

Notes and gleanings

Objektyp: **Group**

Zeitschrift: **The Swiss observer : the journal of the Federation of Swiss Societies in the UK**

Band (Jahr): - **(1927)**

Heft 316

PDF erstellt am: **25.09.2024**

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The Swiss Observer

Telephone: CLERKENWELL 9595

Published every Friday at 23, LEONARD STREET, LONDON, E.C.2.

Telegrams: FREPRINCO, LONDON.

VOL. 7—No. 316

LONDON, OCTOBER 15, 1927.

PRICE 3d.

PREPAID SUBSCRIPTION RATES

UNITED KINGDOM	{ 3 Months (13 issues, post free)	3s 6d
AND COLONIES	{ 6 Months (26 issues, post free)	6s 6d
	{ 12 Months (52 issues, post free)	12s 6d
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	{ 12 Months (52 issues, post free)	14.—

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HOME NEWS

Steps are being taken by the Socialist Party to revive a proposal giving the cantons and communes the right to prohibit the manufacture and consumption of alcoholic spirits in their respective districts. This measure had already been advocated by a successful initiative demand deposited as long ago as March, 1922; the Federal Council, however, had omitted to present the necessary report and recommendations to the Swiss Parliament.

A general appeal for funds in favour of the sufferers from the recent inundations is being made throughout the canton of Zurich. In the meantime the cantonal treasury has already remitted Frs. 15,000 to the affected districts in the cantons of St. Gall, Ticino and Grisons, as well as the principality of Liechtenstein.

According to statistics just published by the "Vorort" (Schweiz. Handels- und Industrie-Verein) no less than 510 million francs have been spent in Switzerland during the years 1919 to 1926 in order to combat unemployment caused by after-war conditions. Of this sum 291 million have been contributed by the Confederation, 201 by the cantons and communes, and the remaining 18 million by industry. Over 150 million francs were distributed as doles to the unemployed.

The contents of the Polish National Museum, which since 1870 have been housed in the old castle of Rapperswyl, are now being removed to Warsaw.

The cantonal gymnastic festival which took place in Baden last July resulted in a profit of Frs. 8,037 which is being distributed among local gymnastic societies.

A delegation of 16 workers has left Basle for Russia in order to obtain first-hand information about present conditions in the latter country.

It is announced that the German aviation company, "Lufthansa," which controls the largest number of aeroplanes in Europe, has decided to equip all its engines with the "Scintilla" magneto, which is manufactured at Solothurn.

Dr. Charles Ferrière, the director of the entomological section of the Natural History Museum in Berne, has received an official invitation from the authorities of the British Museum to collaborate in certain research work with reference to insect life; he will leave his post in Switzerland and take up his residence in London.

Mr. Th. E. Wagner, from Läuelfingen (Basel-land) has been appointed honorary Swiss Consul in Colombo.

Through being run into by a motor car near Horw (Lucerne) Baltasar Greter, aged 47, a joinery proprietor from Kriens, subsequently died from the injuries received. A similar fatal accident befell Greg. Zermatten, age 51 from Mac near Sitter (Valais).

Coming into contact with the high tension line Ulrich Tobler, the chef de depot at Rorschach of the Swiss Federal Railways, was electrocuted; he leaves a widow and three children.

NOTES AND GLEANINGS.

Henry Fuseli.

Few of us will recognise under this name a member of a well-known Swiss family who, at the beginning of the last century, had attained a rare distinction in the country of his adoption. Joh. Heinr. Füssli was born at Zurich on the 7th of February, 1741, and died at his London residence on Putney Heath, on the 16th of April, 1825. According to "Bryan's Dictionary of Painters and Engravers" Füssli was originally intended for the Church, and actually entered it, but compelled by the enmity of a magistrate, whose dishonesty he had exposed, to leave his native town, he went to Berlin, and for some time devoted himself to literature, in which he was engaged at intervals

throughout his life. In 1765, at the instigation of the British Ambassador at the Court of Berlin, he visited England, and in 1767 an introduction to Reynolds, who praised his drawings, induced him to become a painter, and in the following year he went to Italy, where he stayed for nearly nine years, studying the works of Michelangelo; but he never fairly mastered the principles of drawing or colouring, and his works are esteemed more for the powerful imagination they display than for any artistic merit. He was of most eccentric habits and extravagant ideas, and these ideas are everywhere apparent in his pictures. Leaving Italy in 1778, and passing through Zurich, he reached England in the following year and in 1782 produced his famous picture of "The Nightmare." In 1786 he became a zealous worker in Boydell's Shakespeare Gallery, for which he executed nine paintings. In 1788 he was elected an Associate of the Royal Academy, and an Academician two years later, and in 1790, too, he married one of his models. In 1799 he opened his Milton Gallery, comprising 47 paintings, the result of several years of labour. In the same year he was elected Lecturer on Painting at the Royal Academy, and in 1804 he was made Keeper, the bye-laws being altered to allow him to retain the lectureship.

Messrs. Orell Füssli, in Zurich, have just published a monograph written in German by Arnold Federmann, and the book (the price of which is Frs. 22) is reviewed in the Literary Supplement of the *Times* (Oct. 6th). The literary critic of our great contemporary has placed before his English readers a most fascinating appreciation of the Zurich poet-painter; here it is *in extenso* :—

"Heinrich Füssli, better known to us as Henry Fuseli, has rightly been made the subject of this able and beautiful first volume of a promising series of monographs on Swiss art. We English, too, may well renew and improve our acquaintance with this contemporary and friend of Blake, who spent so much of his life and energy in illustrating Shakespeare and Milton, was expected by Reynolds to become a second Raphael, and wrote a defence of Rousseau which some mistook for the work of Smollett. His promise as a young man was so great that Lavater considered him the peer of Goethe—Fuseli "mehr Poet," Goethe "mehr Mensch," he once wrote to Herder. Perhaps he did not quite fulfil this promise, but some of his work bears the mark of genius, and he deserved the tomb which was allotted to him in St. Paul's.

Last year Dr. Wartmann arranged in the charming Kunsthau at Zurich a remarkable centenary exhibition of Fuseli's pictures and drawings, many of which came from the collection of Lord Harrowby. But few, if any, of the English critics bothered their heads about this exhibition. The zeal and skill of Dr. Federmann, ably supported by the famous Artistic Institute of Orell Füssli and by Dr. Wartmann himself, have happily given us another chance to revise our impressions of this Swiss R.A., of whom Blake himself is recorded to have said, "this country must advance two centuries in civilisation before it can appreciate him." Dr. Federmann not only follows his hero's fortunes from his Swiss cradle to his English grave, but gives us also a judicious introductory essay, an excursus on Fuseli's forbears—a Füssli was at work as bell-founder and goldsmith as early as 1386—a critical account of England's influence on Europe between 1650 and 1760, a discussion of Fuseli's Scandinavian friends in Rome and his marked influence on the Northern artists, and three important pages on the friendship with Blake. Perhaps the influence of Fuseli is here somewhat overrated, but the evidence cited by Federmann cannot be overlooked. Its value, in any case, could only be adequately weighed by an expert familiar with the art of the whole period and as well versed in the work of Fuseli as in that of Blake. Federmann's book further offers us several catalogues of Fuseli's works, a full bibliography, and some eighty or more admirably executed plates and prints of his best pictures and drawings. The man behind the artist is revealed by more than a hundred pages of his own writings, chiefly letters and poems, for the most part here printed for the first time.

Fuseli, despite his eight years in Rome and his long residence in England, remained at heart a true Swiss and a German Swiss. A recent Swiss poster represents a peasant preparing to engage in a wrestling match: this bull-necked son of the soil, with sturdy widespread limbs bears an odd, if distant, resemblance to Fuseli's powerful heroes. Of a striking "Achilles before the Pyre of Patroklos" Federmann writes:

ANNIVERSARIES OF SWISS EVENTS.

Oct. 18th, 1356.—Great earthquake in Basel which destroyed the whole town, and laid to waste the greater part of its suburbs. Fires, as the result of the earthquake, lasted over eight days. The inhabitants lost heart to re-build their town, but gradually did so when receiving help from near and far.

Oct. 21st, 1860.—Consecrating of the "Mythenstein."

Oct. 22nd, 1797.—Veltlin ceded to the Cisalpine Republic.

There is in this sketch something of Hodler's style and force. That this is not saying too much and that a kind of secret but unbroken line runs through the whole of Swiss art from Urs Graf and Nikolaus Manuel through Füssli down to Hodler is proved by another sketch of Füssli's. It represents a bearded man in a peasant's blouse reaching to the knees, standing with legs wide apart and raising above his head with both arms a huge block of stone, as if about to hurl it from him. Hodler, when this sketch was shown to him, asked "Who is this that draws like me?" and smiled on hearing it was a Zurich, dead these hundred years.

It is obvious to-day that Fuseli excelled as a draughtsman rather than as a painter in oils, Federmann (perhaps a little too boldly) acclaims him as, on occasion, the equal of Goya: the "Polyphemus" here reproduced, truly great in design, feeling and force, may go some way to making good this claim. But, in general, one saw at Zurich, and Federmann himself admits, that oil was not Fuseli's proper medium: "Anyone who wants to see him at his best and most characteristic must turn to his drawings and water-colours." Some of the latter are charming, but it is his drawings, in which he often makes brilliant use of the wash, which "gives far better than his oil-paintings the true reflection of his will and skill." Fuseli himself knew this and once described himself in a lecture as one who had courted—and still continued to court—colour, "as a lover courts a disdainful mistress." He was not, of course, lucky in his period, nor, even in his drawings, altogether unspoiled by the popular classicism. He delights here, too, at times in the bizarre and the hyper-realistic. But often he shows a true kinship with the great men of the *baroque* age; the forerunners who chiefly claimed his interest, besides Michelangelo, were Signorelli and Rembrandt. Of Dürer he seems to have known few, if any, originals. It is perhaps not fanciful to find in him a distinct affinity with El Greco, and his powerful, but somewhat theatrical, style may never make a wide appeal in England. Yet often he is strangely modern in effect, and he anticipated not only the Romantics but even the heroic shapes and poses of Rodin's sculptures.

Literature, with drawing, occupied Fuseli from early youth, whereas he was late in beginning to paint. Perhaps this interest in literature bound him down too closely to the illustrator's tasks. But it was inevitable, for he grew up in the literary circle presided over by Bodmer and Breitinger, the famous Swiss critics who attacked Gottsched and defended Milton. Bodmer it was who imbued Fuseli with a passionate worship for Klopstock and who urged the young exile—who had left Zurich for political reasons—to hurry on from Prussia, which Fuseli calls "this land of serfs and base, butterfly habits of mind," to England as the home of poetry and freedom. In London he developed greater independence and criticised Klopstock for "the unnatural refinement of the sentiments of his characters" and Wieland for "laying unholy hands on Shakespeare." From Lyons in 1766 he inquires if Bodmer has seen "Piercy's 3rd vol. of the Collection of ancient ballads?" If not, he will send them "to the Restorer of the Minnesong." In 1766 he signs himself "Fuseli" for the first time in a quaint mock-heroic poem in English beginning:

"God said to Fred'ric: 'Be the first of Names...'"

and ending on this personal note :—

"His nod call'd me. I trembled lest a Throne Should be my lot—but mildly-smiling He: 'Take thou thy wish—the genial mind, the Tear, Thy Friend be Bodmer and thy Mistress—?'"

His real mistress was to be art. On the advice of Reynolds he set off in 1770 for Rome, where he stayed for eight years and found above all in Michelangelo what he chiefly sought, "Space, Height, Depth, Length." Federmann rightly stresses the fact that Fuseli was here well ahead of his age. An album of this period, preserved in the British Museum, is full of drawings done in Rome on subjects from Shakespeare, Milton and even Dante. His element was the daring, the grandiose, the heroic. We are not surprised to find him, after the year 1800, painting scenes from the Nibelungen epic and even making use in them of the Volung saga.

Fuseli's poems and prose as printed or reprinted by Federmann illumine chiefly the early period. A prose "Complaint" of 1763 expresses, almost in the language of a bereaved lover, his sense of loss on leaving behind him his fellow-exile and travelling companion, Lavater. It is, of course, partly a literary exercise, in a vein that anticipates "Werther." The poems are not likely to attract much attention at this date; Federmann has to admit that other critics have not thought so highly of them as he does. But they throw some light both on Fuseli himself and on the storm and stress period in Switzerland. The first is an "Ode on a Meta" of 1760; the title, like the text, breathes respect for and imitation of Klopstock. The third contains a clearly seen and heard metaphor:—

dumpfdonnernd
Welzet London seine Menschenluthen!

The "Ode to Patience" (1766) bears a Latin motto from Calvin and speaks of the myriads "Denen mit eisernem Fuss die Noth folgt."

Here and there, perhaps, a line is inspired already by Milton or Shakespeare. The "Ode to the Friends left behind" (Essex, 1765) contains the proud lines:—

"Spiele, brause mein Tag, für euch verloren
treibt

Er der Ewigkeit Meer mich zu!"

Here and later Fuseli is feeling his way towards a sincere and personal utterance: now and then he comes close to the tones uttered by the young Goethe. But one may doubt whether practice would have turned him into a great poet. Still these poems, like the letters, help us to draw nearer to this spirited personality. Less interesting are the aphorisms carefully preserved by Knowles and admirably cited by Federmann. But some of them deserve to be recorded anew, for now and then there is a flash of inspiration or of warm feeling. No one who takes an interest in Fuseli, or indeed in the art and literature of this period, can afford to neglect this fascinating and beautifully produced monograph.

Mountain Railways.

A correspondent who was "agreeably surprised" by the readiness displayed by the erring English papers in rectifying a "terminological inexactitude" sends us the following extract from the *Scotsman* (Sept. 10th) which bears witness to the comparative safety of modern mountain railways:

"The recent disastrous accident on the Chamonix rack and pinion railway has once more shown how the most ingenious safety devices can be rendered ineffective through a fault of the human factor. Fortunately, while the fault of the engine driver by starting at excessive speed caused the disaster, the presence of mind of a conductor saved the rear carriage and its passengers by a supreme effort in detaching and arresting it on the brink of the precipice, as the engine and the front carriage were taking their fatal plunge. As usual in cases of excessive speed, especially on steep down grades, the train derailed at a curve. This averted probably an even greater disaster if the train had run unimpeded down the whole incline to an inevitably fatal impact at the terminus in Chamonix. The great safety device on rack railways, of which the present writer has had a large experience, is the automatic brake-clutch of the pinion wheel in the rack teeth; obviously the wheel had not been given time to grip the rack and so the automatic brake could not function. Two precisely similar cases within the present writer's recollection are those on the Snowdon rack railway in Wales, and on the Florence and Fiesole electric railway in Italy (1890), and it is noteworthy that such accidents, extremely rare as they are, invariably happen, not on the ascent, but in descending at excessive speed.

With these few exceptions, the hundreds of steep grade mountain railways, rack or wire-rope, or both combined, worked by steam, water or electricity, in all parts of the Alps, or connecting the low and high level quarters of many cities, have functioned with perfect safety and regularity ever since 1872, when the first rack railway on the Rigi was opened in Switzerland. These railways, shooting up like mushrooms with gradients of 1 in 4, 1 in 2, and even 1 in 1.6 (e.g., the wire-rope lines of Murren Stanserhorn, and Varese, Italy), and to altitudes of 6,000, 8,000, 10,000 (Gorner Grat), and even 13,000 feet (the Jungfrau line) annually enable—apart

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from the ever-increasing crowds of tourists—thousands of delicate visitors to ascend to heights of invigorating air which they could not reach otherwise. Mountain railways have often been derided as disfiguring scenery; but even the great Alpine trunk lines are mere specks on the mountain sides, and both they and their lesser offspring confer inestimable boons on mankind."

Referendum Fiasco.

The only reference in the English Press on this subject was contained in the following from the Geneva correspondent of the *Daily Mail* (Oct. 7th):—

"Charges of wholesale fraud are made against the Swiss Communist Party, which has failed to secure the requisite number of signatures for its referendum on the new law affecting the status of Government officials.

Under the new measure—which has been strongly combated by the Communist element—strikes by Government officials are made illegal. Out of the minimum of 30,000 signatures required before a referendum can be held the Communists obtained only 25,000, and of these several thousand were afterwards annulled for various reasons.

On the lists being examined many people were found to have signed several times, while many of the signatures were those of boys and of foreigners ineligible to vote.

Hundreds of other people who signed the petition on the strength of false representations by Communist canvassers afterwards wrote to the authorities cancelling their signatures.

Thus, out of 51 signatures, collected at Dubendorf, only one remained, while at Wädenswil only 20 per cent. passed out of a total of 200 on the lists.

The Press is particularly jubilant over this defeat in view of the fact that the Swiss Communists have always been generously subsidised by Moscow."

DU COQ A L'ANE.

Si j'intitule cet article du nom de deux animaux de basse-cour, ce n'est nullement pour insister sur la sagesse des hommes qui règne en ce début de XXème siècle dans notre triste monde. Mais c'est simplement parce que je vais essayer, sautant par dessus les barrières du temps et de la distance, de vous retracer quelques menus faits qui agitent les esprits en différents coins de notre Suisse.

Ceux qui, durant la conférence économique internationale, ont passé par Genève ont vu sans doute un édifice ridicule placé, telle une baraque foraine, sur le débarcadère du quai du Mont-Blanc. On avait dressé là un relief du système douanier actuel en Europe. La Suisse y paraissait telle une minuscule cour de prison, écrasée par les murs dressés de tous côtés par ses voisins. On s'en allait le coeur triste et l'esprit porté à la réflexion. C'est par un court récit semblable que le Comité de la Semaine suisse débute dans l'appel qu'il lance à la population pour l'aider à soutenir ses efforts.

Vous savez, sans doute, ce qu'est la Semaine suisse; il s'agit de faire une intense propagande pour tous les produits de première et de seconde main manufacturés ou réalisés sur notre sol.

Du 15 au 29 octobre, les devantures de tous les magasins n'exposeront que des produits nationaux, en l'indiquant de la plus aveuglante façon. L'affiche dessinée à cet effet comprendra, évidemment, la croix fédérale émergeant d'une gerbe et que surmonte un compas.

Tout le pays s'apprête à soutenir cette annuelle tentative et on a l'impression que l'effort va décidément crescendo. Il n'y a pas jusqu'à la pédagogie qui ne se mêle de la partie, puisqu'on annonce que des concours de composition éveillent l'esprit de la jeunesse à cet aspect nouveau du sens commercial.

Vous avez lu, sans doute, et dans leurs moindres détails, les affreuses catastrophes fluviales dont souffrent les Grisons, le Tessin, une partie de Saint-Gall et de Thurgovie. D'un mouvement unanime, le peuple suisse s'est porté au secours des concitoyens dans la peine et de tous les chefs-lieux, de tous les villages, abondent des sommes d'argent importantes qui viendront se joindre à ce que l'Etat a déjà fait de son côté. Les membres du Conseil fédéral se rendent les uns après les autres dans les

QUOTATIONS from the SWISS STOCK EXCHANGES.

BONDS.	Oct. 3		Oct. 11	
	Fr.	S.	Fr.	S.
Confederation 3% 1903	79.85	79.50		
5% 1917, VIII Mob. Ln	101.30	101.75		
Federal Railways 3½% A-K	84.50	84.60		
" " 1924 IV Elect. Ln.	101.00	101.10		
SHARES.				
	Nom	Oct. 3	Oct. 11	
	Fr.	Fr.	Fr.	
Swiss Bank Corporation	500	830	823	
Crédit Suisse	500	867	870	
Union de Banques Suisses	500	737	745	
Société pour l'Industrie Chimique	1000	2730	2715	
Fabrique Chimique et-dev. Sandoz	1000	4500	4287	
Soc. Ind. pour la Schappe	1000	2900	2925	
S.A. Brown Boveri	350	585	582	
C. F. Bally	1000	1295	1310	
Nestlé & Anglo-Swiss Cond. Mk. Co.	200	819	819	
Entreprises Suisses S.A.	1000	1180	1177	
Comp. de Navig. sur le Lac Léman	500	540	540	
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