

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:	- (1967)
Heft:	1523
 Artikel:	Things Swiss
Autor:	Epsetin, Eugene V.
DOI:	https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-691845

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: 22.02.2026

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

THINGS SWISS

by

Eugene V. Epstein

Mark Twain seems to have slept in almost as many places in Europe as George Washington did in America. As a matter of fact, if we were to compute the number of hours the good humorist is supposed to have spent in various European resorts alone, we would find that he lived to the ripe age of three hundred and twenty-seven years. And when he wasn't sleeping in every hotel on every European byway, Mark Twain was creating aphorisms and local bits of humour, much of which is as valid today as when it was written.

In one particularly famous piece, he took apart the German language in such a devastating manner that it will probably never recover from the onslaught. Among other helpful suggestions to tourists, he pointed out that one can speak German quite acceptably with a vocabulary of but three magic words. The first of these was *Zug*, with a total of 544 different meanings (drawing, expedition, blast, railway train, flock, migration, platoon, inclination, etc.).

If this first attempt should fail to elicit an intelligent response, the next word to try was *Schlag*, with only 392 basic meanings, but far more colourful and more likely to be universally understood (punch, rhythm, carriage-door, tilled field, fit of apoplexy, etc.). Should fate nevertheless spare one the satisfaction of being understood with either *Zug* or *Schlag*, continued Mark Twain, the last resort was to stare your conversational opponent in the eye and say: "Also!" I may be misquoting the author of *A Tramp Abroad*, but this was, in any case, the general idea.

It's too bad that Mark Twain did not have a go at the Swiss-German language, for here he would have found a wealth of material at his disposal. But the subject is still virgin territory, with the exception of those well-known remarks comparing Swiss German to a throat disease or some other illness. It is furthest from my thoughts to malign the most widely spoken language in Switzerland or to discuss expressiveness or musical values or whatever else passes for scientific evaluation of other people's native tongues. On the contrary, I want simply to offer my personal advice to those visitors who would like to get along in Swiss-German:

Grüezi — Most important word in Switzerland. Means, roughly, "Hi, neighbour", and is generally followed by a nod of the head and a very quick smile.

Grüezi mitenand — Same as above, except that *mitenand* means "all together", hence "greetings, all together", when more than one person is present.

PIONEERS of MODERN TRANSPORT

Specialists in GROUPAGE Services
to and from Switzerland and most
other Continental destinations.

Trainferry

TIR Trailers

I.S.O. containers

Lift-units, etc.

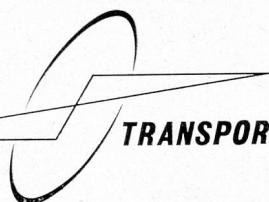
ALLIED HOUSES:

BASLE

M'A'T TRANSPORT A.G., Peter Merian Strasse 50
PHONE: 351800. TELEX BASLE 62216-MATTRANS

ZURICH

M'A'T TRANSPORT A.G., Sihlfeldstrasse 88, 8036 Zurich
PHONE: 258992/95 TELEX: ZURICH 52458-MATTRANS

M A T 
TRANSPORT LTD

"Arnold House", 36-41 Holywell Lane,
LONDON, E.C.2.

Tel. Bis 6500

Telex. 28404/21453

PIONEERS of MODERN TRANSPORT

Specialists in GROUPAGE Services
to and from Switzerland and most
other Continental destinations.

Trainferry

TIR Trailers

I.S.O. containers

Lift-units, etc.

ALLIED HOUSES:

BASLE

M'A'T TRANSPORT A.G., Peter Merian Strasse 50
PHONE: 351800. TELEX BASLE 62216-MATTRANS

ZURICH

M'A'T TRANSPORT A.G., Sihlfeldstrasse 88, 8036 Zurich
PHONE: 258992/95 TELEX: ZURICH 52458-MATTRANS