

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: - (1929)
Heft: 408

Artikel: Bellinzona - the town of castles
Autor: E.L.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-691059>

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: 13.08.2025

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

BELLINZONA—THE TOWN OF CASTLES.

A warm night in July. Night full of mysteries, of charms. Night of dreams.

Against the most pure, the most blue sky, thousands of little lights, myriads of brilliant stars . . . the moon, showing only half of her ethereal face, coquettishly watching above the sleepy town.

Then, from an old pine, there came to me a sweet melodious song. . . The nightingale was singing, hidden away somewhere up there . . . it seemed a pathetic serenade of an ardent lover, imploring . . . From another tree came the reply, full of promises, full of gaiety . . .

Suddenly the enchantment increased. The castle of Unterwalden appeared in its most glorious dress, illuminated by a magical sun . . . wrapped in a mystical light. . . The effect was most gorgeous. Those towers of ancient times that saw many glorious days, that by daylight are grey and imposing were now, owing to powerful pharos, entirely transformed. All the castle seemed made of transparent ice, of crystal.

The nightingale was silent too. . . Then, little further down, on the hill, another flash of lights. . . also the castle of Svitto was awake, its superb walls let slip down its sombre garments to be proudly kissed by that vivid sun, by that charm. . .

Charmed also was the castle of Uri . . . the little, characteristic church of Artore.

It was impossible to remain indifferent before such a mystical, such an unique effect.

And an unique city indeed, is Bellinzona, with its three famous castles. Bellinzona of the angry moving mountain: the Arbino.

Situated in the most southern part of Switzerland, where the fascinating Italian is spoken, Bellinzona is one of the few towns that still have the touch of olden days. It has maintained the aspect of the Middle Ages which gave to the town its particular physiognomy, with its walls, its churches, its "portici," its market Square, where every Saturday, pretty country maids, blushing peasant girls come to sell their various tempting vegetables, fruits, eggs, butter, cheese. . .

The narrow streets close to one another, opening into small squares surrounded by old patrician buildings, by houses of a strict Italian character, reflect the burgher life of the Middle Ages. Its houses resting on the S. Michele are a vivid remembrance of heroic times. Nature and man gave to Bellinzona its present expression.

It seems that one of the towers of the castle of Uri was built by order of Julius Caesar. The one of Svitto was already of a certain importance in the year 1340. And in the year 1479 was built the castle of Unterwalden. And these castles were built owing to the great importance of Bellinzona, already in those years, to the strategic position of the city which was a kind of door between the German speaking countries and the Italian people.

Of great artistic value are the walls that still can be seen in some parts of the town. And of great value are also the various pictures in the different churches, all works of more or less famous Italian artists, especially of the Collegiata—the cathedral of Bellinzona which is a severe and gorgeous building. Its three principal doors represent three different periods of art: the Middle Ages, the Renaissance and the Barocco. Its pulpit, all in marble, is a real jewel, something to be admired again and again.

Bellinzona—the *Belitio* of the Romans—means "bella zona" (beautiful zone) and the town is an appropriate answer to such a name, nature has indeed been very generous with its favours to this part of Switzerland, and the bellinzonesi are so nice, so spontaneous, so jovial, that one feels at home at once among them and their gay songs. The blue sky, the bells happily ringing from the old towers make one soon forget that in this world there are worries and troubles. "Do not despair, life is short, eat and drink, without paying the bill"—so says a bellinzonese popular song and in this town one is really inclined to practise this if only the proprietors of the various hotels and restaurants would allow us to calmly walk away with a smile forgetting the bill; but such things are quite impossible even in this pretty town of many castles. But here, too, after an excellent dish of "risotto," or of "polenta"—the popular food of the Italian speaking countries—and after a few . . . bottles of the generous ruby coloured bellinzonese wine, drunk, may be, in one of the many well-known "grotti" under an imposing "ipocastano" on a table of stone roughly cut, to the music of a melodious "concertina," one feels so happy, so care-free, that also the bill is accepted (and paid) with a sincere smile.

Bellinzona, July 1929.

E.L.

FIRST OF AUGUST IN LIVERPOOL.

I have just read in the *S. O.* the account of the wonderful time you had in London on August 1st, and feel our celebration of the Fête Nationale even though so insignificant, should not go unrecorded.

First of all, for several years, our Fête Nationale had been allowed to pass unnoticed by anybody; but, on the strongly expressed wish of our Consul, Mr. E. Montag, who does all he can to get the Colony together, a quiet dinner was arranged and, as a result of a whip round sent by the Secretary of the local club, a dozen members turned up—quite a good number for our small Colony and in view of the holiday season. To this we fortunately had the pleasure of adding two compatriots from Manchester, thus cementing further the very friendly intercourse between these two sections of the "Fourth Switzerland"; we were further honoured by the presence of two delegates from the Swiss Scouts at the Jamboree.

The dinner was quite a success and although unlike the London celebration, there were no oratorical displays, our Consul very briefly reminded some of us old timers of the significance of our Fête Nationale; Mr. L. Comte, as president of the Liverpool Swiss Club said a few words of welcome to our Swiss Scouts and our two compatriots from Manchester. The former duly replied in *Schwyzerdütsch* and very ably—at least I was told so. The two citizens from Cottonopolis felt, however, sufficiently at home with us to remain speechless—I mean, silent.

Several of us had arranged with our Scouts to return to the Jamboree where there was to be a "Bundesfeier" with a sing-song round the camp fire; but it simply poured. The rest of the evening was therefore spent *en famille* pleasantly enough thanks to the Swiss music out of a gramophone and the productions of our musical members.

In view of our disappointment over the visit to the Jamboree, we decided to meet there the following Wednesday instead of at our usual club room. So, about ten of us visited the Swiss camp on the appointed night and spent some time chatting with representatives from most sections of Switzerland. A party of the boys was giving a show that very night at the Jamboree Theatre; we naturally adjourned there. I can assure you that in every way our lads were a credit to the old country, and that some of us who have been living away from Switzerland for years and years felt the better for having come into contact with the youth of the Home Country, so full of vigour and vitality.

G.R.

CONCERNING THE MILITARY EXEMPTION TAX.

DEAR SIR,

With reference to what was published in your issue of the 13th July, concerning *Military Exemption Tax* in the report of the outing of the *Unione Ticinese*, I have been asked by various people whether the sentiments expressed give a true picture of what myself and other Ticinesi think about the matter. To avoid any misunderstanding I take this opportunity of stating that what was written was only a mild way of stating what I myself and the bulk of my fellow-Ticinesi think about the matter.

A considerable amount of damage to our country has already been done by the senseless rigour with which regulations of very doubtful legal validity are being ruthlessly enforced. *Many Ticinesi have definitely renounced Swiss Citizenship* and many more, not excluding myself, are decided that unless there is a speedy and radical change they will follow suit.

One or two of our members have gone a considerable way towards obtaining at least elementary justice, in the ordinary way of procedure. Glaring facts and attitudes have come to light and as the decks are fairly well cleared for decisive action it is my intention, in common with several of my most trusted friends, to carry through a campaign in the Ticino in the course of the coming autumn and winter with a view to bring the bureaucrats to understand reason and common-sense. I know we can confidently rely on the active co-operation of at least some of the most prominent newspapers and leaders of public opinion in the Ticino.

The Ticinesi have in the past not been afraid to give vent to their opinions. The authorities should have had ample time to mend matters, if they had had the desire to do so, but perhaps, instead of realising that when one was speaking he was really voicing the opinion of us all, they must have thought that one would get tired of claiming justice and would eventually give up the task in disgust.

We command enough knowledge and courage to give the authorities an extremely good run for the money they extort from some of the Military Taxpayers and we are the more determined in the matter because I realise that we are not fighting for some pet theory of the Ticinesi, but that we have the tacit encouragement of the majority of the other Swiss who have experienced the way in which the regulations are enforced.

I am grateful for the opportunity the *Swiss Observer* has provided in the past to ventilate dissatisfaction in this connection, and I consider this one of its most useful purposes. In view of the fact that the "*S.O.*" is still suffering from growing pains and of other circumstances it would however be unfair to burden it with communica-

tions which might not be to the liking of the majority of its readers. In the Ticino, the newspapers like nothing better than the outspoken way in which we are used to speak and write, and Berne must sit up and take notice, whether they like it or not.

I thank you most heartily for the favour you are extending to me and remain, Sir,

Yours sincerely,

(Signed) W. NOTARI.

Aiming, as we do, at loyally representing every section of our Colony in Great Britain, we readily publish the above communication from the well known representative of our Ticinese compatriots, Mr. W. Notari, for many years president of the *Unione Ticinese*. Everybody who reads this letter must needs feel deeply concerned about the high degree of discontent that is revealed by it. It is evidently in the interest of our country that the cause of this discontent should be cleared up. If the matter complained of really is so serious as to have caused some compatriots to renounce our common citizenship and to make others consider taking a similar step, it is all to the good that Mr. Notari should openly voice this discontent. But for that purpose it seems desirable that the actual cause of the complaint should be more clearly stated than it is in the above letter. In what way are the regulations being enforced too rigorously? What regulations of doubtful legal validity does Mr. Notari refer to? Have the compatriots mentioned not relinquished our nationality rather because of the burden of the military tax than because of an unjust enforcement of their liability to pay it? It seems to us that, whatever the complaint is once it has been exactly formulated it should be possible to get things rectified by appealing to the right quarters rather than relinquishing our nationality.

CITY SWISS CLUB.

Séance du 6 août, 1929.

Treize. Nous étions treize. Pourquoi étions-nous treize? Parce qu'il pleuvait. Parce que nous sommes au mois d'août. Parce que plusieurs de nos camarades sont en vacances et surtout parce qu'un de nos plus distingués membres est arrivé en retard. S'il n'était pas arrivé en retard, ou plutôt s'il n'était pas arrivé du tout, nous n'aurions été que douze. Q.E.D. Les treize furent heureux de voir notre Président de nouveau parmi nous. Quelle mine superbe. Evidemment sa santé est bonne. Les affaires de la soirée furent bâclées avec une rapidité recommandable. Admissions néant. Démissions néant. Comité presque néant. Les treize sont bien sage. Quelques petites escarmouches au sujet des faits divers. On pousse pour activer la rédaction du Règlement. On parle du 1er août. On critique la manque de pancartes indicatrices. Un de nos membres n'a jamais pu découvrir l'entrée. Je ne suis pas étonné. On parle du "revolving horse" qui ne faisait pas de révolutions assez rapides malgré une application d'huile, ce qui permettait aux "lapins agiles" de dénicher trop facilement les "paquets de cibiches." J'ai entendu dire qu'aucun des treize s'est perfectionné dans ce genre de sport.

Les treize ont reçu avec le plus vif plaisir, la nouvelle que les camarades C. Chapuis et G. Jenne qui ont été sérieusement malade, sont en voie de guérison.

A 9h.30, l'ordre du jour étant épuisé, la séance est levée et les treize se séparent. ck.

GUESSING COMPETITION.

This competition, organised entirely by the City Swiss Club as part of the general entertainment of the 1st of August celebration, consisted in naming the six Swiss lakes and six Swiss mountains the outlines of which were exhibited in one of the tents. The competition was open to all on payment of six pence for each voting ticket, and many beautiful prizes had been provided for and were on view in the tent.

222 tickets in all were sold, and until darkness came and stopped this very attractive event, there was an almost uninterrupted flow of eager competitors and interested spectators filling the rather limited space available.

As soon as the competition was closed, the 12 solutions were announced in the large (refreshment) tent by Mr. E. Werner, President of the City Swiss Club. These are reproduced here for the benefit of all concerned:

- | | |
|------------------|-------------------------|
| 1—Geneva (Leman) | 1—Pilatus |
| 2—Zurich | 2—Matterhorn (Cervin) |
| 3—Bienne | 3—Eiger-Moench-Jungfrau |
| 4—4 Cantons | 4—Dents du Midi |
| 5—Zoug | 5—Bluemlisalp |
| 6—Sempach | 6—Bernina |

The following eleven competitors gave each a voting ticket with the 12 solutions mentioned above and a draw determined the order in which they were called to select their prize: Miss Alice Wenger; Miss Lena Burgin; Miss Herren; Miss Bertha Steiger; Mr. W. Hirt; Miss V. Courvoisier; Mr. Jean Devenoge; Mr. G. Wenger; Mr. Hans Trepp; Mr. H. Koller; Mr. C. Haefliger.

No less than 67 competitors had one error only and 32 others had two errors.