

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:	665
Artikel:	The new adventurers
Autor:	Maede, C.F.
DOI:	https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-691949

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: 22.02.2026

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

SOME OF THE FORTHCOMING EVENTS IN SWITZERLAND.

August 23 and following days
Swiss Golf Championship for Ladies, open to amateurs, on the Engadine Golf Links at Samaden-St. Moritz.

August 25
Peasant Costume Ball at the Kursaal at Interlaken.

August 25 and 26
Swiss Golf Championship 1934 with International Participation at Lausanne-Ouchy.

August 26
Swimming Competitions at the Interlaken Swimming Baths.
"Grand Prix Suisse" for Automobiles (Bremgarten Circuit) at Berne.
Opening of the Football Season at Lausanne.

August 26-September 2
Bicycle Tour of Switzerland, starting at Geneva.

Second International Beach Week at Lausanne-Ouchy.

August 27
Ladies' Cup on the Engadine Golf Links at Samaden-St. Moritz.

August 28-September 2
International Tennis Tournaments at Lucerne.

August 30-October 10
Vacation Course for Modern French at the University of Lausanne.

August 31
Fashion Show at the Kursaal at Lucerne.

September
International Festivals during League of Nations Session at Geneva.

September 1-6
30th World Peace Congress at Locarno.

September 2 and 9
Open-air William Tell performances at Interlaken.
William Tell Performances at Altdorf.

THE NEW ADVENTURERS.

Since the war there has come into existence a school of young mountaineers whose motives and methods are radically different from those of the older generation. To the latter the new point of view may be uncongenial, but it must be remembered that it is the gradual and inevitable changing of conditions that has just as gradually and inevitably produced the modern methods. The new technique, outrageous as it may seem, to some, has in fact been nothing more than an adaptation to the altered circumstances.

In the happy days in the middle of the last century, when the vogue of mountaineering may be said to have started, there seemed to be an unlimited number of unclimbed peaks. This period may be designated as the first phase of Alpine climbing, and it was not until the end of the last century that the seeker after virgin peaks had to look further afield than the Alps. Towards the end of the last century, however, the decreasing number of unconquered summits had compelled the more adventurous to find distraction in discovering new routes to the familiar mountaintops. Nor was this unreasonable, for the pioneers who had climbed the Swiss and Italian sides of the Matterhorn, or traversed Monte Rosa from Italy into Switzerland, or had explored the classic routes on Mont Blanc, had long ago realised that each new way of approach, to even the most familiar peak, constituted a completely different and novel expedition. For instance, only an expert would guess that the Matterhorn, whose vast bulk dominates the Italian pastures at Breuil, is the same mountain that towers so gracefully and impressively above the Swiss village of Zermatt. In fact, when approached from opposite sides, the Matterhorn is as different to climb as it is to look at, and this applies to all great peaks.

So for a time the profusion of variety to be found on each of the great mountains satisfied even the most adventurous: it was the Indian summer of mountaineering; the evil day on which it had been expected that the Alps would be "exhausted" seemed to be indefinitely postponed, and new routes sufficed instead of new peaks. This period may be called the second phase of Alpine climbing, and it continued approximately until the end of the European War. Throughout this second phase there was a growing tolerance on the part of the Alpine world towards guideless climbing, a practice which the majority of the pioneers had looked upon as a dangerous form of naughtiness. Since the earliest days, it is true, there had been successful guideless ascents, but they were only sporadic instances, and Canon Girdestone's prolonged guideless activities in the 'sixties did little to change opinion, for his ingenuous narrative revealed too many hair-breadth escapes to encour-

September 3-9
International Tennis Tournament at Lausanne-Ouchy.

September 4-7
Congress of the International Union of Producers and Distributors of Electric Energy at Lausanne.

September 6-16
International Golf Contests at Lausanne.

September 7-9
Swiss National Golf Championship at Lausanne for Ladies and Gentlemen.

September 8-23
Swiss Fair of Agriculture and Food Industries at Lausanne.

September 9
Sailing Regatta at Lausanne-Ouchy.

September 13-15
Golf Championship (Watson Cup) at Lausanne.

September 14
"Engelweihe," Divine Dedication, at Einsiedeln.

September 15
Chamois Hunting begins at Interlaken.

September 16
Federal Prayer and Thanksgiving Sunday.

September 17-22
Tennis Tournament at Grindelwald.

September 18-25
International Tennis Tournament at Lausanne.

September 22 and 23
National Costumes Festival at Montreux.

September 23
Concours Hippique of the Geneva Society of Cavalry at Geneva.

September 29 and 30
Valaisan Vineyard and Autumn Festival at Sion.

October and November
International Radio Show at Geneva.

October 14
Bicycle Tour of the Canton of Geneva, starting from Geneva.
St. Meinrad's Feast at Einsiedeln, with final celebrations of the 1000th Anniversary.

October 30-November 4
International Concours Hippique at Geneva.

November
International Tennis Championship on Covered Courts at Champel, Geneva.

First International Basketball Tournament at Geneva.

Bridge Challenge at Lausanne.

Inter-Pensionnats Ping-Pong Tournament at Lausanne.

Festival of the Nations at Lausanne.

November 4-11
International Peace Week at Geneva.

LONDON SWISS RIFLE TEAM.

At a general meeting of the Team held last Thursday, the 12th of July, at the Swiss Hotel, Old Compton Street, W.1, the final arrangements in connection with the participation at the forthcoming "Tir Fédéral" were discussed and settled.

The following members will represent the London Colony at this national competition festival: Messrs. O. Brullhard, A. Burkhardt, A. Deubelbeiss, J. C. Fenner, W. Fischer, A. Fuchs, J. M. Hess, P. Hilfiker, F. Notter, Alf. Schmid, Arn. Schmid, H. Senn and J. C. Wetter. All of them have now left for Fribourg, the statutory rounds having to be fired off between July 21st and August 1st.

We wish to stress the point that the competitors are bearing the whole of the expense themselves, no contribution from outside sources having been solicited nor offered. The unfavourable exchange position added to four months' of persevering training involve a heavy personal sacrifice and demonstrate both their patriotism and love of our national sport.

A special collection made amongst the members of the Team will enable them to offer to the Prize Committee in Fribourg an exquisite silver cup suitably engraved.

On behalf of the London Colony we desire to offer the London Swiss Rifle Team best wishes for the success it so fully deserves.

age others to follow his example. However, a campaign in 1876, accomplished by Messrs. Charles and Lawrence Pilkington in company with Mr. Gardiner, was a very different affair. Within the limits of a comparatively short holiday these three carried out with unvarying success a series of guideless expeditions of all degrees of difficulty. The effect of this performance was decisive, and guideless climbing from that day gradually became respectable. Later on, too, the advent of a class of amateurs who could spend more time, money and thought on mountaineering than even the best guides could spare made it evident that men with the necessary leisure and aptitude were at least as trustworthy as guides for any expedition, however difficult. Subsequently, with the general impoverishment that followed the European War, there were few climbers left with money enough to pay guides for long engagements, and, after the war, guideless expeditions became so common that no longer excited comment.

But even so, during the second phase of Alpine climbing, apart from this relenting attitude to the question of guideless expeditions, the views of the majority of mountaineers remained orthodox, and strict attention was still paid to the fundamental principles as preached and practised by the pioneers. The latter had always drawn the sharpest distinction between difficulty and danger. While admitting that mountaineers might enjoy difficulty with clear conscience and not be deterred by danger, they maintained that true mountaineering consisted not merely in conquering difficulties, but also, as far as possible, in circumventing dangers. Thus they held that no degree of mere difficulty could excuse an experienced mountaineer if he fell off his mountain. But they also declared that it was inexcusable for anyone to venture into the sort of place where the mountain was likely to do the falling and might fall upon the mountaineer. According to this theory, risk from falling stones and avalanches could nearly always be avoided. To run such risks voluntarily was, in the orthodox view, prejudicial to the good name of mountaineering.

After the war these ideas, which had worn so well, came to be discredited and repudiated by a new school which now arose among the numerous young guideless climbers. The third phase of Alpine climbing may now be said to have begun, and the greatest revolution that the ethics of mountaineering have yet undergone began to take place. It was partly caused, perhaps, by a war-worn attitude of mind, but chiefly by what has been often described as the "exhaustion" of the Alps. Now, it has been maintained very plausibly that the Alps can never be exhausted, and this is true, no doubt, in the case of those who love them best. On the other hand, in the case of a man whose motive in climbing may be a passion

for exploration, he will surely find that for him the Alps have been exhausted long before the last route up each gully, ridge, face or quarry has been charted with dotted lines and classified in the last and most exhaustive climber's guide-book of some future age.

The Alps have been referred to by a great writer and mountaineer as the playground of Europe. Such an analogy is disagreeably suggestive of gymnastic apparatus and asphalt playgrounds. Certainly, if the Alps have become a mere playground to us to-day, there is some excuse for the young generation's rejecting the hallowed traditional methods of mountaineering and the present state of affairs can be accounted for. When the best pitches of the playground are overcrowded, when play is becoming stale and the peaks, with all their routes, have been traversed again and again, what novelty or uncertainty is there left? The only solution is to alter the rules of the game, and the young generation will not scruple to do so. They will make the new principles clear by their deeds: dangers must be faced, chances must be taken, uncertainty can be improvised. Are not the very few great mountaineering problems that are left in the Alps all of them dangerous to solve as well as difficult? The word 'impossible' is to have no meaning to the new mountaineer; he is to conquer tempests as well as precipices of ice and rock; it is not for him to wait upon the weather. For him mountaineering is the same thing as war, and, as the enemy gives no quarter, all means are fair. Thousands of feet of rope, scores of hooks, clasps, pegs, wedges, stirrups, slings, hammers, or anything else in the world that can be dragged or carried up a mountain may be used: no manner of mechanical means need be rejected; this is the new spirit.

It is curious that no English names are to be found in the records of this peculiar school of mountaineering. It seems that its general principles do not appeal to Englishmen; at any rate the English do not appear to put them into practice as far as climbing mountains is concerned. But the new attitude to the mountains, whatever Englishmen may think of it, is responsible for some astonishing exploits, edifying and the reverse. On the enormous northern precipices of the Grandes Jorasses a campaign is waged annually, and during one of the numerous unsuccessful attempts to storm the impregnable heights an incident occurred which may serve to show the spirit of the new movement. During the first day's assault upon the tremendous cliffs, which are notoriously exposed to falling stones and falling ice, the rope joining two of the climbers was severed by falling stones and the head of an ice-axe which was suspended in the belt of one of the men was, as their report states, "obliterated" owing to the same cause. The mechanical means employed on some of these attempts are often in accordance with the new principles, and

LA "GUERRE DES JOURNAUX."

Pourquoi donc cette chasse aux journaux suisses telle qu'elle a été pratiquée en Allemagne depuis une semaine environ? Le "Bund" a répondu en substance à cette question: Parce que, quelques jours après la tragédie du 30 juin, M. Goebbels a donné un coup de sifflet à la presse allemande, pour annoncer que l'"incident était clos," et que les gazettes helvétiques n'ont pas suivi ce mot d'ordre, "Inde irae."

Il s'agit, écrit d'autre part la "National Zeitung," d'une tentative avouée d'exercer une pression sur la presse suisse. Les hommes d'Etat allemands, avec la singulière conception qu'ils se font des autres pays, ont eu la candeur de s'imaginer que la presse suisse indépendante se laisserait impressionner par ce chantage du ministre de la propagande."

Ce qui frappe d'une façon particulière dans ces mesures, c'est qu'elles s'adressent exclusivement à des organes de langue allemande de Suisse et de Tchécoslovaquie, la diffusion des gazettes autrichiennes étant déjà proscrite depuis longtemps: il s'agit d'organes de régions que le régime national-socialiste considère déjà comme des parties intégrantes du "peuple allemand," et soumises par conséquent à des pouvoirs particuliers.

C'est là la signification réelle et profonde des mesures prises à Berlin contre des feuilles qui, dans leur appréciation des événements d'outre-Rhin, n'ont d'ailleurs jamais cessé de faire preuve de pondération et d'observer la retenue qui s'imposait. Si la Suisse admettait jamais la validité de la conception hitlérienne, elle suivrait l'exemple de la politique de suicide pratiquée à la fin du XVII^e siècle par les dirigeants de Varsovie.

Telle est la vraie signification de cette "guerre des journaux" qui ruinerait le prestige du Conseil fédéral au cas où ce dernier s'aviserait de capituler. Aussi est-il douteux qu'il suive les conseils fallacieux de certains défaitistes, qui prônent un arrangement sur la base d'une côte mal taillée. Nos gouvernements se rappelleront que le Conseil national vient de leur enjoindre de la

in one attack on this same ghastly precipice the assailants used 750 feet of rope, seventy-eight pegs for rock, twenty pegs for ice, twenty-five karabiners or swivel-hooks, ten stirrups, and six hammers. The attack failed and two of the climbers were killed.

A more successful effort was the celebrated *tour de force* of the brothers Schmidt on the previously unclimbed northern face of the Matterhorn. One of the young men had already taken part in a new ascent of the Ortler Spitze, in Tirol, and the route chosen on that occasion had been described as "an enormous ice-couloir situated between threatening rocky banks and under the constant menace of the gigantic overhanging sérac-bastion of the upper Ortler Glacier." The critic went on to say that only a person desirous of uselessly exposing his life would dream of ascending this funnel, swept as it is by continuous stones and ice avalanches. But the brothers' ascent of the Matterhorn was a longer and more serious business, for the north face of this mountain is peculiar in that it is probably only possible to attack it with any chance of getting up alive when the conditions may be said to be at their worst — that is to say, when the rocks happen to be plastered with ice and snow. Without the coherence which an armour of ice and snow supplies, the whole face is a precipice in process of disintegration, discharging incessant volleys and avalanches of stones. Owing, therefore, to the conditions under which the brothers were obliged to make the attempt, holds for hands and feet had to be scraped with an axe in the ice and snow. Slowly they worked their way up the long, steep slope, grooved by stone falls. Occasionally the leader was able to hammer in a peg in order to secure the rope uniting him with his companion, but there was no security from the stones falling from hundreds of feet above. In places the thinness of the ice that coated the rocks allowed only the smallest notches to be scratched for hands and feet. Only one halting-place could be found before they were obliged by the onset of darkness to bivouac, crouching roped to the cliff. The constant toil had permitted them only time to eat one bar of chocolate since dawn, and the rope was frozen as stiff as a hawser. Next morning at seven o'clock they staggered on again from their roosting-perches and reached the top of the Matterhorn at two in the afternoon. Throughout the latter part of the climb they had been in great danger from the storminess of the weather, and in descending from the top to Zermatt they wasted considerable time, because, as they had never been on the mountain before, they were unfamiliar with the way. One of the brothers has since performed on a very difficult climb on the Wiesbachhorn.

Of a similar ascent on the south face of the Matterhorn, also only recently effected, one of the successful party writes:

façon la plus formelle de montrer plus de fermeté dans les incidents que suscitent régulièrement nos voisins du Nord.

Avec un certain sans-gêne, les défaitistes s'efforcent déjà de rejeter la responsabilité d'un échec sur les trois journaux interdits outre-Rhin. Ceux-ci, au point de vue commercial, s'en tirent en effet beaucoup mieux que les organes officiellement tolérés, qui voient chaque semaine des ballots entiers anéantis au passage de la frontière allemande.

On prétend aussi que, de représailles en représailles, les deux Etats en arriveraient à des interdictions prononcées pour des siècles. Evidemment, la presse suisse risque de partager le sort de sa sœur autrichienne, qui n'en est pas morte. Puis, il y a lieu d'admettre que le Conseil fédéral, lorsqu'il est entré dans cette voie, savait ce qu'il faisait, et que sa politique est dominée par la fameuse maxime: "Gouverner, c'est prévoir."

On peut donc être convaincu que le gouvernement fédéral, tout en conservant le sang-froid et la pondération dont il a fait preuve jusqu'ici, se tiendra fermement sur les positions qu'il a librement choisies, et qu'il continuera de défendre une presse qui, dans ses appréciations sur les tragiques événements du 30 juin, n'a nullement démenti, bien au contraire.

R. Bovet-Grisel.
(*Tribune de Genève*).

SOCIETY OF FRIENDS OF FOREIGNERS IN DISTRESS.

His Excellency, the Swiss Minister, M. C. R. Paravicini, presided at the Annual General Court of Governors of the Society of Friends of Foreigners in Distress, held at their offices at 3, Suffolk Lane, London, E.C.4, on Wednesday, 11th July, 1934.

His Excellency, in moving the adoption of the Directors' Report for 1933, and the Auditors' Statement of Accounts, referred in very cordial terms to the long association and co-operation,

with the rising sun, stones began to fall methodically, and we were involved in their unpleasant company during ten hours. We were obliged to proceed by rushes, steering towards big boulders or other obstacles that might afford shelter. But the stones were kind to us and fell only at regular intervals, thus permitting us to pass between successive showers.

Yet another side of the Matterhorn to be recently climbed for the first time is the east face. It is easier than the other two faces, except in the upper part, where the victorious party were occupied for eleven hours in climbing only 1000 feet. On this side, too, the mountain is notorious for its avalanches of stones, and so great is the danger from this cause that on several occasions it has proved impossible to recover the bodies of victims that have fallen to the base of the precipice.

As a further instances of astonishing performances by ultra-modern climbers the first ascent of the north face of the Grosse Zinne may be quoted. The Grosse Zinne is a peak of 9850 feet, situated in the Dolomites. As the *Alpine Journal* points out, the ascent was only accomplished by means usually employed by steeplejacks in dealing with factory chimneys. In this case the party used:

800 feet of ordinary rope.
500 feet of supplementary rope.
500 feet of light rope.
90 pegs.
50 karabiners (swivel-hooks).

As the *Journal* states, the north wall of this mountain is one of the most forbidding and impossibly smooth precipices in the Alps, and the operations to conquer it had extended over several years. By the end of 1932 one of the attackers attained a point in the precipice only 350 feet below the top, and with only that amount more of vertical precipice to overcome. By August 11, 1933, various guides had reduced this interval to little more than 160 feet. On August 12 it was again reduced, but a terrible overhanging still remained. Next day, as darkness came on, the young guide Dimai, in one last desperate effort, stormed the overhang. This brought the party to a portion of the face, no longer quite vertical, though still terribly steep, where they were able to bivouac. Starting at 6.30 the next morning, with easier going, the summit was reached in three hours. The ascent was repeated soon afterwards by two men who spent their first night suspended in slings on the precipice and remained the next night on the top of the mountain.

In the Himalaya, also, the new spirit is stirring. The campaign for Kangchenjunga is frankly regarded by many of the protagonists as a prolonged battle in which lives may be sacrificed. The exaltation of such a state of mind will seem strange to most Englishmen. One of the

extending over a period of 128 years, between the Swiss charities in London and the Society of Friends of Foreigners in Distress. His Excellency expressed his pleasure in presiding on this occasion.

Mr. M. R. Jardine, Chairman of the Board of Directors, in moving a vote of thanks to His Excellency for the honour he had conferred on the Society in presiding over the Court, and the very able and delightful manner in which M. Paravicini had conducted the Meeting, referred to Members of the Swiss community who in years long passed had actively interested themselves in the Society's work. Among those mentioned were the names of John J. Chisly (who was for over forty years a Director of the Society), Alexis Bideleux, Henry Vernet and Henry Pasteur. Mr. Jardine particularly referred to the useful work done by the present Swiss representative, Mr. C. Campart.

FUERSORGE ZU GUNSTEN BLINDER AUSLANDSCHWEIZER.

Wiederum möchten wir Ihnen Bericht erstatten über die Verwendung, der im letzten Jahre so zahlreich eingegangenen Gaben zu Gunsten unseres Hilfswerkes für blinde, bedürftige Auslandschweizer. Die Einnahmen erreichten mit der Spende der schweiz. Stiftung "für das Alter" 1150.— und den Gaben unserer Landsleute aus beinahe allen Erdteilen 1972.77 sowie einem Beitrag aus unserer Kasse 2121.33

(in der Schweiz gesammeltes Geld) 5244.10

Wir möchten allen Gebern auch an dieser Stelle herzlich danken und sie bitten, unser Hilfswerk auch in diesem Jahre nicht zu vergessen. Das erhaltene Geld wurde restlos ausgegeben für Unterstützungen an 39 blinde, bedürftige Schweizer überall im Auslande. 5 von ihnen befinden sich in Anstalten und die andern 34 leben entweder bei Angehörigen oder werden von be-

English members of the international expedition, himself a hardened mountaineer, wrote: *after nineteen days it was a relief to get back to the base camp, I have never spent a more nerve-racking time in my life, for during the majority of those nineteen days one never felt safe from the huge avalanches that fell down Kangchenjunga. I can only say that anyone who approaches this side of Kangchenjunga must take his own life and the life of his porters in his hand.* These remarks are scarcely surprising, for the expedition was encamped all the time on glacier-plateaux that were liable to be swept by ice avalanches a mile wide. Some idea of the difficulties on Kangchenjunga may be gathered from the fact that one of the climbers while step-cutting on an ice slope, although at least 4 yards below the knife-edged crest of the ridge in which the slope culminated, suddenly saw to his horror that a blow from his axe had broken right through the mountain and that blue sky was showing in the hole that the axe had made. As the editor of the *Alpine Journal* says in regard to the second Bavarian expedition in 1931:

No one ... can have realised hitherto how terrible and tremendous is an attack on Kangchenjunga pushed right home, ... Two solid months anchored to a knife-edged and bepinnacled ridge; never a single step to be taken lightly, never a moment of relaxation of tension, and with the ever-present menace of the inevitable Kangchenjunga tempest.

Indeed, all these attacks on Kangchenjunga are quite a new departure in Himalayan mountaineering, for before these attempts very few Himalayan climbers would have ventured to embark on ascents that would have been considered difficult and dangerous even according to the most exacting Alpine standards, quite apart from the question of altitude.

To attribute such astounding feats as these solely to vanity or to a craving for notoriety seems absurdly inadequate, for it is probable that these strange heroes are often dismayed by the publicity which their performances confer on them. One explanation of their actions may be that they are the result of a new attitude to the conduct of life. Again, it is possible that the mainspring actuating the behaviour of the generation subsequent to the war is a contempt for life so deeply buried in the unconscious mind that no pessimism or despair betrays itself save when it leads to the perpetration of deeds such as have been described. At any rate, whatever the cause, it may be worth while to study the method of this madness, for it is possible that those who have a more conventional outlook on life than the new adventurers might find that there is something to be learnt from them. It is even conceivable, too, that the lesson might be profitable.

C. F. Meade.
(*Nineteenth Century and After*).