

**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:** 669  
  
**Artikel:** Switzerland 's only circus  
**Autor:** K.  
**DOI:** <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-692764>

### **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:** 14.12.2025

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

citizen to reduce unnecessary expenses and to live in a simpler way, in short to accommodate himself to the altered conditions, like other countries have had to do. This does not mean that our people should be less happy or would get less out of life; but it would go a long way to do away with the dissatisfaction of those of our countrymen, who through force of circumstances are debarred from earning their daily bread.

We do not think of those who are never satisfied, whatever you do for them, but of those thousands and thousands who do not know what the next day will have in store for them, of those unemployed who are getting on in years and whom nobody wants, of those who walk with embittered hearts through the streets, because they feel that they are outcasts and dependent. We think of all the young men, who must ask themselves, what will become of them, when they have to spend their best years in idleness. What must their thoughts be, when they see how in East and West, and in South and North the flags are hoisted for all sorts of festivals, when countless speakers tell the people what they should do to conquer the numerous obstacles, when they say that it is the patriotic duty of everyone to stand together in sorrowful and hard times, and to help those who have, often through no fault of their own, landed in Queer Street; when the result, say of a shooting, music, gymnastic or Yodel competition is far more important to the masses, than the warning given by some of our responsible statesmen. What does the country benefit, when on every possible occasion patriotic cheers are raised, and patriotic songs sung, when the very existence of the country is in danger?

ST.

### SWITZERLAND'S ONLY CIRCUS.

Who amongst our readers does not remember the famous Circus Knie? Here is a description from a special correspondent of the *D.M.T.*, of a performance of this well-known company.

The little medieval town of Thun in the Canton of Bern has just been all agog with the coming of the Knie Circus. On my arrival in Spiez, a little way down Lake Thun, I was surprised to see a great coloured poster heralding the arrival of an "Under Water Circus."

Advertisement boardings are not allowed to spoil the beauty of Spiez as a rule, and exception was only made for this much-loved circus, the only one Switzerland possesses and of which it is rightly proud.

I am not at all keen on seeing a man go into a cage of many lions, make them leap through burning hoops, climb pyramids, and, incidentally, poke a stick at them till they roar and beat the air with angry paws. But the whole staff of the pleasant, home-like hotel was so enthusiastic about this circus and its popular directors, the Knie Brothers, that I decided to make an exception, too, and pay it a visit with the young Swiss band that were off to Thun for the last performance.

It was a wild and thundery night, and I wondered if lions were unfavourably affected by thunder, but my cheery companions were so sure of their circus that they drove all doubts away, and as we sat with half of the Swiss Army around us I felt that any unfortunate happening would be capably dealt with.

The Knie Brothers were, as it were, born in the ring. Their father was a famous tight-rope walker who lost his life by mischance when he was walking on his rope over the Rhine. His sons started the circus bearing their name and have flourished exceedingly.

One brother puts three fine elephants through their paces, one huge beast stepping so daintily over him as he lies on a supposed battlefield as a cat walks over china. He also lowers his vast bulk over his prostrate master until he seems to be lying on him. Then he picks him up in his trunk and carries him triumphantly round the ring.

Another Knie brother is in charge of a magnificent lot of horses, amongst which are some sixteen Shetland ponies that waltz daintily in pairs under nodding plumes. Splendid Arab steeds are ridden by fearless trick riders in wide-brimmed Mexican hats, and steady, broad-backed circus horses canter sedately round the ring with sometimes as many as four men and a girl standing on the same back. A slim, dark girl looking not a day older than ten, the only Knie daughter, ends a turn by standing on one leg on her father's shoulder as he gallops round the ring standing on the back of one of these steady creatures.

The third brother looks after the human part of the circus and two young sons are already doing wonders in trick riding. The circus seems a real family affair, and the Knie Brothers are deservedly popular for their generosity in giving free performances in the afternoon to those too poor to pay. All the many charitable institutions such as orphanages and asylums get free passes in the towns and villages passed through, and often some of the company visit hospitals so that the patients may get a chance of seeing something of this much-beloved circus.

A company of Arab acrobats do wild and wonderful stunts. The strong man and leader holds, without apparent strain, a pyramid of men on his shoulders with the top one standing on his head at the apex.

There is almost savage grace about the whirlwind back-somersaults turned at lightning speed by these tawny men, their black hair streaming like manes from their whirling heads. One of them swung over the ring standing on his head on a swinging horizontal bar, keeping his equilibrium with arms and legs scarcely moving and no protecting net underneath. I began to think I preferred the lions, but he swung on as unconcerned as a child in a hammock.

It was, however, the second part of the programme that gave the circus its name of "Under Water." An exciting episode of desert life was splendidly given. A Kalif of Patari, with his bride and numerous suite, comes riding through the desert, and decides to camp for the night in an oasis.

Night falls, a camp fire is lighted, round which slave girls, desert men, and snake charmers dance in ever-changing colours of electric light. When at last all are asleep, even the guards who should have watched, a desert prince succeeds in capturing the sleeping bride and hides her in his desert fortress.

Then begins an exciting chase, the Arab acrobats making perfect desert men. The bride is finally rescued, and the Kalif gives a Venetian fête in his palace gardens to celebrate the fact. This is the famous under water scene of the poster.

A cascade of 500,000 litres of water pours through the Rialto bridge into the ring, which has been swiftly and deftly turned into a circular lake with the help of waterproof sheeting. Swans, pelicans, and gondolas appear as if by magic while the attention of the audience has been held by a beautiful girl who dances on a platform high up over the cascade and turns herself into a series of tropical butterflies, bats, and spiders.

A fine modern fountain in the middle of the lake throws the water up to the roof of the tent in many-coloured spray, and from the rim jets of dancing water make a screen through which you follow the exciting episodes of the Kalif's revenge, in the course of which most of the troupe seem in and out of the water.

As the audience poured out of the great tent, men were busy taking down the seats. Everything has to be packed and the ground left as tidy as it was found in something like the space of three hours, for the circus is always touring and only stays a few days in each town or village. They used to carry fodder and food with them, but since the depression they have done their catering in the towns as they come to them. As there are 350 animals and 250 people to be provided for it is no small undertaking.

K.

## FOYER SUISSE

Under the Management: Schweiz. Verband Volksdienst  
Moderate Prices  
Running Hot & Cold Water  
Central Heating  
Continental Cuisine  
12-15, Upper Bedford Place,  
Russell Square, London,  
W.C.1.  
Tel. Museum 2982

### HOTELS UNDER SWISS MANAGEMENT

"GREAT YARMOUTH. The "Royal" Hotel, 100 Bedrooms, running hot and cold water in all rooms. Swiss cuisine — tea and dinner dances every day. From £3 13s. 6d. per week. Special discount for readers of this advertisement. Please ring Yarmouth 26, or write A. Widmer, Manager. (Late Assistant Manager of the "Carlton" London).

#### MISCELLANEOUS ADVERTISEMENTS

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

BOARD RESIDENCE. Direct Line City and West-end. 1 min. bus Chalk Farm. Continental cooking. Large garden. Piano, Phone. Sunny rooms, some with running water. Moderate Terms. Enquire: H. Simmen, 17, Fellows Road, N.W.3. (Tel. Primrose 3181).

UPPER-LEATHER TANNERY AND LIGHT-LEATHER DRESSERS in Switzerland require *Works Manager*. The same company would like to hear from other Gentlemen wishing to participate financially with or without active collaboration. Replies to O. 90796X Publicitas, Genève.

TORQUAY. Bed/Breakfast, Winter Apartments. Highly recommended. Board residence 2½ gns. and 3 gns. Excellent cuisine. E. Boesch, "Elmsleigh," Avenue Road.

WANTED SWISS GIRL. All duties, continental cooking, French and German speaking. Small family. £2 10s. 0d. p.m. Write Box No. 101, c/o Swiss Observer, 23, Leonard Street, E.C.2.

## 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 - £2,120,000  
Deposits - £44,000,000

All Descriptions of Banking and Foreign Exchange Business Transacted

: : Correspondents in all : :  
: : parts of the World. : :

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

Telephone Numbers:  
MUSEUM 4202 (Fistors)  
MUSEUM 7055 (Office)  
Telegrams: SOUFFLE  
WESDO. LONDON

"Ben faranno! Pagani.  
Purgatorio C. ziv. Dante  
"Venir se ne dee giù  
tra miei Meschini."  
Dante. Inferno. C. xxvii.

Established over 50 Years.

## PAGANI'S RESTAURANT

GREAT PORTLAND ST., LONDON, W.1.

LINDA MESCHINI } Sole Proprietors.  
ARTHUR MESCHINI }

### Divine Services.

EGLISE SUISSE (1762).

(Langue française).

79, Endell Street, Shaftesbury Avenue, W.C.2.

(Near New Oxford Street).

Dimanche, le 19 Août.

11h. — Culte, présidé par M. le pasteur Ulysse Emery.

Les cultes du soir sont interrompus et ne seront repris qu'au mois de septembre par M. le pasteur Hoffmann-de Visme.

Pendant le mois d'août le Pasteur F. Reymond recevra à l'Eglise le mercredi après-midi de 2.30 à 4h.

### SCHWEIZERKIRCHE

(Deutschsprachige Gemeinde).

St. Anne's Church, 9, Gresham Street, E.C.2.

(near General Post Office.)

Sonntag, den 19. August 1934.

11 Uhr morgens, Gottesdienst.  
Die Abendgottesdienste beginnen wieder am 2. September um 7 Uhr.

#### TRAUUNGEN.

Es wurden in unserer Kirche folgende 3 Brautpaare getraut:

Am 23. Juli: Frederick Yelverton Wright von Carshalton (Surrey) und Margaretha Anna Stüssy von Linthal (Canton Glarus).

Am 11. August: Ernest Joseph Morphey von London und Margrit Lauener von Wengen (Canton Bern).

Am 15. August: Heinrich Gotthilf Schärer, von Hirzel (Canton Zürich) und Augusta Elisabeth Gründel von Benken (Canton Baselland).

Anfragen wegen Religions-bezw. Confirmandenstunden und Amtshandlungen sind erbeten an den Pfarrer der Gemeinde: C. Th. Hahn, 43, Priory Road, Bedford Park, W.4 (Telephon: Chiswick 4156). Sprechstunden: Dienstag 12-2 Uhr in der Kirche; Mittwoch 5-6 Uhr im "Foyer Suisse."