rocks and lakes; 25 per cent. woods, another 25 per cent. pastures for our cows, goats and sheep and only 28 per cent. of our whole land are meadows, fields and vineyards. If you consider this, and if you compare these figures with our high standard of living, it is quite normal that tourists and even economists speak of a "Swiss Miracle." How is it possible that so many people live so well in such a small and poor land?

If there is no geographical explanation of the fact that this country exists and is even wealthy, may be there is a historical explanation.

Our grandfathers had to cope with one difficult economic problem: although the number of inhabitants was only about one million, it was impossible to feed them all on the products of our soil. There was no industry, they had nothing to sell and nothing to export. But they were good warriors; they exported men and boys, they sold themselves, they became soldiers. And as a matter of fact, for many centuries, there was hardly a battle fought on European soil without Swiss soldiers.

Fortunately, James Watt and many others, by their inventions, gave poor countries like Switzerland new possibilities. Our ancestors realized immediately the importance of these new inventions and introduced modern manufacturing methods. The raw material had and has still to be purchased, but nevertheless the export industry and

export trade of our country have developed in an outstanding way during the past century. What we earn today and what more than 50 per cent. of our population lives on, is the difference in price between the imported raw material and the high-class finished goods which we export.

This means that we solely sell our work and craftsmanship. And this means that we have to be highly competitive. We therefore have to work very hard, have to start early in the morning, our factories must be well organised, our chemists, engineers and all the workers have to be highly efficient, so that all our export goods, such as cheese, chocolate, food products, engines, watches, chemicals, pharmaceuticals, textiles and so on, are of an outstanding quality and can be sold all over the world for a fair price. If such were not the case, nobody would buy our manufactured goods, we could close our factories and . . . you never can tell . . . maybe become soldiers again!

Let us be honest and let us be modest. If our country is wealthy, let us not forget that this is due to two very special reasons. The most important is that since the time of Napoleon—more than 100 years ago—our country has never been occupied—which is almost an exception in Europe. For more than one hundred years the Swiss have been able to build up their industry and powerful export trade without being disturbed in their task as their neighbours have been.

The second reason is that since 1918 up to the present time there have been no important strikes in Switzerland. This does not mean that we are better boys than other nations around us. But being allowed to live in peace during World War I and World War II, inflation has not been as important as elsewhere in Europe. So that tension between rising prices and salaries has never been as acute as in neighbouring countries. Then the political structure of Switzerland has avoided any serious misunderstanding between the various classes. Our small country is divided into a great number of small geographical and social units. In small firms human relations are no problem. In small units they are much easier to cope with than in large political and social units. In our country employers and employees frequently know each other personally: maybe they were in school together or met each other during their periods of military service.

What about our future?

The problem is terribly clear. A nation which has to be so highly expert-minded, absolutely needs a climate of freedom and liberty.

OUR FATHERLAND

[Continuation]

The Canton of Valais

To break the hard struggle, many festivals of all descriptions are arranged by the Walliser and at Corpus Christi the old uniforms worn by the eighteenth century Valaisans who fought as mercenaries in many foreign armies—and which have been carefully preserved by their descendants—are still worn with pride.

French is spoken at the Western end of the Canton and the Swiss German dialect, spoken at the Eastern end, is very difficult to understand, even among other Swiss. There is also, due to the difficult life in this Canton, a strong and steady emigration to foreign countries, and today for instance, there appear to be more people of Saas-Fee settled in Argentina than there are in Saas-Fee itself.

Sion, the capital of the Canton, is noted for the beautiful church of the Notre-Dame de Valerie dating back to the twelfth century. Conspicuous also are the ruins of the castle of Tourbillon perched close on two neighbouring hills and visible from a great distance. These two hills rising abruptly out of the surrounding plain, crowned with their lovely buildings and ruins, give Sion quite an original aspect. The city has an interesting and colourful history, dating back right to the time of the conquest of this countryside by the legions of Julius Caesar.

Sierre, one of the sunniest places in Switzerland, is the starting point for the mountain rail to Montana-Vermala, where so many foreigners have regained their health. Further towards the lake of Geneva is the charming resort of Champéry, a picturesque village perched on the mountainside facing the famous Dents du Midi. This small place is well known for the magnificent swimming pool and as a centre for mountain climbing.

From Visp, at the other end of the Canton, an important rail and road leads to Zermatt and to Saas-Fee. This small village is another spot where the sun shines profusely. It is surrounded by the highest peaks of the Alps and being well off the usual travel routes, it offers ideal vacation to those interested in mountaineering. The rail leading to Zermatt is well known and has been described in the *Helvetia* some three years ago, together with the incomparable Matterhorn, Gornergrat, Monte Rosa, etc.

Brig, at the eastern end of Valais, is another interesting town and a railway centre of considerable importance. Here the famous daily Orient express enters the longest tunnel in the world, the Simplon. From the north-west also joins the great Loetschberg rail with about twelve daily express trains connecting Central