

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: - (1934)
Heft: 664

Artikel: A swiss murder
Autor: Pope, Wilmon
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-691742>

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>

August 13-September 5

Vacation Course for Modern French at the University of Neuchâtel.

Middle of August

Automobile Show and driving skill test at St. Moritz.

August (2nd Part)

International Riding Tournament and Swimming Festival at St. Moritz.
Archery Contest at St. Moritz.

August 18

Golf Competition, "Morgan Cup," at Lucerne.

International Sailing Regatta at Lausanne-Ouchy.

Golf Competition at Lausanne-Ouchy.

August 20-25

International Carlton Tennis Tournament at St. Moritz.

August 20 and following days

International Tennis Tournament for the Championship of Interlaken in open Men's and Ladies' Singles at Interlaken.

HEALTH SPRINGS BUBBLE IN SWITZERLAND.

To any one in quest of health Switzerland will prove the solution of the most difficult problems. Not only has this country beautiful become more renowned for her miracle-working alpine climate, but in its great wealth of mineral springs it possesses priceless assets which, strange as it may seem in this enlightened era of ours, are only superficially known in foreign lands. Yet knowledge and use of healing waters in Switzerland date back to the very beginning of civilization.

The springs of St. Moritz in the Upper Engadine, according to Dr. med. H. Keller, furnish indisputable proof of great antiquity, for when their pipes were replaced in 1853, there were found at $3\frac{1}{2}$ to $4\frac{1}{2}$ feet under the surface of the earth the well-preserved hollowed-out trunks of three mighty larches which had obviously been employed for the springs. In these tree-trunks a number of bronze objects, swords, knives, needles, etc., were discovered, which scientists estimated to be about 3,000 years old. Similar prehistoric finds were made in Baden (Argovie), Lœche-les-Bains (Valais) and Yverdon (Vaud).

The period of the Roman occupation, beginning in the year 58 B.C., represents the second stage in the development of watering places in Switzerland. Spas flourished to a high degree, not only for the use of such medicinal springs as were already known, but also through the discovery of others and particularly through the progress made in technical equipment and bath fittings. The thermal baths at Baden are an outstanding example of this. The bath hospital and the numerous surgical instruments discovered there show how well the Romans understood how to utilize natural healing methods as available through baths and even to combine them with surgery.

After invasions from the North put an end to Roman influences, appreciation of mineral springs suffered a temporary setback, but already during the reign of Charlemagne taking the baths came more and more in vogue. In the monastery of St. Gall there is still preserved the plan of a building of the year 820 in which a bathing establishment is designed. In the later Middle Ages and particularly at the time of the Renaissance, baths taken by people in normal health were considered as one of the chief "amenities of life."

Watering places now increased rapidly and in addition to the before mentioned spas of prehistoric foundation, there are historical records of the establishment of the following: Ragaz-Pfäfers (1038 and 1384), Tarasp, Lower Engadine (15th century), Val Sinestra, Lower Engadine (15th century), Bex, Vaud (salt spring mentioned in 1554 and sulphur springs in 1717), Gurnigel near Berne (1561). The springs of Passugg near Chur had already been known in 1562 and were rediscovered in 1863. The mineral spring of Rheinfelden, called Kapuzinerquelle, was in use as early as 1664, and the exploitation of the Rheinfelden salt mines and the opening of the brine baths dates from 1846.

There are 100 spas in the alpine regions, 26 in the Jura and 30 in the Swiss high plateau. Springs with over 20 degrees centigrade are called thermal waters, and those with less than 20 degrees cold springs. They contain the soluble substances of the percolated rocky strata. The greater the quantity of such substances and the longer the water has been in contact with them, the richer is the water in mineral constituents. These elements are chiefly calcium, potassium, sodium, lithium, magnesium, iron, silicium, aluminium, sulphur, phosphorus, borax, chloride, bromide, iodine, fluoride, carbonic acids, sulphuretted hydrogen and nitrogen. The bases and the acids can be dissociated from one another or compounded with salts. The most important of these are common or kitchen salt, carbonate of soda, magnesium and iron, sulphate

of soda, sulphate of sodium, gypsum and sulphate of magnesium iodine salts and arsenic compounds. The importance of borax and lithium has not yet been sufficiently investigated.

When the mineral waters come into contact with organic substances on the surface of the earth and slowly spread, they deposit a part of their salts; in this way mud and peat are formed, which are both used for baths and local applications.

The majority of the springs are radio-active, having emanations either in the water itself, in their sediments or in their gases. Radio-active springs contain but little mineral substance, and are connected with the deepest strata of the earth.

Mineral waters are classified in ten kinds, according to their degree of mineralization, predominant element and temperature. They are:

1. *Febly Mineralized* or simple cold waters, containing less than 0.5 gr. of solid constituents to one litre, and less than 1.0 gr. of carbonic acid. Switzerland has 40 such springs, of which the most important are Aigle, Disentis, Knutwil, Romanel and Weissbad.

2. *Akrato-Thermal* or simple thermal waters, "Wildbäder." They contain to the litre less than 0.5 gr. of solid constituents, and their temperature is above 20 degrees centigrade. Ragaz-Pfäfers features such a spring which compares with Badenweil, Gastein, Wildbad and a number of other spas in foreign countries.

3. *Earthy Waters*, containing over 0.5 gr. of solid constituents to the litre. They are divided into carbonate and gypsum waters, according to the predominance of carbonic and sulphuric earth. Some of the most important watering places with these features are: Henniez-les-Bains, Montreux, Meltingen Sissach, Rheinfelden-Kapuziner and Magdener springs, Yverdon, Tenigerbad, Andeer, Grimmelalp, Lœche-les-Bains and Vals-Platz. The springs in the two last resorts are thermal. This category of spas compares with such foreign watering places as Thonon, Vittel, Wildungen, etc.

4. *Alkaline Waters*, containing to the litre more than 0.5 gr. of solid constituents. The predominant salt is carbonate of sodium. Several of these springs contain iron, bromide, iodine, borax and lithium. There are 9 springs in all, of which the most important are Tarasp-Schuls-Vulpera, Passugg and Oberberg, Neuenahr, Vichy, Ems, Franzensbad, Karlsbad, Marienbad, etc., are rivals of similar properties in foreign countries.

5. *Sulphur Waters*, containing sulphate of sodium, sulphate of calcium and sulphuretted hydrogen. Some are cold and others warm, and often contain chloride and sulphate. There are 68 such springs, 24 of which are warm. Among the most important of them are Baden, Schinznach, Lavey-les-Bains, Yverdon, Alvanen, Bex-les-Bains, Gurnigel, Lenk, Lostorf, Heustrich and Schwefelberg Bad.

6. *Common Salt or Brine Baths*, containing over 1 gr. of common salt to the litre. Bromide, iodine and carbonic acid are often found in these springs. Switzerland has such saturated waters at Bex-les-Bains, Rheinfelden, Rheinfelden-Ryburg and Schweizerhall, which are used for extracting salt as well as for brine baths. They compare, for instance, with Baden-Baden, Biarritz, Homburg, Ischl, Kissingen, Nauheim, Wiesbaden in foreign lands.

7. *Iodine Waters*, containing at least 0.001 gr. of iodine salt to the litre. The iodine is mostly found compounded with chloride of sodium in common salt, alkaline, and earthy waters. The most important of these springs are at Tarasp-Schuls-Vulpera, Rheinfelden, Passugg, Bex-les-Bains and Schinznach.

8. *Chalybeate or Iron Waters*, containing 0.01 gr. and more of ferruginous salts, in which the iron is the main curative agent. In Swiss springs the iron is found in the form of bicarbonate. They are classed as alkaline, earthy, muriatic, saline and carbonic waters, according to their predominating element. Iron waters are very numerous in Switzerland, especially in the alpine regions, and particularly in the Grisons. The most important among these spas are St. Moritz, Tarasp-Schuls-Vulpera, Passugg, Fideris, Lenk, Morgins, Acquarossa, and Franzensbad is one of the foreign rivals.

9. *Arsenical Waters*, containing at least 0.0002 gr. of arsenic. In Switzerland arsenic is found with the carbonates and sulphates of alkalis, alkaline earth and iron. Val Sinestra and Acquarossa feature such springs.

10. *Springs Containing Epsom Salts* are found in the little spa of Birnenstorf near Brugg.

11. *Peat and Moor Baths*. They are classified according to their mineral and vegetable substances. In some localities the mud of the mineral waters is used for the packings. This is the case at St. Moritz, Schinznach, Andeer and Acquarossa. Sand baths with alluvial sand from the Rhone are methodically employed at Lavey-les-Bains. Elster, Franzensbad and Marienbad number among non-Swiss rivals.

The manifold healing agents which bounteous Nature has so lavishly placed at mankind's disposal in Switzerland are combined with the forces and laws of physics, hygiene and dietetics. Mineral springs, pure air, and sunshine form a matchless combination, and all the leading resorts feature the latest and best installations for any special treatments which the attending physicians may deem necessary for a patient.

Transportation and hotel rates have been reduced so drastically in Switzerland that a sojourn at one of the before mentioned spas is now within easy reach of any purse, and it is bound to prove a high-interest-bearing investment for health.

A SWISS MURDER.

"Via Mala" by JOHN KNITTEL (Hutchinson, 8s 6d). We have recently considered books by clever German authors, and one by a Norwegian. This week we have what is a complete novelty to me, a story at full length and in full value by a Swiss, John Knittel.

It is not merely by a Swiss author, but it deals intimately with Swiss people and contemporary Swiss life, and enables us to realise how that life seems to natives of a confederacy which has been camouflaged for most of us by the chromolithographic eulogies of the tourist agencies.

"Via Mala" exposes some of the drawbacks which fill in the picture for those who live in Switzerland all the year round. It is the valley of the Yzolla, dark and narrow and damp, where "the air smelled of wood and the acids of clammy mushrooms."

Here dwelt the Lauretz family, whose lives were darker and narrower and damper than this valley. The father, who boasted in his cups that he was descended from a soldier of Napoleon, was a brutal and drunken saw miller, and his wife and children all bore permanent marks of his violence. The father was thoroughly bad. The children, though rough as their environment, had redeeming traits of human kindness.

One of them, Sylvie, whose enduring evidence of her father's cruelty was a crippled arm, was more fortunate than the others. She was engaged to "do for" an old and famous painter, who occupied a neighbouring chalet for the purpose of making studies of the mountain scenery, and who gave her a fatherly affection, and opened her mind to a number of things finer than the philosophy of the Via Mala dreamed of.

Sylvie, as the author develops her, is a charming character, and it appears quite natural that when the old painter died he bequeathed to her a sum of money and the chalet and its contents.

It was while she was in Zurich on the business of this legacy that the miseries of the Lauretz family came to a head, and there is a powerfully written chapter in which the limit of endurance is reached, and the other children, and the mother, plan and carry out the murder of the father.

It is a ghastly business, clumsily put through, but, from any moral point of view, as justifiable a homicide as could be imagined.

But here began the troubles which ever pursue the amateurs of crime, the unexplained absence of the father, the dawning suspicions and innuendoes of the neighbours, the fear of discovery and punishment. And, to complete the entanglement, in Zurich Sylvie had met and fallen deeply in love with Andi von Reichenau, a clever young man of the governing class, who was also the examining magistrate for the district in which the Via Mala lies.

Their love prospers, but Sylvie, who has discovered the secret of her father's disappearance, tries to avoid marriage. The insistence of her lover carries her away, and for a time they are idyllically happy.

Then, by one of life's little ironies, it becomes her husband's official duty to reopen the question of the disappearance of Lauretz, and he discovers to his horror that he is the son-in-law and brother-in-law of murderers whom it is his official duty to denounce.

He has the means of closing the inquiry without any disclosure, but he is a man of honour. Here is a fine case of conscience. What did he do about it, and how did it react upon his deep affection for Sylvie? It would be unfair to the reader to give away the secret.

Wilson Pope.
(Star.)

PERSONAL.

We regret to hear that Mr. G. T. Grotz, of Ightham (Kent), has met with a motor accident, when his car collided with a taxi which was travelling on the wrong side. Mr. Grotz received some internal injuries from which we trust he will make a speedy and complete recovery.