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Compatriots who would like to read the

New Year's

Message delivered by the President of the Swiss Confederation may apply to Embassies or Consulates.

Swiss humorous drawings

Perhaps this heading already may cause a smile with some readers abroad, for they cannot imagine that the Swiss who have the reputation of being serious, calm and reasonable, should also have some humour or even know how to appreciate it. And yet, there is a Swiss brand of humour which – if expressed in drawings – has the advantage of being international, national and regional all at the same time, and this thanks to the various cultures and languages anchored in our country.

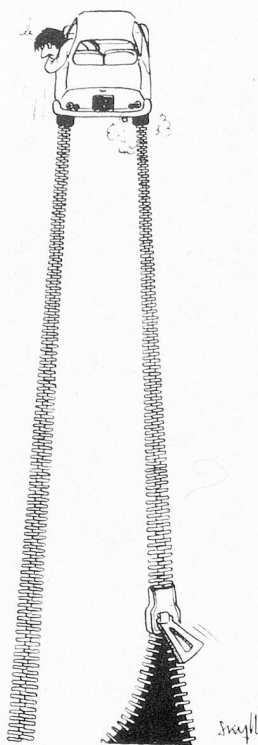
At exhibitions every year where the best artists of all continents are represented, the specialists in pictorial humour are agreed that entries from Switzerland show very personal characteristics. Not only are they of high artistic value, but they contain freshness of ideas full of originality and imagination. The numerous prizes and awards which Swiss humorists receive, testify to this.

Prof. Gianeri, famous Italian critic of humorous art, describes Swiss humorous drawings as follows: «...if, as Arsène Alexandre maintains, caricature is a mischievous, malicious animal with a thick skin and double tongue, then Swiss caricature is an animal with three tongues. It is indeed the only one which, with the ease of a computer, speaks three different languages in a drawing. It is a caricature whose roots go very deep, and with an authentic pedigree...»

The creators of Swiss humour

This definition is flattering, yet correct; for it suffices to confirm that several Swiss drawing artists belong to the pioneers in the world history of humour. Some of them indeed became very famous abroad. Thus we owe the first real book of caricatures with the title «Hollandia Regenerata» (1798) to

David Hess (1770–1843), a book which is practically no longer to be found and which contains grim drawings devoted to the lost cause of the French counter-revolutionary reaction. But it was the Brothers Usteri (Johann Martin 1763–1827 and Paul 1770–1843) who stimulated the distribution of popular humorous drawings by their works published in German-Swiss calendars. Martin Disteli (1802–1844), unequalled creator of satirical animal caricatures, and



Drawing SKYLL.

Hieronimus Hess (1799–1850) were very famous. And who does not know the works by Rodolphe Toepffer (1799–1846) whom one considers the creator of the strip cartoon. His pictorial sequences, true comedies in drawings («Vieux-Bois», «Crépin», «Jabot», «Dr. Festus» etc.), which were highly valued at the time by Goethe and Xavier de Maistre, are equally successful today. Theophile Steinlen