

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

Herausgeber: Federation of Swiss Societies in the United Kingdom

Band: - (1923)

Heft: 99

Rubrik: Literary page

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: 23.02.2026

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

LITERARY PAGE

Edited by Dr. PAUL LANG.

All letters containing criticisms, suggestions, questions, etc., with regard to this page should be addressed to the "Literary Editor."

THE STORY OF DAVEL.

The following is the story of Davel's enterprise as it came, through the London papers of the time, to the knowledge of the 700-800 Vaudois who already, two hundred years ago, earned their living in this City of London. The Rev. Hoffmann-de Visme had the happy idea of looking up these newspaper reports in the British Museum when preparing his lecture for the Nouvelle Société Helvétique. We are indebted to him for having handed us his notes. They are a very accurate rendering of the events, and subsequent historical research has had little to add in the way of correcting errors. Will our descendants of 2123 be able to say the same thing if they try to reconstruct the, let us say, establishment of the Munich Räteregierung, according to the despatches of the "Daily Mail" and the "Westminster Gazette" of 1918?

The "Daily Courant," April 8th, 1723:—Geneva, April 4th. On the 31st past, at Three o-Clock in the Afternoon, Major Davel entered Lausanne at the Head of 5 or 600 men, whom he assembled in the Pays de Vaud under a Pretext of having them reviewed. He immediately summoned the Council of Lausanne, and proposed that they should take this opportunity of withdrawing themselves from the Jurisdiction of the Canton of Berne, assuring them of being herein powerfully supported by a neighbouring Potentate.* The Council made a shew of liking his proposal, only desired him to give them a little more Time to consider it thoroughly, and in the mean time it was agreed to quarter his Men among the Citizens; while this was doing, the Council sent Orders privately to raise the Militia of the neighbouring Places, and during the Night they accordingly marched into Lausanne. Upon this, Major Davel and two of his Captains were seized in their Quarters and conveyed to Prison, but their Men were permitted to march back to their own Homes, and did so without any tumult. Nevertheless, for greater Security, the Country is under Arms, and Search is made after the rest of the Accomplishes engaged in this Enterprise.

The "Daily Courant," April 10th, 1723:—Bern, April 7th. Major Davel, the contriver of the Design to engage the City of Lausanne and its Dependencies to revolt from their Allegiance to this Canton, was Yesterday put upon the Rack, but 'tis not said what Matters he confessed, every Person that was there present being obliged by oath not to reveal anything. Major Tacheron is narrowly looked after in the Castle at Lausanne, but 'tis not known, if Major Vorney be of the Number of the Prisoners. All the Cities of the Pays de Vaut keep a strict Watch within themselves.

The "Daily Courant," April 15th, 1723:—Geneva, April 12th. Letters from Lausanne of the 11th instant advise, that Major Davel had been strictly examined twice and put to the Torture, but persists in taking wholly upon himself the Design against the Regents of the Canton of Berne in which he had endeavoured to engage the Magistrates of Lausanne, and in denying his having any Accomplishes. On the 10th M. de Vattenville, Treasurer of Berne, sent thither his Examinations, to be laid before the Council of the Two Hundred, in order to (aid) their determining what kind of Punishment shall be inflicted on the Criminal.

LA BARQUE DU LEMAN.
Par Eug. RAMBERT.

Blanche voile furtive
Qui glisses loin du bord,
Sait-tu sur quelle rive
Tu vas chercher un port ?
Sur la vague assombrée,
Ouverte au vent du soir,
Vas-tu de Meillerie
Chercher le marbre noir ?
Pour Genève la belle
A Montreux ou Lavaux
As-tu chargé ton aile
Du vin de nos coteaux ?
Près d'Yvoire ou d'Hermance
As-tu pris rendez-vous ?
Vas-tu guetter l'absence
Des domaniers jaloux ?
Des choses de la grève,
Du vin, du marbre noir,
D'Yvoire ou de Genève
Que pourrais-je savoir ?
Je suis la voile blanche
Amoureuse du vent,
Qui s'enfile et qui se penche
Et rit au flot mouvant.
Le gouvernail sans doute
Vise un port, cherche un lieu ;
Moi, je n'ai point de route,
Sinon le grand lac bleu.
Je vais au gré de l'onde,
Du vent, des matelots,
Ne sachant rien du monde
Que le ciel et les flots.

LA ROMANDIE.

... Nous sommes cinq cantons solides, ou demi-cantons, chacun avec ses traits, sa couleur, son

The "Flying Post," April 16th-18th, 1723.—Lausanne, April 8th. Major Davel, who is Prisoner in the Castle, fettered and handcuffed, has been examined several times, and even put to Torture; but his Constancy and Coolness are perfectly astonishing. He says, it was not any private Disgust, but the Love of His Country only, which put him upon this bold Undertaking; that he had received more Favours from the Regency of Berne than he deserved; that he had no Design to shed Blood, nor hurt any Body; that he was not set on by any Potentate whatsoever nor had any Accomplish because his Conscience would not permit him to make any Body run the same Risk that he did; and that he flattered Himself few Persons would have been against his Project, which he had formed five Years ago, and which tended entirely to free the Country of the Vaudois from the Dominion of Berne, or at least to oblige the Sovereign to redress certain Grievances, especially the Compulsion which they use in the Affair of the Consensus. *Being desirous, says he, to walk in the steps of the ancient Switzers, of glorious Memory, when they shook off the Yoke of the House of Austria.* His Chains, he said, he valued as Chains of Gold, and the Prospect of Death to which he says he heartily sacrifices himself for the Good of his Country, does not blunt his Appetite, nor disturb his Rest, which he takes very heartily, nor ruffle his Temper. As he was always generally beloved and esteemed and as his Head seems to be a little turned, 'tis not yet known how he will be dealt with.

Berne, April 14th:—Monday last Major Davel was again put to the Torture at Lausanne, but he has discovered nothing, and, tho' he is 60 Years of Age, bore it with a World of Courage. He persists in his whimsies, saying he was inspired by God to undertake what he has done. An indictment is actually drawing up against him, and 'tis said he will shortly be executed.

The "Weekly Journal" or "Saturday's Post," April 20th, 1723.—We hear from Bern in Switzerland, that Major Deval (*sic*) has been examined two or three times, and even put to the Torture concerning the Plot said to be carried on by him, and others, against the Regents of the Canton of Berne, yet he has not confessed any Accomplishes, tho' it is pretended he had made some Attempts to draw (in) the Magistrates of Lausanne, but this is looked upon to be no more than one of those groundless Reports which commonly fly about very plentifully at the first Noise of a Discovery of a Plot; for, in all the Examinations which have been taken, nothing like this could be made out. The Council of 200 have not, as yet, determined what Punishment to inflict.

The "London Gazette," April 20th-23rd, 1723.—Geneva, April 19th. By Letters dated Yesterday from Lausanne we have an Account, that the Regents of the Canton of Berne had referred to the inhabitants of a street of Lausanne, called du Bourg, the Examinations of Major Davel, it being an ancient Privilege of the said inhabitants of that Street to take cognizance of and pass Sentence upon Criminals within the Town of Lausanne. Accordingly they gave Judgement on the 17th instant, that Major Davel should have his Hand and his Head off. An express was sent to Berne to acquaint the Regents with the Sentence and their final Decision concerning him is daily expected.

The "Daily Courant," April 23rd, 1723:—Bern,

attitude à lui. Et un sixième, qui sera canton un jour ou l'autre. Et nous autres Vaudois, en particulier, nous saluons ce cadet du Jura et lui tendons une main fraternelle, n'oubliant pas qu'en 1815 il fut un peu sacrifié pour nous. Enfin, nous avons nos frères du Tessin, dont les Alpes nous séparent, mais dont l'âme ardente, nous le savons, vibre à l'unisson de la nôtre. Eux aussi, nous les saluons, par delà les sapins sombres du Gothard.

Beaucoup de choses nous lient et nous lieront toujours à nos grands cousins d'outre-Jura. Cependant, sommes-nous Français ? Non pas. Pas plus que ceux de Wallonie, de Luxembourg ou d'Alsace. Etre deux ou trois petits départements lointains ? Merci. Nous sommes mieux. Nous sommes nous-mêmes, la Romandie. Et nous avons, nous tournant d'un autre côté, conclu une autre alliance.

Nous formons une des extrémités de cette barrière nécessaire et opiniâtre, toujours dressée, depuis Charlemagne, entre les deux grandes nations rivales qui se partagent l'Occident de l'Europe. L'ancienne Lotharingie, qui allait des Alpes à la mer du Nord. Comme l'Alsace, comme la Belgique, nous faisons glacia. Et l'un de nous fut toujours atteint, quand la France et l'Allemagne violèrent leurs querelles. La Lotharingie a sombré, en tant que tout politique. Mais les parties anciennes en demeurent, et leur tâche urgente se perpétue. Quels que soient les statuts présents ou futurs, une grande parenté va du Léman à l'Escaut, et le Rhin est l'artère commune.

Placés entre deux races ennemies, pénétrés en partie par l'une et par l'autre, nous les comprenons toutes deux. Certes, entre elles, notre choix est fait et l'a toujours été, mais, encore une fois, nous voulons avant tout être nous-mêmes. Seulement, nous avons conclu une alliance, et nos cantons se sont alignés, sur un pied d'égalité, à côté des autres cantons suisses.

April 21st. The Treasurer, M. de Vattenville, returned hither some Days ago from Lausanne with the other Deputies of this State: He has brought with him the Council of Lausanne's which judges Major Davel worthy of Death. The Sentence has been laid before the Senate, where after some Debates the Major was declared a Rebel, and condemned to be Beheaded: Today this Judgment is to be confirmed by the Grand Council and on the 24th instant Major Davel is to be executed at Lausanne.

The "Daily Post," Wednesday, April 24th, 1723: Geneva, April 20th. It is advised from Berne that there have been warm Debates in the Council of 200, relating to the Sentence of Major Davel. Many spoke very much in Favour and openly declared, that if their Excellencies did not forthwith redress the Grievances of the People, it was to be feared some unhappy Consequences would ensue; at length, not being able to agree on the Sentence of that Major, they sent Orders to the Nobles, Burgesses of the Street of Bourg at Lausanne, to judge him themselves. These Gentlemen assembled on the 18th at the Castle and unanimously condemned him to be beheaded; but, because of the Manifesto he had written, they added to his punishment, to have his Hand cut off before beheading; that his Head should be stuck on a stake, and his Body given to his Relations. This Sentence was transmitted to Berne whither his Relations are gone to implore the Clemency of the Regency, either to obtain his Pardon, or some Mitigation of the Sentence: the Prospect of approaching Punishment has put no Damp on his Heroism. On the contrary, he seems to expect the fatal Moment with Joy. 'Tis assured that several Months before he put his Design in Execution, he writ to several Lords of the Regency in Berne, but without signing his Letters, to solicit them to remedy the Disorders that reigned in the Country, in Default whereof he told them, there was just Reason to dread some fatal consequences. M. de Vattenville, who was sent to Lausanne by the Regency of Berne, was vested with an unlimited Power, like that of the ancient Dictators of Rome.

Scaffhausen (sic), April 22nd, 1723:—We hear from Lausanne, that Major Davel is this Day to be shot to Death.†

The "Weekly Journal" or "Saturday's Post," April 27th, 1723:—We hear from Switzerland that Major Davel, whom we gave an Account of in our last, has been sentenced by the Council of the 200 to have his right Hand cut off, and afterwards to be beheaded, but because he should not pass under the Hangman's Hands, this Sentence was changed to that of being shot to Death at the Intercession of his Friends, which was accordingly executed on the 20th inst. He died with a great deal of Resolution.

The "Daily Courant," May 1st, 1723:—Bern, April 28th. Major Davel was executed the 24th inst. at Lausanne.

The "Daily Post," May 1st, 1723:—Bern, April 27th. Major Davel was executed at Lausanne on the 24th in the Manner mentioned in our last: He dy'd without revealing any thing, and shew'd an undaunted Courage to the last.

* This he never pretended.

† The only "canard" in this whole series of statements. There was never at any time any question of his being shot.

Gouverner la Suisse romande, ce ne doit point être facile, non plus que de gouverner la Belgique. Et pourtant, à qui du tact et du cœur, la belle tâche ! Car nous faisons pleine confiance; il faut seulement nous comprendre, et s'en donner la peine.

La Romandie est un peu femme, comme tous les pays latins; pour la prendre, et la garder, il y a des gestes à faire, et d'autres qu'il convient d'éviter. D'abord, il faut bien se rendre compte que nous sommes fédéralistes par définition, comme tous les petits peuples qui veulent rester intact. Et il faut nous traiter en conséquence. En entrant dans un tout organisé qui nous dépassait, nous avons abandonné ceci, sacrifié cela; mais nous sommes farouchement attachés aux institutions particulières qui nous restent, parce que celles-là, au moins, ont été conçues par nous, et pour nous.

Et puis, nous avons comme ça quelques habitudes qui nous viennent de la civilisation spéciale à laquelle nous appartenons; et il ne faut pas nous demander d'y renoncer. Celle, par exemple, de voir les problèmes de haut, et de loin; de chercher à les résoudre pour la justice, et non seulement pour la commodité du lendemain. Celle aussi, quand des principes sont en jeu que nous estimons supérieurs, de leur subordonner tout le reste. On appelle cela l'idéalisme latin. Celle de sacrifier résolument les personnes aux lois, et non les lois aux personnes. Et d'autres habitudes encore, que nous avons. Tout au moins, qu'un instinct nous dit être bonnes, et auxquelles nous tâchons de notre mieux de rester fidèles. Notez bien ça, tout cela, on ne le voit pas toujours au premier coup d'oeil, chez nous, parce que nous nous donnons l'air de plaisanter, et de causer en l'air. Mais précisément: pour nous gouverner, il faut nous connaître, et connaître même notre pudeur.

[De Maurice Porta: Pays (G. Vancy-Burnier, Lausanne) dont nous rendrons compte sous peu.]