

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: - (1947)
Heft: 1074

Artikel: True till death
Autor: J. J. F. S.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-693321>

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>

TRUE TILL DEATH.

The French Revolution, like a volcanic eruption, shook the very foundations of European Society and reverberated throughout the world. In its course, dark and inhuman deeds were perpetrated, and well might Madame Roland bitterly exclaim, as she did, at the foot of the scaffold "Oh liberté, que de crimes sont commis en ton nom." By contrast, many acts of heroism and devotion are recorded among which the defence of the Tuileries by the Swiss stands out as a shining example.

Throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, a Swiss bodyguard formed part of the French royal establishments, the first regiment having been recruited in 1616. At the time of the revolution, the Swiss Royal Guard was stationed partly in Versailles, partly in Courbevoie, a suburb of Paris. When, after the unsuccessful flight to Varennes, the King was brought back to Paris, and took residence in the Tuileries, the Swiss garrisoned the palace and were responsible for the safety of the royal family.

Louis XVI was a slow-witted, phlegmatic sort of man, good-hearted enough but lacking strength of character. He seemed to know or understand little of what was happening outside his court. When, late at night on the 14th July, 1789, the news of the storming of the Bastille was brought to Versailles by the Duke of Liancourt, the King exclaimed, "Mais c'est une révolte." "Sire, replied Liancourt, it is not a revolt, c'est une révolution!"

During the next three years, the King remained in the uneasy occupation of a tottering throne. His weak and precarious reign came to an end when, on 10th August, 1792, he left the Tuileries and abandoned the Swiss to their fate. His days were numbered, anyway; imprisonment and the guillotine awaited him.

All through the night of the 9th August, Paris was in a condition of ferment. The Legislative Assembly and the Municipality were in permanent session, a state of insurrection had been proclaimed, Mandat, the commandant of the National guard who was suspected of loyalty to the King, was murdered as he stepped out of the Town Hall, and at midnight the tocsin was rung calling the people to arms. On Friday the 10th August, a beautifully sunny morning, an armed mob from the faubourg St. Antoine and from every other section began to march on the Tuileries, at their head the 600 men from Marseilles who, under

the command of Barbaroux, and with three cannon, had arrived in Paris a few days earlier. By eight o'clock, they came in sight of the royal palace, an excited and uncontrolled body of men and women, armed with pikes, sabres and muskets, vociferating and threatening. The National troops posted around the palace made no attempt to stop them; no one in authority dared give the order. Before, however, the crowd had reached the palace, a delegation from the Legislative persuaded the King to take refuge in the Salle de Manège. The royal family left the Tuileries under escort, through the silent ranks of the Swiss, never to return.

The Swiss, calm and steady, stood at their posts in orderly ranks. They occupied the outer staircase, the corridors and the windows, tense, alert and with their muskets loaded. They had received no orders, but they knew it was their duty to protect the King's residence. Summoned to make way, they refused to stir from their posts. The Marseillais pleaded with them, Westerman, the Alsatian, addressed them in his dialect, the crowd yelled and clamoured, all to no avail: the Swiss stood firm. Realizing that entrance could not be gained peaceably, the Marseillais brought their three cannon into action. Badly aimed, the first shots rattled harmlessly over the roofs.

The moment had come for a decision. Should the Swiss fight or withdraw? They resolved to fight, taking it to be their duty to do so, and before the cannon could be reloaded, they fired a volley across the square of the Carrousel. The human tide receded, in a minute the Carrousel was deserted and the cannon left unattended. A party of Swiss rushed out and succeeded in seizing the pieces. They brought them in and tried to fire them when the attack was resumed but as the linstocks and other parts were missing the guns were of no use to them.

Soon the crowd returned to the attack, joined by the National troops with their artillery who now openly sided with the attackers. The Swiss kept up a steady fire, volley after volley thundered from their muskets, the dead and dying lay around, the wounded were carried away, bleeding, through the streets, the mob roared with fury and pandemonium reigned. So deadly was the Swiss fire that at least 1,200 of the attackers were killed and many more wounded.

Towards midday a messenger from the Legislative Assembly was seen making his way through the bullet-swept approaches to the palace. He carried a written

Spend a Weekend or Holiday by the Sea at HOVE, SUSSEX

DUDLEY HOTEL

NEAR SEA AND SHOPPING CENTRE

80 ROOMS — 30 BATHROOMS

Inclusive Terms from 30/- per day

LARGE GARAGE AND LOCK-UPS

Telephone: HOVE 6266

Managing Director: F. KUNG (Swiss)

ALL ROOMS with
Running Water, Central Heating
and Telephones

Self-contained Suites and
Rooms with Private Bathrooms

Continental Cuisine

Restaurant and Cocktail Bar open to Non-Residents

Sackville Court Hotel

OVERLOOKING THE SEA

50 ROOMS — 30 BATHROOMS

Inclusive Terms from 27/- per day

LOCK-UP GARAGES

Telephone: HOVE 6292

Manager: W. WALTER (Swiss)

order from His Majesty the King to cease firing. This order, which can still be seen in the Musée Carnavalet, reads: "Cessez le feu et rendez vous."—

What were the poor Swiss to do now? Why was there no order not to begin? Their position, if they obeyed, was desperate. They ceased firing but not to be fired at. Could they find shelter anywhere? One party broke out by the rue de l'Echelle, it was immediately set upon by the infuriated mob and all were murdered. Another rushed the gardens through a keen fusillade and some of them found sanctuary in the National Assembly. A third, several hundred strong, made towards the Champs Elysées, hoping to join up with the Swiss in Courbevoie but none of them escaped, they were all murdered, singly and in groups, fighting from street to street. In justice to the Marseillais, it must be said that they took no part in the killings and even tried to save. A few of the Swiss found refuge in private houses and one Clémence, a wine merchant, led a rescued Swiss to the bar of the Assembly and there offered to adopt him. But most were slaughtered and their bodies mangled. Fifty were marched as prisoners to the Hotel-de-Ville, the people burst through the escort and killed them to the last man. The scarlet uniform worn by the Swiss made them a conspicuous target and whenever a red-coat showed, he was fired at and hunted down. A pile of dead, stripped of their uniforms, lay in the streets two days before being carted away. Thus perished these gallant and unfortunate men, victims of their devotion to duty.

Some doubt exists as to their burial place. According to Desclozeaux (quoted by G. Lenotre) whose house adjoined the Madeleine cemetery, most of the Swiss were buried there; it is probable that some of them were taken to Monceau and other cemeteries. But wherever they may rest, the memory of these brave men is kept alive by Thorwaldsen's beautiful monument in Lucerne. Carved in the rockface, it represents a dying lion still protecting, in its last agony, the drooping lilies of France.*

The tragic events of the 19th August, outcome of terror and mass-hysteria, form a confused and violent pattern difficult of adequate description. They have been reconstructed mainly from the accounts of eye-witnesses and onlookers. Among the latter was no less a person than young Bonaparte who, according to Las Cases, expressed the opinion that the Swiss, had they had a commander, would have won the day.

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 s.f. 160,000,000

Reserves - - s.f. 32,000,000

NEW YORK AGENCY

15 NASSAU STREET.

All Descriptions of Banking and
Foreign Exchange Business Transacted

Thomas Carlyle, in his masterly History of the French Revolution, devotes to the Swiss of the 10th August a special chapter from which the following lines are well worth quoting:

"Honour to you," he writes, "brave men; honour and pity, through long times! Not martyrs were ye, and yet almost more. He was no King of yours, this Louis, and he forsook you like a King of shreds and patches. Ye were but sold to him for some poor sixpence a-day, yet would ye work for your wages, keep your plighted word. The work now was to die; and ye did it. Honour to you, o kinsmen, and may the old Biederkeit and Tapferkeit, and Valour which is Work and Truth, be they Swiss, be they Saxon, fail in no age." —

J.J.F.S.

* A poem "The Lion of Lucerne" was published in the "Swiss Observer," 22nd December, 1944.

DEPRESSION

**NERVOUS
BREAKDOWN -
WEAKNESS -
ANAEMIA -
SLEEPLESSNESS -
MALNUTRITION**

Strike at the Root
of the Disorders
— THE BLOOD



Do you know that your blood is like a defending army within a fortress? The Red Corpuscles, if normal, are a strong, virile, efficient force which mans the walls and repels all attacks of disease. Weak Blood decreases the supply and multiplication of the health-defending Red Corpuscles, leaving the fortress (your system) vulnerable to the attack of any disease or epidemic that comes along.

Dr. HOMMEL'S HAEMATOGEN



Weak
Thin
White
Blood

makes straight for the Blood. Its special constituents are so balanced that they are absorbed through the digestive tract immediately into the Blood. They build up the Red Corpuscles at a terrific rate incorporating into the Blood an enormous recuperative force and an ever-increasing power to resist and throw off disease.



Healthy
Red
Virile
Blood

Dr. Hommels Haematogen is not a patent cure-all — but a combination of scientific elements that are prescribed and heartily recommended for men, women and children by more than

10,000 MEDICAL MEN

Don't experiment, go straight to your local Chemist and get a trial bottle — test it faithfully for a week and note the amazing difference in your health, activity, vitality and appearance. Guaranteed harmless to the most delicate constitution.

HOMMEL'S HAEMATOGEN & DRUG CO.
121, NORWOOD ROAD, S.E.24