

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: - (1936)

Heft: 748

Artikel: Naturalization in Switzerland

Autor: [s.n.]

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-690437>

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SWISS YODLERS IN LONDON.



Some years ago I had a heated argument with some friends of mine as to whether a "yodling" concert was a fit performance for a concert Hall. I strongly objected to it, because I took the view that the necessary atmosphere for such a display was lacking. I had always connected "yodling" with mountains, or at least, surroundings quite different to the one of, f.i., the Albert Hall. —

Having attended now for the last three years, a performance of the famous "William Tell" Yodel Choir of the Swiss Federal Railways, on the occasion of the yearly Reunion of the Polytechnic Tours, which took place as usual at the Albert Hall on Saturday last, I have completely changed my opinion.

The performance of this wonderful choir has achieved, what I always held to be impossible, namely to create an atmosphere which makes one forget the immediate surroundings; I do not know whether any other choir would be able to achieve the same object, but anyhow this one did.

I attribute the magic spell they cast over an audience of nearly 10,000 spectators, principally to their fine singing, apart from the yodling. Here we have a choir, which is wonderfully blended, and which knows the art of good singing. There *pianissimo* was a pleasure to listen to, and the *ensemble* was faultless, there was not one flaw in their execution.

The Choir started the programme by Krenger's "Lengi Zyt" (Homesickness), with yodel solo by M. E. Sommer, the champion yodler of Switzerland. Having lived in this country for a good many years, I am not prone to attacks of this illness, but their beautiful rendering has never-the-less brought a lump into my throat.

I am not going to mention every item, with which they entertained an enthusiastic audience; they were billed for 5 numbers, but in the end they nearly had to double this number by encores.

They sang of spring, of love, of our glittering mountains, of the silvery lakes and sun-kissed hills; which after these dreary dull days of winter, brought thoughts of the warm sunshine coming and the budding trees and flowers. I am sure I was not the only one who felt like this, for all round one could see smiling faces made happy by these lovely thoughts and memories.

Whilst threatening clouds were gathering on this Saturday in the political firmament, there was assembled in this imposing Hall the large Polytechnic family, to spend a few happy hours together and to exchange remembrances of hours spent on travels in Foreign countries under perhaps happier auspices. Perhaps, where the jolly laughter of Tourists used to echo, the guns will roar again; what a stupid world! Why must this mistrust, jealousy and discontent embitter this all too short life of ours? — I could not forbear but to reflect on this, but when amongst great applause, Gritli Wenger in her picturesque Bernese costume, with her plaits hanging over her shoulders appeared, all was forgotten. It is a wonderful thing how these simple and unassuming songs touch one's imagination. There is no *Prima donna* touch in Gritli Wenger's singing, I

have heard in the very same Hall, some of the most famous singers, and yet they have given me no bigger thrills than this little lady who sat in that enormous big Hall, hugging her harmonica and singing those songs of the life and doings of simple folks. Yes, Gritli Wenger is, in the realm of folk lore, a great singer because she puts all her innermost feelings into her songs.

As an *encore* the choir rendered a song entitled the "Echo over the Lake of Thonne," which brought the house down, seldom have I heard such applause at the Albert Hall. The "star" turns were Messrs. Sommer and Tanner, who enjoy a great reputation as yodlers in our country; one of the singers was situated in the gallery, no doubt to give the impression that he was on a mountain, whilst his partner "down below" suggested the echo. This was some of the finest yodling I have ever heard.

As a special turn, the choir brought along Franz Hug, the champion flag thrower of Switzerland, a tall, broad shouldered man in a coat superbly embroidered with silk patterns of Edelweiss; and with the accompaniment of Gritli Wenger's harmonica playing he was twirling, in a most amazing manner, the Swiss flag into the air. It was a marvellous exhibition of skill, and the audience was not sparing in their applause.

After the conclusion of the choir's turn, the Swiss Minister, Monsieur C. R. Paravicini appeared on the platform to shake hands with the performers, he also spoke a few words to the vast audience, assuring them that they will always find a hearty welcome in our home country. —

On Sunday morning the choir paid a surprise visit to the French Hospital at Shaftesbury Avenue, where they entertained both patients and nurses for nearly an hour, amongst the former were some of our compatriots.

On Monday, the "William Tell" choir left for Bristol where they gave a similar Concert in the largest Hall of the Town, and where they received a great ovation from a packed House. Two days later (Wednesday) they sang at Leeds before an equally packed house. Both concerts were broadcasted, and the singers were introduced to their invisible audience by commander R. G. Studd, D.S.O., R.N., who gave a short outline about the history of Switzerland.

This all too short visit of our countrymen to this country has been a great success, and they can well be satisfied with their achievement; they have literally sung themselves into the hearts of British people.

From a propaganda point of view this visit must rank very highly, and seems to me of infinite greater value than a number of advertisements in the Daily Press, or some, not always very artistic posters. I do not know who is responsible for this splendid idea of sending this famous choir over here, but whoever it is, is to be congratulated on this far-seeing piece of advertising.

They have also managed to dispell from me an uneasy feeling which I have had for some time, when reading of the ever increasing deficits of our State Railways; a concern where the staff still can, and do sing is not yet doomed, and in spite

of the recent reduction in their renumeration they looked a "bonny" lot.

Thank you, Yodlers for the few hours of intense enjoyment which you have given your countrymen far beyond the sea and to the people of this land, you have shown to them that besides possessing fine scenery we are also a land of happy songs.

ST.

PERSONAL.

The many friends of Mr. and Mrs. F. G. Sommer, of "Hepple Lodge," Holly Park, Crouch Hill, N.4, will sympathise with them in their loss, Mrs. Sommer's father, Mr. Peter, Fr. Schär, having died in Berne, at the age of 70.

Mr. Schär was for 47 years a preacher of the "Evangelische Gemeinschaft," and in later years, although still preaching frequently, occupied the post of "Verwalter" of the "Christliche Verlagshaus" in Berne.

NATURALIZATION IN SWITZERLAND.

The "Swiss Observer" has on several occasions referred in its columns to the naturalization practice in Switzerland.

As far back as September, 1933, when dealing with the "Fronten" movement, ST. wrote as follows:

"One bright spot in the endeavours of the "Fronten," is the one, to remedy the laxity existing in the naturalisation laws; and here they deserve the wholehearted support of every Swiss citizen, who has the welfare of his country at heart. The present position is a farcical one, and will remain so, as long as this most important matter is left at the discretion of the cantonal and local authorities. The deciding factor *who* should and *who* should *not* enjoy Swiss citizenship, should be left to a Federal Dept. The granting of naturalization papers, for, in many cases, ridiculously small sums, has degenerated to nothing less than a "Kuhhandel," and most of the troubles, we had to contend with, in the last few years, can be traced back to the laxness with which this matter has been treated. The Federal Council has shown here a leniency which is simply amazing. For months and months, agitators of foreign origin, were allowed to preach without the slightest interference, — revolution —; as a result we had to register the disgraceful happenings at Zurich, Fribourg and Geneva.

If the "Fronten" succeed in bringing radical changes in this direction, they will go a long way towards gaining the sympathies of those, who at present are standing aloof.

Hand in hand goes the vigorous campaign against the Communists and Marxists, the "Fronten" demand a sweep with an iron broom, and rightly so. For centuries Switzerland has kept an open door, has given an asylum to all political fugitives, and it would be expected, that these people, who were hounded out of their respective countries, should be grateful for being able to enjoy the hospitality of a free country. Nothing of the sort; with a few exceptions, they have started to poison the minds of our working classes, they have continued to preach the dogmas, for which they had to leave their own country, they have sown the seeds of class hatred, they have insulted, ridiculed and besmirched the honour of our army, and as a recompense for their mischievous work, they have entered the council chambers of our constitutional governing bodies.

On some rare occasions they have been told to behave as good boys, or they would have to quit. — I have been given to read some of the shorthand notes taken from speeches which were held in public, which made my blood boil, and yet if one of these foreign agitators calls at the "Gemeindekanzlei" of one of our smaller communities, with a bundle of bank-notes, he will be welcomed with joy, into the fold; should a question be asked in Parliament, the reply will invariably be, that the Federal Authorities are incompetent in the matter, and that the sovereignty of the cantons must not be violated. — *Liberté, Egalité et Fraternité!*!"

Recently we have read in the Swiss press, that Dr. Klöti, Mayor of the town of Zurich and Member of Parliament, has, in an interpellation in the States Council (Ständerat) asked the Government, whether they were aware, that a number of communities throughout the country, were granting naturalization to Foreigners, who have never been even residents in the respective communities or cantons. He asked the Government to take energetic steps to prevent in future, that Foreigners who have not the necessary qualifications should be granted civic rights. He urged emphatically that the traffic with regard to naturalization should be stopped forthwith. —

So far so good, we rejoiced, that at last, this cause, which has been nothing short of a scandal for some considerable time, had found such an ardent champion.

Is Switzerland to defend the Steward's Cup and the Diamond Sculls?

Our compatriots in the British Isles will no doubt remember with what enthusiasm they greeted the splendid victory which the Zurich Rowing Club achieved last July at the Henley Regatta, by capturing the Steward's cup and the Diamond Challenge Sculls, only missing the "Grand" by a small margin.

A wonderful achievement, when one considers that it was their first attempt in a field of sport where English and other Foreign crews have hitherto gathered all the honours.

Our countrymen received universal and unstinted praise from the greatest rowing experts in this country.

G. C. Drinkwater, one of the best known rowing authorities wrote in the *Daily Telegraph*:

"The Zurich crew were superb ...; I have never before seen such splendid rowing."

Manchester Guardian. (6.7.35.)

"Zurich easily beat Thames R.C. in a splendid contest."

Daily News and Chronicle. (8.7.35.)

"The brilliance of the Swiss competitors on their first appearance will remain a feature of this year's festival.

Zurich completed their success when their star member, E. Ruffi, won the Diamond Sculls in splendid form."

The Times. (8.7.35.)

"The Zurich four in beating last year's record for the Steward's Cup by 10 seconds, and the 1925 record by 13 seconds was alto-

gether phenomenal. Ruffi sculled right, in the Diamond Sculls, at 28 to win very comfortably by three and a half lengths in 8 minutes 15 seconds, a time that has only twice been beaten."

Daily Mirror. (8.7.35.)

"The Swiss crew had the satisfaction of achieving the only record performance of the meeting, and their victory was decisive. E. Ruffi, won the Diamond Sculls in easy fashion."

These are only a few of the many splendid testimonies which our countrymen received, in a sporting event, which is followed with the greatest interest in rowing circles all over the world.—

On this occasion we might also mention that the same crew won first honours, only a month previous to Henley at the Regatta in Mannheim. They were also first at the "Europäischen Meisterschaften" in Berlin, and they won in 1935, no less than thirty-one first prizes, a feat which is unrivaled in the annals of rowing.

By their achievements they have proved to the International sporting community that Switzerland has become a dangerous and gallant rival in the domains of Sport, and they have thus added new lustre to the many accomplishments which have promulgated a good and honourable name for our country abroad.

The Rowing-Club Zurich is willing and anxious to take part in this year's Henley contest

AN UNUSUAL HOLIDAY.

You may scoff at miracles but they are still happening and of almost every day occurrence at the little town I visited on my holiday this year.

A woman, so badly crippled with rheumatism that she had to be wheeled from her bedroom to the lounge of the hotel where she is staying, and in a week's time walking unaided down this self same passage. Men walking with the aid of sticks into a swimming bath and when they enter the water moving all their limbs and being able to float and swim on their backs as well as the fittest. A swimming bath where it is impossible to sink even in the 6ft. deep end. The water of the bath so strong with brine and other constituents, and with such powerful action that iron and metal pipes are eaten through in a short space of time. The water so dense that it is impossible to dive into it without risk of serious injury to yourself.

You may well ask where is this place. It must be some famous continental spa. No! It is right under our noses. 120 miles from London and 20 miles from Birmingham. A small town called Droitwich.

Yet with all these wonderful propensities so little known to the average person and for that matter, until the last year or so, so little visited. However, I predict it will not be many years before it's fame of curing these wretched ills of rheumatism, gout and kindred complaints becomes world known and we shall have a very different little town to what we have got to-day.

It is a quaint town with all the old buildings tumbling about. So much so that you would imagine an earthquake must have struck the place. The result of the past mining for the salt which lies in beds not very far below the surface of the earth. Houses with a list of 20-30 degrees, shops with the fronts falling forward or tilting backwards and looking so grotesque and dangerous that you wonder the Borough Surveyor has not condemned them years ago. Settlements galore!

The water used in the baths is composed of natural brine and other minerals pumped up from these salt beds on which the town stands. It is extraordinarily dense as I have tried to indicate — a great deal more dense even than the waters of the Dead Sea and the experience of first entering the baths is very interesting and amusing!

The large swimming baths are heated up to a temperature of 90 to 92 degrees and can be visited by anybody, but the other baths, more suitable for the chronic invalids. Such as reclining baths heated up to 100 or 102 degrees, douche baths, aeration baths can only be given under a doctor's direction. It is great fun to go into the large swimming brine bath even if you are not a sufferer from rheumatism, for you can float and roll about with the minimum of effort. You can stand up in the 6ft. end putting your arms to your sides and heels together and go down no further into the water than your shoulders. In the shallow end the water is so buoyant that you cannot sit

to defend their title; there is, however, a snag, these International Sports contests entail heavy financial burdens on the individual members of the crew, and this year, their attendance at Henley is in the balance, owing to the fact that not sufficient Funds are available.

In order, therefore, to enable our countrymen to defend their title, which they won in such an amazing manner, we make an earnest appeal to all Swiss in the British Isles, to help us, to find a part of the expenses, taking the point of view, that their success reflects in no small part on the good name of Switzerland, and the individual Swiss living in this hospitable land.

We may mention that the Swiss Legation associates itself warmly with our request.

We have an amount of about 1,000 Swiss francs in view, no contribution will be too small, every little will help, and we dare to hope that this will not be an impossible achievement.

Donations, marked "Henley Fund, R.C. Zurich" can be sent either to the offices of the *Swiss Observer*, 23, Leonard Street, E.C.2, or to the *Swiss Legation*, 18, Montagu Place, Bryanston Square, W.1; they will be acknowledged weekly in the columns of our paper.

We feel sure that the Swiss Colony, will come up to the scratch and help our sportsmen, who have given such a wonderful performance of their skill and sporting spirit to defend their title in this great sporting event.

THANK YOU!

on the bottom of the bath but are supported about half way. With the water heated up to such a comfortable temperature of 90 to 92 degrees a stay of 30 to 45 minutes can be enjoyed without feeling chilly and you must get out. Hot towels are provided and you rest for 5 minutes in your cubicle when you find the salt water has dried and you leisurely dress yourself. No teeth chattering or blueness of the nose! What a delight to the non-swimmer or the person who shrinks from the general coldness of the sea.

Added to the wonderful advantages the town possesses it is set amidst some of the most beautiful and interesting country you can imagine. For the tourist it is ideal.

Consider what beauty and historical interest such as the following towns bring to your mind: Stratford-on-Avon, Warwick and Leamington Spa, Worcester, Evesham, the Malverns, Tewkesbury and Gloucester, not forgetting Ludlow, Bewdley and Hereford. All within 16 to 35 miles distance. If you have never visited Birmingham, that City is only 20 miles away.

The views of the surrounding country from the Malverns can only be appreciated by the people who have visited these group of 6 towns. On a clear day, 13 counties can be seen from the heights of the Herefordshire Beacon. No wonder George Bernard Shaw resides here.

Ludlow on the river Teme with its interesting castle and picturesque old houses richly repays a visit.

Mr. Baldwin, the Prime Minister, lives in a beautiful spot just outside Bewdley.

The historian has a superabundance of material and places to visit such as Tewkesbury, Warwick, Evesham, Monmouth, Kenilworth and Hereford, all stepped in the battles of the middle ages.

Fishermen are in their element along the pretty banks of the Severn and the Avon.

I didn't take my usual holiday by the sea this year, but certainly do not regret it.

I have certainly seen miracles of health healing and miracles of wondrous and interesting scenery.

If any reader would care to have any further information as to Droitwich and what it might do for them, I shall be only too pleased to help them. With a spa with such wonderful remedial qualities almost on your doorstep everybody should hear about it.

S.P.

SWISS BENEVOLENT SOCIETY.

The Annual General Meeting of the Committee of the above Society was held on the 10th inst., at Pagani's Restaurant, Great Portland Street, W.1, with the Swiss Minister in the Chair.

The Minutes of the last Meeting and the quarterly and annual accounts were read and duly passed. The Report of the Official Auditors of the Society was also accepted.

The widow, sons and daughter of the late Louis Buechi, desire to express their sincere thanks for the loving kindness, and thought shown to him by their friends, particularly the Unione Ticinese, during his brief illness, and for the many expressions of sympathy extended to them in their bereavement.