

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: - (1951)
Heft: 1162

Artikel: Federal Gymanstic Festival
Autor: [s.n.]
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-693772>

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: 23.02.2026

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

MR. ABPLANALP DOES IT AGAIN.

(Mr. Arthur Abplanalp, Swiss physical culture expert, recently gave a demonstration of his system at King Charles Hall, Tunbridge Wells. He offered a prize of £50 to anyone who could hold a chair by the top at arm's length horizontally with each hand and then with both hands at the same time for as long as himself.

The following report has appeared in the "Tunbridge Wells Advertiser" (June issue).

Test of Strength.

Half-a-dozen men left their seats among the audience and went on to the small stage at King Charles Hall on Saturday evening and prepared themselves for a test of strength.

Challenger was Swiss physical culture expert Mr. Arthur Abplanalp.

With deceptive ease 67-year-old Mr. Abplanalp first of all lifted a drawing room chair with his right arm and held it out horizontal to the ground for 60 seconds. He then transferred the chair to his left hand and held it in the same difficult position for 30 seconds. To finish up he held out two chairs, one with each arm for 25 seconds.

He offered £50 to any member of the audience who could repeat his performance.

Not one got further than an attempt with the right arm. Best effort was a count of 10 seconds. *Not a Stunt.*

Mr. Abplanalp capped his other efforts by balancing a rifle by the muzzle end on his chin and holding a chair out horizontally with his right arm for 45 seconds.

This demonstration was the more remarkable because Mr. Abplanalp scorns to "dress up." He appeared in an ordinary lounge suit and explained to his audience that his purpose was not a stunt merely to entertain but to prove that it was only by putting all parts of the body to work and by obtaining perfect reciprocal co-operation that perfect health could be attained and maintained.

"The human body," said Mr. Abplanalp, "is like the soil of a garden: it acquires a quality according to the cultivation it is given."

Mr. Abplanalp first came to England in 1906 as assistant to the famous Eugene Sandow at the Sandow Institute. He returned to Switzerland in 1908 but came back to England in 1921 and has been here expounding his system of exercise for simple and effective health and figure culture ever since.

FEDERAL GYMNASTIC FESTIVAL.

(Reprinted from the "Young Traveller in Switzerland" by Mariann Meyer, published by Phoenix House, Ltd., at 7/6, by courtesy of the Publishers and kind permission of the Author.)

... On the following Sunday Herr Huber took John and Werner to the federal gymnastic festival at Aarau. The festival is held every four years, each time in a different town.

'I expect you think we have a lot of festivals, don't you?' he said to John, smiling. 'We run cantonal and federal ones for singing, rifle shooting, and other sports, and pastimes such as yodelling. In some years we have as many as a thousand festivals of one kind or another.'

Aarau is half-way between Basle and Zurich. The train followed the river Limmat as far as Baden, the attractive watering place that used to be the Aquae Helveticae of the Romans.

'A very well-known engineering firm has its works here,' Herr Huber remarked. 'There are other factories in the canton of Aargau, too. They make the Stumpen cigars, and the centre of the straw-plaiting industry is within the Aargau's boundaries. Many of the farm-houses used to be covered with a wide, thatched roof. But these are rapidly being replaced by red tiles. There's even synthetic straw now.'

'Cellophane was a Swiss invention and so is the zip-fastener', Werner put in.

'True. There's something quite different that Aargau is famous for and that is old castle ruins. The most notable are those of the ancient family castle of the Habsburgs.'

In well under an hour their train reached Aarau, a fine medieval town built in terraces, and set in the green country-side with the distant wooded hills as a background. Aarau had risen to the occasion and was gaily decorated with flags and flowers.

Herr Huber and the boys joined the crowds waiting for the long procession, the *Festzug*, which was part of the festival. Presently they heard a brass band coming nearer and very soon the head of the walking column appeared. The procession took two hours to pass. There were thousands of men in white gymnast's dress carrying their coats and each wearing diagonally across his chest a red and white ribbon covered with silver souvenir badges of all the gymnastic festivals in which he had taken part. Some societies were small and modest, others numerous and justly proud of their large numbers. Each *Verein* was preceded by a banner-carrier who wore an ostrich feather on his hat, huge white gauntlets, and a silk sash over his shoulder. On either side walked a gymnast with a large horn filled with flowers slung round his neck. Many public figures were in the procession. At intervals came brass bands. Some of the students' associations, which were also gymnastic societies, looked especially picturesque in their traditional costumes of white breeches, velvet jackets, and black riding boots. Each carried a rapier. Many of the girls and women watching the procession threw flowers to their friends in the *Festzug*.

YOU CAN BE SLIM AND SUPREME FIT WITHIN 3 MONTHS WITHOUT DIETING



Before

A Complete Physical Rejuvenation for Men and Women of ALL AGES

Why not have an interview with Mr. Abplanalp? or write for particulars to:

ARTHUR ABPLANALP
168, REGENT STREET,
LONDON, W.1. Tel. 2726



After

(Established at this address since 1921)

When the march past was over hundreds of jostling people tried to reach the *Festplatz*, where the festival was held. Herr Huber and the boys were carried along in the stream. When they arrived he took them to watch some of the best gymnasts. The individual *Kunstturner* were, as their name indicated, real artists, and the team work of some of the societies was a treat to watch. John marvelled at their precision and accuracy. They performed in small groups to the steady counting of their leader, while the rest stood in formation awaiting their turn. The onlookers watched every movement with attention — almost as critical and expert as the umpires.

Lunch was a quick affair in the *Festhütte*, an enormous marquee with a large stage where evening entertainments were given during the festival. Hundreds of rows of plain wooden seats and tables filled the canvas tent, which was hung with flags. The place was crowded but Werner managed to find three seats and they lunched off sausages, potato salad, and bread.

In the afternoon they walked about the grounds and saw some societies doing the *Freiübungen*, a set of special physical exercises, some hurdle races, and competitors throwing the discus. There was also sprinting, jumping, and pole-vaulting.

Later they had a look at the hundreds of prizes in the *Gabentempel* (the prize tent). The olive, laurel, and oak crowns were also ready for distribution.

Herr Huber told them that the crowns would be distributed by maids of honour. 'The individual champion kneels, the girl puts the trophy on his head, and, by way of thanks, he give her the traditional kiss.

Each successful society has the crown fastened to the top of its flag.'

The high spot of the festival was the mass display. From their seats on the grandstand the visitors watched men marching on to the vast arena until it was covered with white figures. Only flags of the societies provided splashes of colour.

'There are about 22,000 men down there', Herr Huber said.

'They don't look so many', John remarked.

'They are, though. The Federal Gymnastic Society has over 2,400 *Vercine* and altogether 210,000 members, not counting the 42,800 women members who held their contest last Sunday, nor the junior sections.'

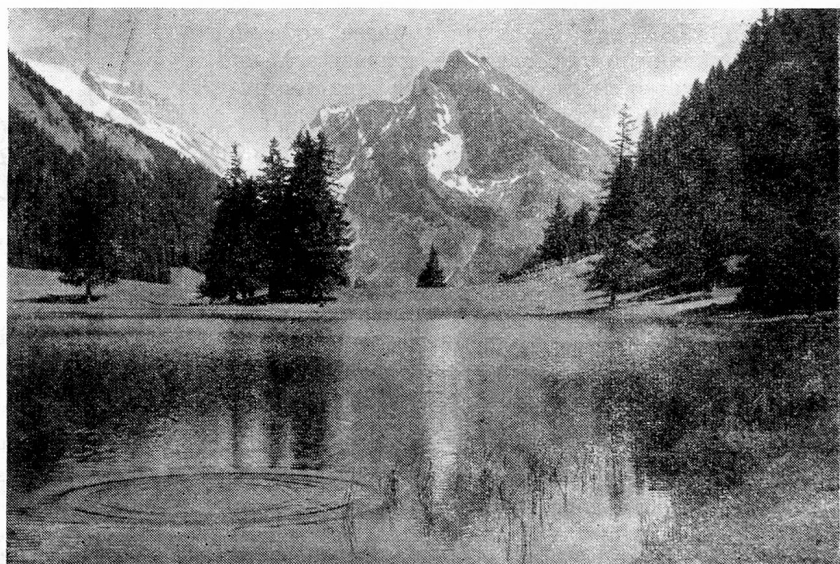
The big moment had arrived. As soon as the music started with a rousing march all the banner-carriers ran to the back of the field. The multitude of coloured flags fluttered above the heads of the white figures — so many white figures that presently the whole field was like an immense, snow-white sheet. The men performed a complicated set of exercises to a march composed especially for the occasion. It was the most impressive mass display John had ever witnessed. For twenty minutes the white figures moved rhythmically to the sound of the brass bands while the huge crowd watched spell-bound.

When it was over the banner-carriers joined their respective societies and the men closed up to columns of four. To the strains of another march the groups left the field and for John a unique experience had come to an end.

Have you made your
holiday plans yet?

Don't forget — and
let your English friends
know too —

SWITZERLAND
is an ideal choice.



THE SWISS NATIONAL TOURIST OFFICE AND
OFFICIAL AGENCY FOR THE SWISS FEDERAL RAILWAYS

458/9 STRAND, LONDON, W.C.2