

**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:** - (1964)

**Heft:** 1466

**Artikel:** The Valais entertains

**Autor:** [s.n.]

**DOI:** <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-696565>

#### **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:** 15.01.2026

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

## THE VALAIS ENTERTAINS

As its name suggests, the Valais is a valley, or rather a star-shaped complex of valleys and routes leading off the Rhone. It forms a great cleft between two giant mountain ranges containing Europe's most famous peaks. From the Furka to Martigny, this furrow runs lengthwise, then, all at once changes direction, proceeding crosswise to Lake Geneva.

The Valais is known the world over for its mountain splendour, its wonderful climate, clear air and rare combination of northern snow and southern sunshine. It houses secluded hamlets as well as sophisticated international holiday centres, a unique combination of beautiful historical towns, unspoiled and quaint mountain villages and a rich variety of summer and winter holiday places.

The Valais has been a favourite with the British for a century, but in order to make it even more widely known to the British holiday makers, the Valais Tourist Office sent a delegation to England from 13th to 17th October.

On 14th October, the Swiss Ambassador and Madame de Fischer gave a cocktail reception at the Embassy, and on the day before, a

## VALAIS EVENING

was held at the Law Society's Hall in Chancery Lane, W.C.2. Lawyers have occupied the site of the Law Society's Hall for nearly six hundred years. In 1400, twenty-two years before the historical Black Book of Lincoln's Inn, part of the site was occupied by the timbered residence of Nicholas Wymbyssh, a Master of Chancery, having "a large practice". From as early as 1511, it was occupied by the Six Clerks of Chancery who were to remain in residence for well over two hundred years. About 1708, parts of the site were also occupied by the Middlesex Registry, by Law Stationers in 1802, and by a Hostelry founded in 1784.

Two years after the Society was founded in 1825, the site of the present Hall was acquired and the first part, the Reading Hall, and part of the Library was opened in 1831. An extension to the Library and what is now the Members' Bar were completed in 1849, and a further extension to the Library and the Buffet Room were opened in 1857.

In 1870, the present Members' Luncheon Room was completed and the final part of the building, as we know it today, which included the Members' Common Room, was completed and opened by King Edward VII in 1904.

These then were the splendid rooms which formed the background for the sunny Valais Evening. The scene was alive with bright Valais posters and pretty Valaisannes in costume, and amongst the illustrious guests were the Lord Mayor of London, Sir James Harman, accompanied by the Household Officer in waiting, a Serjeant-at-Arms, the Swiss Ambassador and Madame de Fischer, members of the Embassy and many English and Swiss personalities as well as representatives of travel companies. There was a magnificent display of Valais fruit which was later presented to St. Mark's Hospital.

The atmosphere was very happy and informal. The Lord Mayor's evening attire — he had to leave early for another function — was the only sign of official splendour. He is a great friend of Switzerland and delighted the audience with some "Schwyzerdütsch" in his address. A Panorama Book was presented to Sir James, and a box of chocolates was sent to the Lady Mayoress who, unfortunately was unable to attend.

The Valais is well-known for its wines. They were all there, flown over by Swissair, the light, fruity and dry FENDANT from "Chasselas" stock; the JOHANNIS-

BERG with its golden glow produced from "Sylvaner" and sometimes "Riesling" stock; the red DOLE, produced from a harmonious blending of the "Pinot Noir" and "Gamay"; the ERMITAGE, wine of distinction from the "Marsanne Blanche" stock; the MALVOISIE, a mellow dessert wine from "Pinot Gris". These wines formed the subject of a jolly competition: each of them was served at two tables, one displayed with the name of the wine, the other with a number. The wine had to be tasted and the number put next to the appropriate name on a special form. The *Dégustation* was accompanied by specialities from the Valais, cheese, smoked meat, tasty bread and rich cheese and onion flans. There were some Valais songs presented by a member of the "Chanson Valaisanne", and an excellent film was shown, a Kern Film production called "Land of Contrasts". Much fun was attached to the competition, and to judge from the number of entries, the wines must have been well and truly tasted. The first prize was a week's hotel accommodation for two in the resort of the winner's choice and free travel inside Switzerland. Other prizes included wood carvings, pewter, a Valais manufactured wrist watch, Valais wines and liqueur, cheeses and a copy of Mrs. Eva Défago's book "Deep Freeze Girls".

The evening was a huge success by all accounts, and the panelled walls of the venerable Law Society's hall will reverberate the happy songs and laughter for a long time. The Valais sunshine has been felt in London — may its rays attract many new and old holiday makers.

*Mariann.*



The Lord Mayor in conversation with the Swiss Ambassador and Madame de Fischer.



Display of Gifts and Prizes.



The Lord Mayor addressing the gathering.



Dr. Fritz Erne, Sion, Director of the Valais Tourist Office, introducing the film.



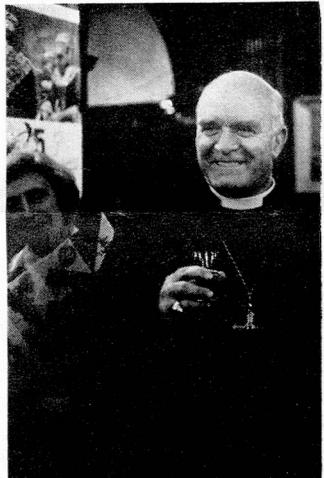
Mr. Harold Horsfall Turner, Secretary of the Law Society, winner of the Second Prize, an oil painting of the Matterhorn. On the right is Mr. Willy Amez-Droz, President of the Valais Tourist Office in Sion, and Mr. Constant Cachin, Director of the Zermatt Tourist Office.



Mr. Albert Kunz, Manager of the Swiss National Tourist Office, London, announcing the winners of the Competition.



Another happy prize winner.



The Bishop of Leicester and Mrs. Williams, author of "Zermatt Saga".



Miss Margaret Darwall, College Principal and Secretary of the Ladies' Alpine Club, winner of the First Prize. On the left is Mrs. Eva Défago, author of "The Deep Freeze Girls".



Mr. H. O. Ernst, former Manager of S.N.T.O. London, in conversation with Wing Commander and Mrs. E. Bentley Beauman.



Mr. E. Burgazzi, U.K. Deputy Manager of Swissair, in conversation with the Editor of the "Swiss Observer" and Mr. Paul Guntern, President of the Leukerbad Tourist Office.



Enjoying the Valais wines. In the foreground can be seen Mr. Max Keller, U.K. Manager of Swissair, and Mr. J. P. Christen, Chairman of the Swiss Economic Council.

### "ZERMATT SAGA"

**Cicely Williams**

Author of *Bishop's Wife — But Still Myself*  
With a Foreword by SIR ARNOLD LUNN

Readers of Cicely Williams' previous book, will know of her passionate attachment to alpine Switzerland, and in particular to the mountain village of Zermatt. In *Zermatt Saga* — written as the centenary of the first ascent of the Matterhorn approaches (14th July 1865) — the author begins the story of Zermatt in ancient times, tells again the epic of that July day in 1865 which brought both glory and disaster to Whymper and his party, and follows the history of the growing village up to the outbreak of the last war. She then takes her readers behind the scenes and unfolds aspects of Zermatt life known only to few, but familiar to her through many years of intimate acquaintance with Zermatt people. The closing chapters resume the saga, and show Zermatt entering the modern world. The unexpected typhoid epidemic of 1963 is briefly described and put into proper perspective.

Though more objective than *Bishop's Wife*, the *Saga* will again captivate readers owing to its writer's gift of intimate self-communication. Few will escape her infectious enthusiasm.

Published by Messrs. Allen and Unwin, 192 pages.  
Illustrated. About 36s. net.

### "THE DEEP FREEZE GIRLS"

**Eva Défago**

"The Deep Freeze Girls" is the title of a book which has recently appeared on best-seller lists in English-speaking countries. The story centres around a genteel boarding school for girls, located on the shores of Lake Geneva. The English-language "Weekly Tribune", published in Geneva, recently printed an interview with the author Mrs. Eva Défago-Wirz, the wife of an *hôtelier* from Champéry, in the Valais. Mrs. Défago stated that she was already at work on her next book, a literary treatment of the theme 'life in a hotel'.

### ART TREASURES OF THE VALAIS

The growing city of Martigny, in the fertile Lower Valais, is the starting point for journeys up the Great St. Bernard. In honour of the opening of the new St. Bernard Road Tunnel, the city has organized an exhibition of art treasures of many types from the Valais. Some are state-owned, some privately owned, and some belong to the Augustinian Order's institution at the top of the St. Bernard Pass and to its various parishes. A few of the *objets d'art* date from the ancient Roman Empire, while others are as relatively recent as the "Biedermeier" era. Among the Roman relics are some particularly interesting small statues of Venus and a three-horned head representing a bull-god. The medieval part of the exhibition includes some outstanding statues, chalices, monstrances and procession-crucifixes. There is an especially rich selection of furniture in the style of Ludwig XIII, including a comfortable armchair with movable wings and back-rest — quite modern in its conception.

A part of the exhibition is located in the successfully restored seventeenth-century manor house of the Gagniez family.

S.N.T.O.

### ANOTHER SUCCESS FOR GENEVA INDUSTRY

Two Geneva firms, the Charmilles Engineering Works Ltd. and the Sécheron Engineering Works Ltd. have just been commissioned to construct the turbines and alternators for the new power station at Bitsch in the Valais. The Bitsch underground power station, supplied by the waters of the Aletsch glacier, is designed to hold three groups, only two of which will be installed during the first stage, i.e. by 1967. These hydro-electric groups are to be the most powerful in Switzerland; each of them will consist of a Charmilles pelton-type turbine with a vertical axle and four jets developing a maximum of 143,000 h.p. under a head of 2,418 feet and driving a Sécheron triphase alternator of 120,000 kVA maximum at 375 r.p.m. It should be added that the planning of the Bitsch Power Station as well as the supervision of the work has been awarded to the General Company for Industry, also of Geneva.

[O.S.E.C.]