

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: - (1960)

Heft: 1371

Artikel: Mark Twain in Switzerland

Autor: J.J.F.S.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-691653>

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: 17.01.2026

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

MARK TWAIN IN SWITZERLAND

The rich, if somewhat broad, humour of Mark Twain finds nowhere happier expression than in his "A Tramp Abroad", a book published back in 1880. It is the record of a tour through Southern Germany and Switzerland, made by the author in the company of a courier named Harris, probably an imaginary character. The major part of the book concerns Switzerland, hence it should be of special interest to Swiss readers. The style is Mark Twain's at his best. As one follows his account, one seems to hear the soft Southern drawl and to see the twinkle in the eye of the celebrated author. But the story he tells is by no means all humour, though, always on the look-out for the incongruous, his keen observation and his gift of description have produced page after page of beautiful and instructive writing. Yet, every now and again, unexpectedly and as if he could not help it, that humour of his comes to the surface; it cannot be repressed. This entertaining twist is best illustrated by an actual quotation. How he saw the sunrise on the Rigi is described as follows:—

"Supper warmed us, and we went immediately to bed; but first, as Mr. Baedecker requests all tourists to call his attention to any errors they may find in his guide books, I dropped him a line to inform him that when he said the foot journey from Weggis to the summit was only three hours and a quarter, he missed it by just about three days. . . . We curled up in the clammy beds, and went to sleep without rocking. We were so sodden with fatigue that we never stirred nor turned over till the booming blasts of the Alphorn aroused us. It may well be imagined that we did not lose any time. We snatched on a few odds and ends of clothing, cocooned ourselves in the proper red blankets, and plunged along the halls and out into the whistling wind bare-headed. We saw a tall wooden scaffolding on the very peak of the summit, a hundred yards away, and made for it. We rushed up the stairs to the top of this scaffolding and stood there, above the vast outlying world, with hair flying and our ruddy blankets waving in the fierce breeze.

"Fifteen minutes too late, at least", said Harris in a vexed voice. "The sun is clear above the horizon." "No matter," I said, "it is a most magnificent spectacle, and we will see it do the rest of the rising, anyway."

"In a moment we were deeply absorbed in the marvel before us, and dead to everything else. [Follows a description of the beautiful scenery.] We could not speak, we could hardly breathe. We could only gaze in drunken ecstasy and drink it in. Presently Harris exclaimed — 'Why, damnation, it's going down!' Perfectly true, we had missed the morning hornblow and slept all day. This was stupefying, Harris said — 'Look here, the sun isn't the spectacle, it's *us* stacked up here on the top of this gallows, in these idiotic blankets, and two hundred and fifty well-dressed men and women down here gawking up at us . . . and laughing their ribs loose . . . etc. etc."

Similar accounts are to be found throughout the book. There is a chapter on the French Duel, for instance, which is pure farce and most amusing. And in the appendix, the chapter devoted to "The awful German language" is extremely funny.

Books of this kind, though perhaps out of date, provide a welcome relief from the actualities of these distressing times. So if you would escape for a while from your miseries and your worries, settle in an arm-chair, switch off the radio or television and chuckle over "A Tramp Abroad", you will not regret it.

J.J.F.S.

THE ANGLO-SWISS INSURANCE & REINSURANCE AGENCY LTD

29/30, High Holborn, London, W.C.1

Telephone: CHAncery 8554

draw the attention of merchants, forwarding agents and firms connected with Switzerland engaged in the import and export trades to the fact that the SCHWEIZ ALLGEMEINE VERSICHERUNGS-AKTIEN-GESELLSCHAFT, Zurich, have a British subsidiary company the **Switzerland General Insurance Co. (London) Ltd.**, offering the facilities of a first class British insurance company backed by the Swiss company and a world-wide agency organisation. Insurances can be effected at very competitive rates with personal service and advice given where required. We have special facilities for arranging insurances with this company and welcome enquiries.

THE BEAR HOTEL AT WOODSTOCK IN OXFORDSHIRE

Second Chef required. Must be accustomed to A la Carte orders and Silver Service. Fast high class trade. Able to take charge in the absence of the Chef. £16 per week, live in all found. Permanency. Apply:

Apply to: M. G. EHRSAM,
General Manager,

THE BEAR HOTEL, WOODSTOCK,
OXFORDSHIRE.