

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: 510

Rubrik: Union Helvetia, London

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>

following year de Saussure, the famous Swiss scientist, accompanied by no fewer than twenty guides under the direction of the same Balmat, made the ascent which has become a landmark in the history of mountaineering.

Thanks to the two refuge huts that now stand among the snow and ice, caravans can find food and shelter on the way up; indeed, often they are obliged to stay there for days before weather conditions permit them to proceed or to retrace their steps. Although these and many other facilities have replaced the antiquated devices employed by de Saussure, the ascent remains one achieved by very few, and is rarely attempted except during the few fine weeks of summer. The marvellous panorama that slowly unravels itself during the ascent has so far remained their exclusive privilege.

This is not so any longer. The experience can be had by all, young and old alike, and in an even more striking manner, owing to the rapidity and audacity of the ascent.

There now exists a suspended aerial funicular, one of the most daring feats of engineering ever carried out. Swung from cables supported by gigantic steel pylons, a car climbing at the speed of eight feet a second transports its occupants from the valley of Chamonix to the foot of the great glaciers, at the height of nearly nine thousand feet, in exactly twenty-seven minutes. This part, actually in operation, represents two-thirds of the line, which will shortly reach the summit of the Aiguille du Midi, at an altitude of twelve thousand eight hundred feet, when it will be the highest mountain railway in Europe.

The present line is composed of two sections. The first, stretching from Chamonix to La Para, rises 2,500 feet in twelve minutes; the second, from La Para to the Station des Glaciers, rises another 2,900 feet in fifteen minutes, the latter station being 8,790 feet above sea level.

One by one, firmly embedded in the rock, rise and disappear the long line of steel pylons, not unlike a series of oil wells, some of them over 125 feet high. The top of each pylon forms a flat structure projecting at either side like a wide letter T, supporting the cables for the ascending and descending cars.

There are three cables on each side, the first and most important being the suspension cables that are the rails of the line. Made of a special steel composition, they are tested to a resistance of 350 tons. As the weight of the car is only four tons there is little likelihood of it breaking. A counter weight of thirty-five tons at the base of each maintains its rigidity and prevents any modification in tension due either to the movement of the car or to temperature. Over these runs the wheel of the car, the wheel being on the roof.

The second cable, immediately beneath the suspension cable, acts as an emergency brake. As the car glides swiftly up or down it passes between the jaws of a clutch (Ceretti patent) which automatically grips it in case of accident.

The car is thus immediately blocked in mid-air, no matter how steep the gradient may be. This gradient in places attains as much as 120 per cent., that is one metre per twenty metres. This brake can likewise be operated by hand. Despite this knowledge of security, passengers might be extremely seasick, swinging from side to side in space, especially in the terrific winds of the high altitudes, were it not for the presence of a third cable to steady them. This is not stretched over the top of the pylons like the other two, but runs along the side of the car and prevents it from swaying.

Lastly, the actual operation of the line is by means of a single traction cable, to which both the ascending and descending cars are attached, one at either end. They are worked from the power station at the summit of each section and cross each other midway.

These aerial cars are extremely comfortable and are partly enclosed for the winter. Lighted and heated by electricity, they carry eighteen passengers. A telephone puts them in constant touch with both stations.

The ascent is spectacular. Leaving the station of Chamonix, the car rises abruptly and soars rapidly into space. Very similar to the view from an aeroplane, one watches the valley as its familiar landmarks widen and grow dim. First come green meadows and pine forests, with here and there a mountain cascade.

Then as one climbs higher and higher, the air becomes colder, the wind whistles along the cables and Nature changes her aspect. Vegetation thins out, blocks of stone and mighty boulders that have crashed down from the mountain are mingled with the last remaining trees. Soon all trace of life disappears in the desolate wilderness of the high altitudes.

If the pylons are often high above the ground, some cables are swung from rock to rock over deep ravines with five hundred feet of void beneath one.

Soon snow appears and with it the splendour of the everlasting glaciers, whose history is marked in million of years. At the summit the little Hotel du Glacier offers a welcome that is very pleasant on cold or windy days. From its terrace, more than half-way up the highest mountain of Europe, stretches a marvellous view over the neighbouring ranges and the valley far below.

From this lofty station an audacious car will soon climb farther into the silence of the eternal snow to the great terrace that is being laid out over the world.

To go from Chamonix to the foot of the Great Glaciers, and eventually to the summit of the Aiguille du Midi, without other effort or discomfort than a change of cars on the way up, how simple it all seems, but at the price of what tenacity, hardship and danger has it been made possible!

It was in 1909 that a French company approached the well-known Swiss engineer, Mr. Maurice de Blonay, with a view to studying the possibility of such an enterprise. No man could have been better fitted to take in hand

a work of this importance, by reason of his long experience with the technical difficulties of mountain engineering. He had already built many mountain railroads, routes and bridges, both in France and Switzerland, and perhaps on account of this was keenly alive to the tremendous odds opposed to the realisation of the new project. Confident, however, in its ultimate success, he accepted the undertaking and started on the work the very day after his completion of the famous cogwheel railway from Chamonix to the Mer de Glace.

The prospecting over arid peaks and crevasses where the slightest mishap would be fatal was very difficult, and in certain places could only be done suspended over the precipice, at the mercy of a cord held by guides, reaching the high altitudes, the small caravan lived completely cut off from the world, in a wooden hut twelve feet by six, without windows, and the floor of which was a solid piece of ice. During the great storms, lasting sometimes for eight days, it was impossible even to open the door. In the intervals provisions were carried up on the backs of guides, who took from twelve to fourteen hours to make the ascent, not from Chamonix, but from the Mer de Glace!

This was child's play in comparison with the laying down of the foundations.

TO BE CONTINUED.

UNION HELVETIA, LONDON.

The Editor, Swiss Observer, London.

Sir,

Since you have deemed it a matter of interest to our London Swiss Colony to publish an entirely inaccurate and consequently misleading, "Compte-rendu" about our Club affairs, I and my colleagues trust that you will be good enough to accord to this reply the same measure of prominence in your paper.

If you had first approached us to glean some facts, instead of rushing into print some "badly mangled Minutes," which have been duly rectified since their publication, you would have speedily satisfied yourself that there are generally "two sides to a picture" and we would have gladly enabled you to give "fair play" to your editorial talents.

The Union Helvetia Club, London, has been in existence for over thirty years and its usefulness can hardly be denied. Unfortunately from the very start Debts towards the Lucerne Headquarters of the Association were incurred and relatively heavy interest accruals have swollen our liabilities in the direction indicated. Though we certainly did not see "eye to eye" with our Lucerne Administrators over given claims levied upon our exchequer, it was nevertheless decided that the London Organisation would honour these claims and as a matter of fact debts incurred by our predecessors some 15 years ago are now being discharged.

In 1929 the Club enterprise showed a small profit, but ever since the general conditions under

Dann entdeckte auch der Bergbauer den Menschen in sich. Menschenlust und Menscheneitelkeit regten sich in ihm. In den Frauen zuerst! Hei, wie schön gekleidet die Taldamen und gar die Ausländer gingen. So ein Bändlein im Haar, so ein farbiges Hut, ein so leichtes wehendes Kleid und gar ein seidener Strumpf! Die Mädchen machten weite Augen! Es zog sie dort hin, wo die Leute sich so schmückten und das Geld fanden, allerlei Herrlichkeiten zu kaufen. Sie stiegen zu Tal und als sie das bisschen Neuglück gefunden, holten sie die Brüder und Schwestern nach. Oben im Bergheime blieb ein altes, sich mühsam abrackendes Paar. Der Boden gab karg und karger. Die Schulden wuchsen. Elendes Leben! Am Ende nahmen auch die Eltern den Wanderstecken. Haus und Hof zerfielen und verwüsteten. Und doch, derer, die so die Scholle verliessen, waren immer noch Einzelne. In Hunderten lebt noch das machtvolle, den Schweizern ureigene Gefühl, die Liebe zum eigenen Grund. Diese Liebe tauscht Kargheit und Kampf und Mühe nicht an Glanz der Fremde. Der ist Heimat alles. Diese Liebe aber will die diesjährige Bundesfeier-Sammlung belohnen. Sie will helfen, wo die dürre Scholle zu wenig trägt. Sie will grüne Matten, in die die Rufe sich frass und Aecker und Hütten, die die Lawine zerschlug, wieder urbar und wohnbar machen. Und wie ihre Matten vor Verwüstung, sollen deren Eigner vor Untreue an der Heimat bewahrt werden.

Merkt auf, Ihr Leute im Tal. Ihr Städter und Bürger, Ihr Landleute und Arbeiter! Merkt auf, Schweizervolk! Es geht mit der diesjährigen Sammlung der Bundesfeier um ein Grosses.

Nicht Grossstadtmenschen, noch Grossgrundbesitzer waren die alten Eidgenossen! Sie wohnten hinter den Wehren ihrer Hauptorte, des stolzen Bern, des geschäftigen Zürich, des streit-

baren Luzern oder hinter den festeren Wehren ihrer Berge von Uri, Schwyz und Unterwalden. Und haben sie sich gewandelt in den Städten, hoch oben unter den Felsen, um die dunklen Bergseen und im Glanz der Gletscher wohnen sie noch, ein Urbild aller, die sich Schweizer nennen.

Ihr kennt sie, die Ihr in den Bergen wandert, Ihr liebt sie wie Ihr ihnen begegnet, die Wildheuse auf der Achsel, die Lastgabel am Rücken, oder die Gamsflinte im Arm, wie sie Euch grüssen, mit kurzem, mehr scheinem als freundlichem Gruss. Euch führen in der Wildnis des Gebirgs und über die Gefahren des Firms, wie sie als Geissbuben jodeln, dass Ihr meint, die ganzen Felskerne seien in's Singen geraten, und wie sie als Mädchen mit grossen, verwunderten Augen unter niederen Hüftentüren stehen! Hei, muss es Euch nicht mitreissen, vom reichen Mittelland bis hinaus an die Grenzen, in das herrliche Basel am Rhein und das kühne Schaffhausen, in das Genf des Völkerbundes und hinunter in's bundestreue lenzige Tessin! Nicht Armuthilfe gilt es! Es gilt mehr: Die Erhaltung des Eidgenossen wie er von Anfang war!

Läutet Ihr Glocken! Knattert und bellt Ihr Böller! Redet, Patrioten! Hinter den Klängen und Schüssen und Worten wird ein stilles Opfer gehen. Den Hut von ernsten Stirnen gezogen, legt Mann um Mann und Bruder um Bruder seine Münze auf einen schlichten Altar.

Und loht nur ihr Feuer auf allen Gipfeln, seid mehr als je und flammt höher denn je. Euer Widerschein, eine Flamme wird sein auf allen Wangen und eine Wärme in tausend Herzen: Wir geben, wir geben am Bundestag zu Gunsten der Brüder, die uns ein Urbild der Väter sind! Wir geben, wir geben als Eidgenossen den Eidgenossen! Wir geben, wir geben, weil uns allen eines mehr Not tut als je: die Einigkeit!

Zur Bundesfeier-Sammlung 1931.

(Die folgenden eindringlichen und packenden Sätze sind aus der Feder des Dichters Ernst Zahn).

Die Sammlung dieses Jahres ist eine besonders eindrucksvolle, dem Wesen der alten Eidgenossenschaft angemessene. Sie gilt der Not in den Hochgebirgstälern. In den Bergkantonen längst gekannt, hat die Motion Baumberger auch eine weitere Öffentlichkeit auf die Tatsache hingewiesen, dass vielen unserer Hochtäler Entvölkerung droht, weil das karge Brot, das sie ihren Bewohnern bieten, die Gefahren, mit denen sie sie bedrohen, ganze Dorfschaften verleiht, auszuwandern und anderswo ein leichteres Auskommen zu suchen. Unser Fremdenverkehr, unsere neuzeitlichen Errungenschaften der Nachrichtenvermittlung in Wort und Bild sind nicht eitel wohlthätige Einrichtungen. Es gibt heute mehr wie noch vor Jahrzehnten Leute, die, nur die Enge ihrer wilden kleinen Heimat kennend, nichts wissend von Eisenbahn und gutem Leben, in stiller, vielleicht stumpfer Zufriedenheit ihre paar Ziegen hüteten und an den Steilhalden das Wildhien sammelten. Zeitig und Wanderer sind in die weltferne Hütte gelangt und haben vom Besserhaben des Bruders im Tal Wunderdinge erzählt. Es dauerte wohl eine Weile bis der Bergbauer glaubte. Aber nach und nach gingen ihm die Augen auf. So gross wie da oben bei ihm die Kartoffeln, wurden im Tal die Nüsse. Hoch und äppig wuchs das Gras! Der Landwirt hielt Kühe und Pferde, und über seinen Wiesen und Häusern hing nicht ewig das Verderben des Steinschlages und der Lawinen. Sanfter waren die Winde. Der Föhn rüttelte nicht wie toll an den Fenstern und fasste den Funken nicht, der aus der Esse sprühte, um ihn als Zündfackel in zwanzig Hütten zu werfen.

which we have to carry on have become still more adverse by reasons of the constantly growing economic depression and in face of which even the very best Administrators are often powerless to avert final disaster, more especially so if a certain "element" would perhaps welcome such an ending, as being synonymous to a highly interesting financial gain upon realising our Club property, the value of which is anything from £20,000 to £25,000 whereas our Cash indebtedness to Headquarters is merely in the neighbourhood of £4,000. The "partnership" interest of our Lucerne friends is represented by a shareholding of £3,600. There does not seem to be a particularly grave reason to worry over the "security" aspect, though, of course, it is a matter of general regret that under present day trade and financial conditions the Union Helvetia Club London does not appear to be able to "make ends meet."

Your article in the S.O. must have created the impression in the minds of those "who are not in the know" that the men at the helm of affairs in London are either "manacled" or incapable of properly conducting the society's affairs, but let me assure you and your Readers that the London Administration is very progressive and that everything reposes in good and trusty hands.

Apart from the "old debts" redemption which is in itself a strain on our resources, we have nevertheless voted the sum of £100 to the "Georges Dimier Fund" and a further gift of £100 has also been made to the Clubhouse Fund. That actions of this sort often give rise to severe criticism owing to lack of proper understanding as to "why and wherefore," we fully appreciate.

Furthermore be it stated that of recent years the demands on our Benevolent Fund have been particularly heavy and during the last 6 months no less than £250 have had to be paid out as Sick benefits. But even under this great strain the Sick Fund still presents a healthy aspect.

Owing to new Labour Exchange activities in our own sphere it is but natural that the Union Helvetia Registry Office has "felt the draught," but a marked improvement has set in since Easter last and we entertain hopes that during the coming Winter months the records of the last 4 years may be beaten, in spite of the most regrettable and for our Institution particularly harmful fact, that nowadays few, if any, young Swiss Hotel employees are permitted to enter this country in search of work. The services rendered by our staff under very trying conditions are much appreciated.

Our Language School has proved a conspicuous success and a new course will open in September next. We are aware that in certain "official quarters" there are pangs of jealousy over our scholastic achievements and we are more than ever bent upon continuing these useful activities in favour of our young colleagues of both sexes.

I trust that after placing the above remarks to the "credit side" of the Union Helvetia London account, the decidedly harmful effect of your last Saturday's article in the "S.O." will be duly "off-set" and the "balance" of service and usefulness of our Club to the Colony will become more apparent to the discriminating Reader.

I am, Sir,

Yours very truly:

A. Indermaur,
Président, Administration Territoriale
de l'Union Helvetia.

(We very much regret if the article referred to has given offence to our friends in the Union Helvetia. The original was sent to us by a member and we convinced ourselves that same was a reprint from a communication contained in the official organ of the U. H. and presumably published at the request or with the approval of the interested parties. We gladly publish the above rejoinder. Ed. S. O.)

CITY SWISS CLUB.

L'assemblée mensuelle aura lieu comme d'habitude mardi 4 août au local du Club (voir annonce).

SWISS RIFLE ASSOCIATION.

We wish to remind our readers that the Swiss Rifle Association have made special arrangements to celebrate the First of August on their ground at Hendon. Apart from shooting competitions for non-members there will be a number of other attractions.

A "PICNIC" BY CAR.

It has been suggested amongst some members of the City Swiss Club who are the fortunate owners of cars to join in a common excursion to the South Coast (a run of about 60 miles). This would take place on Sunday August 9th, and likely participants are requested to communicate with Mr. P. F. Boehringer (Tel: Clerkenwell 9595), for further particulars.

CITY SWISS CLUB.

Messieurs les membres sont avisés que

L'ASSEMBLEE MENSUELLE

aura lieu le 4 Août au Restaurant PAGANI, 42, Great Portland Street, W.1. et sera précédée d'un souper à 7 heures (prix 5/-).

ORDRE DU JOUR:

Procès-verbal. Admissions. Démissions. Divers.

Pour faciliter les arrangements, le Comité recommande aux participants de s'annoncer au plus tôt à M. P. F. Boehringer, 23, Leonard St. E.C.2 (Téléphone: Clerkenwell 9595).

PATZENHOFER
FINEST
PILSENER & MUNICH
Lager Beer
Bottled at the Brewery



Sole Agents for U.K. and Export:
JOHN C. NUSSLE & Co. Ltd.
8, Cross Lane, Eastcheap,
LONDON, E.C.3.
Phone: Royal 8934 (2 lines).



10d.
HALF POUND BLOCK

Choc-ful of goodness!
NESTLÉ'S
MILK CHOCOLATE

Drink delicious "Ovaltine" at every meal—for Health!

SEASIDE HOTELS.
UNDER SWISS MANAGEMENT.

BRIGHTON. Malvern Private Hotel, Regency Square, facing West Pier. Well appointed; 2½ to 3 gns. weekly. Telephone: Brighton 4517. EMILE MARTIG.

NEWQUAY. Atlantic Hotel, Cornwall's Leading Hotel. Every Modern Comfort. Justly famous for its Service and individual attention. Sea view from every window. Telephone: 400. New Illustrated Brochure from—J. JENNY, Resident Manager.

MISCELLANEOUS ADVERTISEMENTS

Not exceeding 3 lines.—Per insertion 2/6; three insertions 5/- Postage extra on replies addressed to Swiss Observer

OUVRIER, mécanicien 46 ans, Suisse Française cherche chambre et pension dans famille Suisse ou Française pour fin août. Ecrire: Box No. 9, c/o Swiss Observer, 23, Leonard Street, E.C.2.

MRS. A. F. SUTER, of "Lueg-is-Land," Lower Kingswood, Surrey, requires a Swiss Cook-General for mid-Sept.

SWISS BANK CORPORATION,

(A Company limited by Shares incorporated in Switzerland)

99, GRESHAM STREET, E.C.2.
and 11c, REGENT STREET, S.W. 1.

Capital Paid up £6,400,000
Reserves - - £1,960,000
Deposits - - £43,000,000

The WEST END BRANCH
opens Savings Bank Accounts on
which interest will be credited
at 2½ per cent. until further notice.

ADVERTISEMENT
IS THE MOTHER OF
NECESSITY

In other words, if you advertise insistently you will CREATE a market for your goods. Well executed Printing is essential if your advertising is to possess the necessary "punch." Therefore send along your enquiries for Leaflets, Circulars, Folders, Price Lists, etc., to

The Frederick Printing Co. Ltd.

23, LEONARD STREET, LONDON, E.C.2.
Telephone - - CLERKENWELL 9595.

Tell your English Friends
to visit

Switzerland

and to buy their Tickets
from

The Swiss Federal Railways,
Carlton House, 11b, Regent St., S.W.1

Divine Services.

EGLISE SUISSE (1762),
(Langue française.)

79, Endell Street, Shaftesbury Avenue, W.C.2.
(Near New Oxford Street)

Dimanche 2 Août 11h. M. M. Pradervand Es 46 : 4.

BAPTEME.

Yvonne Lise Favre, née le 19/3/31, fille de Samuel et de Suzanne née Cand, de Savigny et Vilette (Vaud) le 26/7/31.

Durant le mois d'Août les cultes du soir sont suspendus. Ils sont remplacés par des services en plein air. Voir les annonces spéciales.

Pour tous renseignements concernant actes pastoraux, etc., prière de s'adresser à M. R. Hoffmann-de Visme, 102, Hornsey Lane, N.6. (Téléphone: Archway 1798).—Heure de réception à l'église: Mercredi de 10.30—12 h.

SCHWEIZERKIRCHE

(Deutschschweizerische Gemeinde)

St. Anne's Church, 9, Gresham Street, E.C.2.
(near General Post Office.)

Sonntag, den 2. August 1931.

11 Uhr vorm., Gottesdienst und Sonntagschule. Während des Monats August fallen die Abendgottesdienste aus.

Alle Anfragen wegen Amtshandlungen und Religions—bzw. Confirmanden Unterricht sind an den Gemeindepfarrer zu richten: C. Th. Hahn, 43, Priory Road, Bedford Park, W.4 (Tel. Chiswick 4156).

FORTHCOMING EVENTS.

Saturday, August 1st. Swiss Rifle Association: First of August Celebration on Shooting Ground at Hendon.

Tuesday, August 4th at 8.30 p.m.—City Swiss Club: Monthly Meeting at Pagani's Restaurant, preceded at 7 p.m. by the usual dinner (see Advert).

Wednesday, August 5th, at 7.30 p.m.—Société de Secours Mutuels: Monthly Meeting—at 74, Charlotte Street, W.1.

Printed for the Proprietors, by THE FREDERICK PRINTING CO., LTD., at 23, Leonard Street, London, E.C.2.