

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: 656

Artikel: The historical reations of England and Switzerland [to be continued]
Autor: [s.n.]
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-689302>

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>

"RAPT."**A Swiss Picture.**

The *première* of the first Swiss talking film took place last Tuesday at the Curzon Cinema. A great number of well-known society people attended the performance, amongst them Mlle. Livia and M. Vincent Paravicini, daughter and son of the Swiss Minister.

The film, which is adapted from a novel by C. F. Ramuz called "La Séparation des Races," takes us away both from the lakeside towns and the huts on the heights, and gives us the real everyday Switzerland lived in by Swiss villagers. That is its first merit, and the second is that it is made by a man who can respond to that life. Ramuz's story is a help, for it belongs to the mountains. The events in "Rapt" could happen nowhere else, for the mountains influence not only circumstances but characters, and the peaks which shut in the peasants from the outside world separate them also from themselves.

We are shown two villages. Both are Swiss, but in one German is spoken, in the other French. A shepherd's dog is chasing goats belonging to a man from the other side of the mountains. He kills it. The shepherd broods over this. He goes over to obtain redress, but the other man's sweetheart arrives at that moment, and he has no time for his French-speaking visitor, who plans revenge. When the girl goes out in the moonlight he kidnaps her and takes her to his home, where he keeps her under lock and key. The girl's small brother slips when searching for her and is killed.

News of this is brought to her by a one-legged pedlar who alone is at home on both sides of the mountain. Through him the girl and her sweetheart make plans against her captor. They will wait in a wood while the village idiot, who is fond of matches, sets fire to the house during everyone's absence at church. The shepherd has gradually fallen in love with his captive, and she, to further her plans, pretends to encourage him.

The idiot sees this, but thinks that now she will not be taking him with her to her village. She had promised he would be more kindly treated there. When he sets fire to the house, he accordingly locks them both in a room. The shepherd is trapped with the locks he had used to imprison the girl. They die together.

It is a grim tale, grimly told. Set in the Valais Alps, it has no truck with conventional prettiness. Kirsanoff uses his camera with dramatic imagination; some of the scenery is overwhelmingly beautiful. The shepherd does not know that the girl's brother died, so he never realises the full reason for her revenge. She craves his forgiveness, but it is too late, and the

villagers who come running from church at the rumour of smoke are not in time to give the picture a happy ending.

It is inevitable that it should end as it does, for the mountain has made misunderstanding between the people. This is not sufficiently brought out in the film, which moves rather jerkily and with abrupt transitions. Nor does Dita Parlo, as the peasant girl, fully convince. It is an experience to watch Nadia Sibirskaja again, but, in spite of her spiritual gravity, her dead-white face and beaded eyelashes make it hard to accept her as the simple girl she plays. That this should be so weakens the film, but is part of Kirsanoff's outlook. In other directions it gives us a film made as it should be, and that is a sight too often denied us. The music, specially composed by Honegger, takes the place of dialogue in expressing the moods and drama, and is a decided asset to the film. We hope that many of our compatriots will pay a visit to see this interesting film.

MAY IN THE ALPS.

(From a Correspondent.)

Four thousand feet up on a Swiss mountain side in May is like the middle register in music; above is the treble of early spring running up into winter; below, late spring becoming ever deeper summer as one goes farther down. Along the 4,000 feet contour just now is a kind of half-way belt; summer may invade it from below, so that on a full south slope the grass may be already a foot high and the field flowers in bud. On the north side of a north-facing wood spring may still linger, with half-submerged crocuses and oxlips grown a foot long in the stalk; but for the most part there is nothing to see at 4,000 feet but an incredible greenness against which, in the neighbourhood of villages, isolated cherry trees and sheets of dandelion-clocks give a touch of white.

It is another matter if one goes down 2,000 feet or even 1,500 feet — there the villages are hidden from sight, smothered to the roofs in apple blossom and cow-parsley. It is worth while for the peasants to plant fruit trees down there because the summer is so much longer. In May "lush" is the word; the deep grass is still green and still vividly green. It has not begun to take on the character of hay, and the flowers that make it into a multi-coloured lace are the earlier field flowers — orchids and cranesbill, sainfoin, milkwort, and everywhere, even on dusty roadsides, that glory of Switzerland and the Lombard plain, as yet despised of English acclimatisers — the royal blue meadow sage, *Astrantia* and columbines and much else will follow, and on the ground-level, where the Rhone flows, the columbines are already out.

Above 4,000 feet the woods are all spruce, but below, even on the steep slopes, oak and beech and birch make enough leaf-mould to harbour lilies-of-the-valley. Where any torrent has hewn itself a ravine, the air is filled with their scent, as well as with the sound of waters and the coolness of tossed spray. But in the precipitous forests of the gorges flowers are safe, even from the skinny goat-like children whose homes are in the depth, where in winter the sun only comes for an hour a day.

Spring is elusive and lasts but for a moment here and there, but its friends know where to look for it; even as late as midsummer they will know of spongy hillsides starred with pink primulas and small gentians, and even with the large gentian, the only flower that the peasant of the mountains is at pains to pick. Everything else is common to him, as daisies and dandelions. There is a boggy tract of mountain-side at this moment as purple with butterwort — each little plant with its own flower on delicate stalk — as any English hedge with dog-violets. A little farther there are no purple butterworts, but many white. Some pastures of that isolated region, little cultivated, are as thick with tufts of the yellow housewort as if someone had dropped clots of cream wrapped in ferns. Elsewhere the Alpine flax casts a blue mist over the sterile pasturage. Globe-flowers are everywhere — strung by children into chains, they look like large amber beads.

With the odd contradictions of the Alpine sun, which can burn hotter on the bleak and wind-swept heights than in the sheltered valleys, one may be sure that all the brown patches one sees up above, where the snows are melting, are purple at this moment with the pansy, *viola calcarata*, growing so thick as almost to defeat the moss and the fine mountain turf. Up there, too, there will be soldanellas wherever there is grass.

This morning our village was roused at dawn by the tramping of the cows getting ready for the great migration. With collars and bells, they await the queen cow, who has gone to the high pastures most often and best knows the way. Crowned with a milking-stool and a bunch of lilac, she climbs proudly up the village street, the train of her younger sisters following. It is the sign that the peace and silence of the mountains have departed and the bustle of summer begun.

T.

ANNUAL CONCERT.

Swiss Choral and Orchestral Society.

A report about the Annual Concert of the two Societies will appear in our next issue.

THE HISTORICAL RELATIONS OF ENGLAND AND SWITZERLAND.

(Translation from a Pamphlet which appeared in the *N.Z.Z.* in March, 1919, and published in Oechsli's "History of Switzerland." — Cambridge University Press.)

(Continued from Previous Number.)

In the revolution that took place in our cantons in the thirties of the last century, the various personal rights which for the English, since their revolution, formed part of their inheritance, were for the first time adopted by the cantons — such as protection against arbitrary arrest, the inviolability of the home, freedom for trade and commerce, the liberty of belief and of worship, of speech and of the Press, of petition, of forming associations and of public meeting. The new Liberal Constitutions of the former aristocratic or plutocratic cantons could therefore not be a thorn in the flesh to England as they were to the more easterly Powers.

The July Revolution of 1830 in Paris had broken up the Five Great Powers into two groups — the Liberal western Powers, England and France, and the reactionary eastern Powers, Austria, Prussia and Russia. This split made itself especially felt in their relations to Switzerland. The western Powers did not hinder the free development of political life in the Confederation; France, indeed, even demanded this in the early days of the Monarchy of July. The eastern Powers, on the contrary, led by Austria, favoured the resistance of the Conservatives, and had only unfriendly warnings for the Liberal governments. The attempt in 1832 to reform the Federal Pact of 1815 finally decided the Austrian Chancellor, Metternich, to intervene. He had to admit that the Treaties of 1815 contained no guarantees for the Federal Pact, but got over this obstacle by the following theory — that the guarantee of its neutrality and of its territorial inviolability, which had been promised in 1815,

was forfeited when it gave up its character as a Federation of sovereign States (which was the leading idea of the eastern Powers) and became subject to a central authority, for this would be only a collection of puppets in the hands of a great neighbouring Power. A Memorial dated at Vienna on June 5th, 1832, recommended that the Great Powers should take preventive measures against any proposed revision of the Pact of 1815. Prussia and Russia were quite satisfied with all this.

At one moment it seemed as if in this question England would join the eastern Powers. Lord Palmerston had in 1830 entered the Cabinet of Lord Grey as Secretary for Foreign Affairs, and was to direct the foreign policy of England for eleven years. He clearly feared that a centralised Switzerland would become again a vassal of France, as in the days of the Helvetic Republic and of the Act of Mediation. Hence, on June 9th, 1832, he directed the British envoy in Berne to make the following declaration in the proper quarter: that the British Government had not the slightest desire to interfere in the internal affairs of Switzerland, but that the existing guaranteed neutrality was indissolubly connected with the existing Federal system; hence, any change which should disturb the sovereignty of the several cantons and should put them under the arbitrary rule of a central government would, without doubt, give the guarantee Powers the right of opposing such an alteration; but the British Government trusted that the genuine expression of its opinion would be taken as a proof of friendship and interest.

The British envoy in Switzerland, David Richard Morier, who was accredited on June 21st, 1832, made representations in this sense to Lucerne, then the ruling canton, and sought to postpone a revision of the Pact of 1815 till the times were quieter; but the mayor, Edward Pfyster, declared this to be impossible. The Austrian envoy, Count Bombelles, proposed that the Five Great Powers should lay down the principle

that the guarantee of Swiss neutrality should be considered to depend on the continued existence of the Pact of 1815. But this proposal met with the absolute refusal of the French envoy, de Rumigny; the representative of England behaved also in such a manner that Bombelles complained that the despatches which Morier had received since his original instructions had greatly diminished his energy.

The so-called "Rossi" draft of a Federation, which Bombelles declared to be a "perfidious fabrication," meant to mask cleverly the death-blow aimed at the old Pact of 1815, completely calmed, by reasons of its moderate reforms, Palmerston's anxiety lest a unitary republic should be subject to French influence. When the Austrian envoy, Apponyi, in the spring of 1833, at a conference in Paris, laid before the Five Powers a note to the Confederation, which threatened it with the withdrawal of the guarantee of its neutrality, the French foreign minister, de Broglie, refused to sign it; and the British envoy, Lord Granville, agreed with him. Metternich's plan of frustrating the reform of the Pact of 1815 by a common protest of the Powers thus broke down before the refusal of the two western Powers. Therefore the voters of Lucerne did him the pleasure of laying aside all reform of the Pact by their vote of July 7th, 1833.

Morier, who was British envoy in Berne for some fifteen years, was well disposed towards Switzerland (the original home of his family), but he did not understand the profound agitation which, under his eyes, was preparing the transformation of the loosely knitted Confederation into a much closer Federation. According to his views, the Confederation should have enjoyed a peaceful existence, under the protection of the Great Powers which guaranteed its neutrality. Both his religious and his political opinions made him heartily opposed to the two parties, the Conservatives and the Radicals, which were disturbing this peaceful existence, but he took no active part in the party struggles.

NEWS FROM THE COLONY.

CITY SWISS CLUB.

The new Committee, or should it be the old Committee or the new old Committee, has started the season in a blaze of glory, and if it can be taken as a presage of things to come, this season will be one of the most successful the Club has ever known. Now the reason for this enthusiasm is as follows. On Tuesday, May 8th, the first monthly meeting was held at Mr. Pagani's, and instead of the usual business, we were invited to a "Soirée familiale," to which ladies were welcomed, and at which Mr. Tschiffeli had promised to give us a talk about his wonderful exploits on horseback through the three Americas, a talk which was to be illustrated by lantern slides, after which dancing was to take place until the mystic hour of midnight struck on Big Ben's deputy. This programme sounds almost as complicated as my last sentence; but what a success!

Over one hundred and forty members and guests were present.

After the usual toasts had been drunk, Mr. Senn called upon Mr. Tschiffeli, who kept us enthralled for over an hour. I would willingly have listened to him for another hour, so interesting was he, and I would willingly have watched many more slides, of which he informed us the ones he showed formed only a small proportion. Mr. Tschiffeli is a born lecturer, and he has the rare faculty of condensing his matter so that interest never flags, and when he had finished, one could only wish that he was about to start. I have seen many travel films and listened to many travel lectures, but never have I heard so thrilling an account of high adventure as was given to us that evening.

I suppose everyone knows about Mr. Tschiffeli's exploits, but I cannot help saying a few words, in case there should be someone who is ignorant thereof. All alone, with two horses, he travelled from Buenos Ayres through South America, over the Andes, through Central America, and through North America to Washington. I think that what he left unsaid was almost more pregnant than what he actually did say. The difficulties he had to overcome would have baffled almost any other man.

I still can hear his words about the Andes: "As one toils over the mountain passes, one wishes one was down in the valleys, and as soon as one is in the valley, one wishes oneself back on the mountain top." The extremes of temperature on these equatorial ranges must have been trying beyond description. Bitterly cold on the mountain, and a steaming, moist, tropical heat in the valley. Flies on the mountain and mosquitoes in the valley. Little to eat for man and practically nothing for a horse. Ever-

lasting mountain ranges to pass, rivers to be crossed, and when they could not be crossed, the only thing to do was to swim across, first with one horse and then with the other. Hunger and thirst and disease. Danger from man and danger from animals. In spite of every conceivable difficulty, he achieved his object. Buenos Ayres to Washington! A glance at the map will give you some idea of the distance, but distance was the least of the problems to be overcome. To add to his troubles, he apparently ran into a revolution in one of the Central American states.

I fear I can hardly do justice to the subject, and not only did the lecturer keep us spellbound with the account of his adventures, but he showed us a most extraordinarily interesting series of photographs which he took with a small camera, and which I understand were afterwards enlarged to lantern size in Washington. These slides were coloured and gave a vivid impression of many of the places through which he passed and of the different tribes and races which he encountered. Among some of the most beautiful were views of the mountain passes of the Andes.

A wonderful achievement, and I am sure every Swiss present was proud to feel that it had been done by one of his countrymen.

The lecture came to an end all too soon, and the rest of the evening was given over to the joys of dancing. I have described the dances at the City Swiss Club so often that I think I will say no more about this one, except that it was a great success.

Our President, Mr. Senn, is to be congratulated most heartily on the success of the evening, and if he has failed to infuse new blood into the Committee, he certainly did so so far as the programme for a meeting was concerned.

ck.

LONDON SWISS RIFLE TEAM.

Bisley Camp, surrounded by Surrey hills, was at its best last Sunday, and those of the members who came along with their families were able to enjoy picknicking under ideal conditions.

The attendance was good, but not sufficient advantage is taken of the fact that practice may commence at nine in the morning. Most of the members arrived late, due in some measure to one of the cars having become a "hospital case."

Nearly all the participants went in for competition shooting, and the handicap points produced somewhat freakish results. The best series were scored by Alfred Schmid and W. Fischer, with 53 each, but the points credited to the "also ran" constituted a heavy penalty. In the same way the best averages in the competition series went to W. Fischer (51), Alf. Schmid (49), and J. M. Hess (49), but the first

prize was secured by J. Deubelbeiss with an average of 47.5, the second by F. Notter with 48.5, and the third by W. Krucker with 46.5, which latter, with one exception, was the lowest competition average of the day.

The new handicap points have been calculated on the actual scores of the previous competitions, and should exhibit the relative performance of the members. W. Fischer is now scratch and the following points are credited to: Alf. Schmid 0.3, J. C. Wetter 1.6, J. M. Hess 1.7, P. Hilfiker 3, O. Brullhard 4.3, H. Senn 4.8, F. Notter 5, W. Krucker 5.1, J. Deubelbeiss 5.5, Arn. Schmid 8.8, J. C. Fenner 17.7, and E. Fuchs 18.1.

The next shooting practice takes place on Sunday, the 27th inst., in the morning only, i.e., from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

ARTHUR LOUIS FRAISSARD.†

We deeply regret to inform our readers of the death of Arthur Louis Fraissard, who lost his life in a French air liner last week.

Born at Couvet (Neuchâtel) in 1895, he came to London in 1919, where he spent some time at the Swiss Bank Corporation; there he gained useful experience and a clear outlook on economic subjects.

Then the watch trade called him, and he became the English representative of that world famous horologist, Paul Ditisheim, who greatly appreciated his services. Later he launched out into broader fields, and "carried" fine watches of other Swiss manufacturers, as well as those of "P.D.'s."

In October, 1929, he joined the Zenith Watch Company (Great Britain), where in time he became a co-director with Mr. Roost; on the retirement of the latter in February this year, Mr. Fraissard became sole director.

Mr. Fraissard was a keen business man and was greatly appreciated in the trade. He was a man of infinite charm, and he will be greatly missed by his friends. Owing to extensive travelling for his firm, Mr. Fraissard was unable to play an active part in the Swiss Colony, but he was a member of the City Swiss Club since 1920.

Mr. Fraissard leaves a widow, to whom we express our deepest sympathy in her tragic loss.

It was only in the case of complications of Switzerland with foreign parts that British influence was benevolently exerted. Morier himself described his activity in Switzerland in the following words: "It is true that the Government of Great Britain, by reason of its position and of the unchangeable benevolence of its policy, has been looked upon by all parties and governments in Switzerland with complete trust in the case of complications with the negotiations with Sardinia, Austria and France about the Polish refugees in Savoy, the German refugees, the French spy, Conseil, and Louis Napoleon, brought with them, and the solution of which was much lightened by British influence." The value which was placed upon this influence was especially shown in an internal matter — the petition made in 1845 by the Bernese government that the British Legation should intervene first to bring about the speedy release by Lucerne of the captured "Volunteers," and then to rescue Dr. Steiger, of Lucerne, their chief, from capital execution.

In 1845 Metternich was again pressing for a joint intervention of the Powers "to rescue poor Switzerland, which was in a state of social disorganisation." He asserted as his justification, just as in 1832, the Treaties of 1815, which pre-supposed the undiminished sovereignty of the 22 cantons, a sovereignty which was continually being violated by the Radicals. Austria could count, as usual, on Prussia and Russia. Even Louis Philippe and his minister, Guizot, transferred their dislike of the Radicals in their own country to the Radicals in Switzerland, and made visible approaches to Austria, though they hesitated to accept Metternich's proposal for a joint intervention. Instead of this, Guizot induced Lord Aberdeen, Foreign Secretary in Peel's ministry, to take the lead in a gentle warning to the Swiss. On February 11th, 1845, Aberdeen sent to Morier a despatch meant to be circulated. This described the danger of a dissolution of the Pact of 1815 to the cause of Swiss neutrality, and expressed the hope that

the cantons would advise the ruling canton, Lucerne, to solve the questions which were troubling Switzerland by the legal methods prescribed in the Pact of 1815, and not by the use of physical force. This courteously worded warning of England against the "Volunteer rioters" in Switzerland was regarded as harmless; but a note from Guizot, dated March 3rd, by reason of its imperious tone, was sharply criticised, both in the Diet and in the Press, as a non-permissible intervention, so that the later notes of the eastern Powers attracted relatively little attention.

However, a certain amount of agreement between the Powers seemed to have been attained; and Metternich desired to strike while the iron was hot. On May 20th, 1845, he proposed to Guizot to make the following declaration: that the Five Powers would regard the destruction of the Pact of 1815, whether openly executed or under the cloak of a majority vote of the Diet, as an act which annulled the guarantee of Swiss neutrality. Guizot negotiated with Aberdeen, who replied that England would take no part in any campaign in favour of the Jesuits; and so Metternich's plan fell to the ground for the time being.

The nearer the danger for the Sonderbund approached, the busier were the Continental diplomats in working in its favour. In September, 1846, Metternich put forth a definite programme, according to which the intervention of the Powers was to be made step by step: first that, when the position of capital should pass to Berne, then dominated by the "Chiefs of the Volunteers," all the envoys should publicly leave Berne; then that identical notes of the Powers should be issued to threaten Berne; and, finally, that armed intervention should follow. Louis Philippe and Guizot drew back, in consideration of public opinion in France, from such radical measures, preferring to support the Sonderbund with weapons that could be smuggled in.

But from London Metternich received a plan and definite answer. In July, 1846, the Tory

Ministry of Peel and Aberdeen had given way in England to a Whig Ministry, with Lord John Russell as Prime Minister and Lord Palmerston as Foreign Secretary. The new British Cabinet stood alone in understanding and sympathising with the efforts of Liberal Switzerland. Moreover, the great British historian of Greece, George Grote, during his stay in Switzerland in 1847, showed his sympathy in the excellent letters he published in the "Spectator" about Swiss affairs, which he depicted in quite another light than that in which they were shown in the half-official Press of Germany and France.

Palmerston had also his special reasons for frustrating the Swiss policy of Metternich and of Guizot. At the end of 1846 France destroyed the Entente between the two western Powers by the breach of faith shown by the double "Spanish marriages," of the Spanish Queen, Isabella, with the Bourbon Francesco de Assisi, and of her sister with the Duke of Montpensier, Louis Philippe's son, through which the French King hoped to secure a preponderating influence in Spain.

On November 6th, 1846, Austria, speculating on the ruin of the Entente, annexed the republic of Cracow, the last remnant of independent Poland, and expected to evade the objections raised by England with impunity. But Palmerston was not the man to allow himself to be treated in this fashion. He paid back both Louis Philippe for the Spanish marriages, and Austria for the annexation of Cracow, by supporting the Liberals and Radicals in Switzerland, who were opposed by those two Powers. In principle he was for the non-intervention of the Powers in Swiss affairs. But, instead of simply standing aside, he did more and what was better for Switzerland. Apparently agreeing to the plans of the other Cabinets, he managed, by skill and good fortune, to get into his hands the leadership of the campaign against Switzerland, to blunt its edge, and to delay it till it came too late.

(To be continued.)