

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: - (1931)
Heft: 508

Artikel: A revived Swiss festival : costume and folklore
Autor: Sharp, Evelyn
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-694006>

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>

NEWS FROM THE COLONY.

THE BASLER JODLER GROUPE.

A very strenuous programme characterized the short stay in London of the Basler Jodler Groupe.

Arriving at Liverpool Street station on Friday morning they regaled the other early arrivals both from the boat train and the locals with a couple of jodling songs. On Saturday morning they placed a beautiful wreath consisting of Edelweiss and Alpine Roses on the Cenotaph.

Apart from their turn at the English Broadcasting station the outstanding feature of their visit constituted the reception given by Madame Paravicini on Monday evening at 21, Bryanston Square, W. 1, where they sang to a distinguished gathering. H.R.H. Princess Helena Victoria had graced the party with her presence which also included the Duchess of Norfolk with her daughters, Constance Duchess of Westminster, the Duke of Alba and Mrs. Charles Cochran (wife of the well-known producer).

On Sunday evening the Jodlers were the guests of the Swiss Club "Schweizerbund" at 74, Charlotte Street, W.1, and last Tuesday they joined the City Swiss Club at their Monthly Dinner at the Brent Bridge Hotel.

The troupe left last Wednesday morning for Paris, and we believe they have every reason to be satisfied with their short stay. Their programme had been carefully arranged beforehand and we wish to pay a compliment to Mr. E. Siegrist, the organiser, who had spared no pains in securing the well-known deserved success.

SCHWEIZERBUND (SWISS CLUB)

Nowhere could one have found a more homely atmosphere than at the Swiss Club "Schweizerbund," 74 Charlotte Street, W.1, on Sunday evening last. The visit of the "BASLER JODLER GRÜPPE" attracted an audience beyond all expectations, necessitating the abandonment of the advertised dancing programme. The visitors from our homeland received a great ovation very much befitting the occasion. They fully proved themselves delightful entertainers by the skillful rendering of their songs and yodels, a fact well confirmed by the repeated applause of the audience. These homely tunes and melodies must have touched the hearts of many listeners, reviving in them happy memories of by-gone days. It would have only needed a breeze of "Alpenluft" to carry the spectators away in a trance. It seemed quite apparent that they forgot their artificial surroundings, for they refused to think that their "last bus" was about to leave, shortly before midnight. The singing of the National Anthem by the choir and the audience brought this most successful evening to a close and everyone bade farewell to our welcome visitors.

It is to be hoped that arrangements for further concerts of this description will be made whenever the opportunity presents itself.

E.A.N.

A REVIVED SWISS FESTIVAL.
COSTUME AND FOLKLORE.

Geneva, June 30th.

During the last few days a wave of nationalism has swept over this most international of cities at the foot of Mount Salève. The ancient Festival of Swiss Costume, as it is called, though it means much more than that, is being held here for the first time since 1914, and we seem to have suddenly returned to gay pre-war days when people came to Geneva because it was a lovely place to see and not because there was a League of Nations Secretariat installed at the Quai Woodrow-Wilson.

For a whole week the decorators have been putting up green and flowery arches and turning the streets and quays into avenues of flags and garlands. Though the actual festival occupies only two days—it took place yesterday and is to be repeated to-day—the fun began on Friday, when the first of the 3,500 participants began to drift in from the cantons. At any moment you might run up against a group of gaily dressed peasants among the throngs of Genevans who had come out in the sunshine to look at the decorations, or find yourself held up in a crowd outside a café where some early arrivals from the mountains were already yodelling or singing one of their folk-songs. It was not until Saturday morning, however, that the mass of the processionists came pouring in by train and by road, some in farm wagons drawn by oxen or great powerful horses, some riding mules, and all wearing the costume of their craft and their canton, all carrying implements of work and garlanded in some way or other with flowers. The smell of the little mountain rose was strong in the air, and it was this charming flower that the visitors threw from bunches they carried at anybody whose smile they happened to encounter.

The festival was in two parts—the procession, and the performance later of traditional songs and dances in the Parc des Eaux Vives on the

shores of the lake. The procession, grouped according to districts, took over two hours to pass a given point. Beautiful as the whole effect was, it meant much more than an artistic display of colour and costume, for in it, as the different groups filed past, could be seen all present-day Switzerland—the variation in types striking even some of the Swiss spectators—and a good deal of historic Switzerland as well. Some of the cantons, Obwalden and Zug, Argovie, and others, had sent among their work-a-day peasants some groups dressed in the ancient costumes of their old families, some of whom were actual descendants of well-known founders of Swiss independence. William Tell and his son, of course, received clamorous applause. An amusing tableau in the Berne section showed the eighteenth-century mountain doctor and his eighteenth-century lady patient, from Fribourg came the model of a 1790 chalet, and from Grisons some genuine old Engadine sledges.

THE REAL THING.

All these belonged to what one might call the fancy-dress part of the pageant. More attractive to many people were the main body of processionists, who come direct from the mountains and valleys in which they live and work. Here were old bearded ploughmen from the oldest canton, Schwyz, fisherman from Lake Constance, vineyard workers from Schaffhouse, with their dray bearing two enormous wine vats, lace-makers from Neuchâtel, linen spinners and weavers from Berne, sugar refiners from Aarberg, and, of course, agricultural and farm workers from all parts of Switzerland, carrying corn sheaves and loaves of bread, and cheeses, and cherries, and other fruits of the earth, and leading sheep and goats. There was plenty of other live stock, too, in the way of chickens and pigs, and beautiful dun-coloured cows, and some very good imitation bears who were exceedingly popular.

But the marchers did nothing so dull as merely to march past. Frequently they broke into song, the girls from Fribourg and from Thurgovie with some particularly charming traditional songs. A group of musicians from Appenzell, the tympanum among their instruments, played delightful dance tunes. Now and then a young mountaineer with a magnificent voice showed what a much more harmonious achievement yodelling is than would be dreamed of from hearing its imitators, while a queer mountain cry uttered by the women, sometimes in the shrill voice of an ancient dame, filled up the few intervals that occurred in the moving volume of sound. The flag-throwers added to the general feeling of incident by their skilful manoeuvres with the Swiss flag flung repeatedly into the air all along the route.

THE FOLKLORE OF IT.

Old and new met very interestingly at more than one point. Together with those who carried flowers and fruits and other evidences of the spring festival came a group of very young girls from Schönenwerd (Soleure) with their leader who is not, I think, called a queen, and their may tree decorated with ribbons, flowers, and eggs, which in some villages is carried still from door to door on May Day, the ceremony concluding with a feast. And not far from the tableau of children from Argovie, representing the introduction into the village of Brunegg of a peal of church bells, came two groups of traditional dancers from East Switzerland clanging bells, who were undoubtedly, from the folklore point of view, the most remarkable feature of the whole festival. The first group were the Kaltbrunner Klause from the canton of St. Gall. They came running and leaping in single file rather like morris dancers, whose costume theirs to some extent resembled, for they were dressed impersonally in white shirts and white trousers, and the enormous sheep bell, which they held out in front in a horizontal position with both hands, was fastened to their broad embroidered leather belt with crossed embroidered straps coming from the shoulders. But the most extraordinary part of their costume was the high leather headdress, which also formed a mask over the whole face and was embossed with various symbols such as the star and the spiral. Did they belong to Africa or ancient Egypt, or Mexico? Or to Merrie England, since they were accompanied by the traditional hobby-horse, also dressed entirely in white, and driven by another dancer who acted as clown? One might have asked all these things had this troop of dancers not appeared in a Swiss procession.

The second group were a curious example of the man-woman so often found accompanying our own traditional dancers. They were men dressed queer glittering headdress of great height and bulk. They wore waxen female masks and four or five largish sheep bells both on their chest and their back. With them came running a jack-in-the-green bearing a large bell back and front.

THE FETE IN THE PARK.

The fête in the park yesterday evening was much spoilt by a thunderstorm. In spite of it, a good deal of traditional music was performed on wooden platforms to spectators who did not seem to mind the rain, perhaps because they felt so sure, to judge by their remarks to English

people present, that the weather would have been worse in England. The most interesting musical event was certainly some very beautiful playing by three Bernese mountaineers on the Alpine horn, an instrument some fifteen to twenty feet long that rests on the ground at one end. The St. Gallen yodellers were especially fine, and quite unceremonious, some of them removing their large wooden pipes from their mouths when their turn came to join in the song. But the rain spoilt the dancing, although one saw some very pretty examples of circular country dances before it began.

As I write, on Sunday morning, the procession again winds its way around Geneva to the accompaniment of distant thunder, while optimists hope for finer weather than yesterday's for the festival of dance and song to follow in the park down by the lake.

Evelyn Sharp.

In Manchester Guardian.

BEROMUNSTER'S INAUGURATION.

(Continued from front Page)

was an important one for the canton of Lucerne, and in fact for the whole of the Swiss Confederation; for Switzerland now possesses a station which ranks amongst the principal ones of Europe, and will be able to remove any false impression which exists regarding the musical standard of the State. It will soon be discovered by European listeners that Switzerland is not content with "yodelling," but that it possesses in its principal cities orchestras which can compare with those of other cities of Europe, which for some particular reason, are generally recognised as musical centres.

We left the Beromünster transmitter shortly before midday and glided down from the plateau through medieval towns and villages to Lucerne, where further speeches and music punctuated and enlivened a well-arranged lunch attended by high State officials, local magistrates, and the leaders from all parts of Switzerland in the new broadcasting movement.

The same evening, at sunset, I was speeding westwards through the mountains, hauled smoothly at about sixty miles an hour by an electric locomotive developing three thousand horse-power—the concentrated energy of millions of fallen snowflakes. Beromünster employs a similar source of electrical energy. Can there be anything more poetic than the transformation of snowflakes into sweet music and radiation of those sounds into valleys where such music has never yet penetrated, into the hospitals and sanatoria where colour is so needed to relieve the greyness of life and suffering, and into foreign industrial cities of which the majority of inhabitants have no chance of seeing for themselves the wonders of the Swiss Osberland?

D.W.

June 26th.

World Radio.

"FUNNY CUTS"

La crise économique rend les affaires pénibles ... et toutes les histoires vraisemblables.

Aussi, Monsieur a-t-il prié Madame de songer à ne pas dépasser le budget qui lui est alloué tous les mois.

— Afin d'y parvenir plus aisément, ma chérie, explique-t-il, tu n'as qu'à tenir un compte très exact de tes dépenses.

A la fin du mois, le budget se trouve nettement en déficit. Monsieur s'en désole et réclame le livre des comptes sur une page, il trouve cette mention : D.S.S.P., 600 frs. Un peu plus loin, les mêmes initiales se répètent en face de sommes diverses.

— Mais, en fin, que signifient ces abréviations? demande Monsieur.

Alors, Madame, toute confuse :

— Elles signifient : Dieu seul sait pourquoi, mon chéri!

* * *

Maman. — Ma petite fille, il faudra que tu ailles voir ta grand-mère cet après-midi. Oui. Elle est malade...

Lolita. — Ma pauvre grand-mère... Qu'est-ce qu'elle a?

Maman. — Eh bien! ma chérie, c'est bien ennuyeux : elle est tombée et elle s'est cassé la jambe...

Lolita (désolée). — Oh!...

Lolita a été songeuse et préoccupée pendant toute la matinée. La voici enfin auprès de sa grand-mère qui est couchée.

Lolita (se jette au cou de sa grand-mère). — Ma pauvre grand-mère... Tu t'es cassé la jambe... (Et elle regarde autour d'elle dans la chambre). Où l'as-tu mise?