

Switzerland buys british

Autor(en): **[s.n.]**

Objekttyp: **Article**

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

Band (Jahr): **- (1952)**

Heft 1180

PDF erstellt am: **26.04.2024**

Persistenter Link: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-689315>

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SWITZERLAND BUYS BRITISH.

(Reprinted from the September issue of "THE AMBASSADOR" by courtesy of the Editor.)

"While half the eminent Victorians were conquering the world by slaying every blackamoor in sight and still smiling at the tiger, the other half were 'discovering' Europe by sitting on their trunks at Basle station, swathed in Tartan rugs, waiting for the man from Cooks to come and extricate them. They were not unkind people, and, accustomed as they were to buying large tracts of Africa for a bag of salt (so their enemies say), they understood the idea of a good bargain. They had business minds and so were sympathetic to many Swiss ideas of good business — they admired it. As they also had large stomachs, the part they admired most was the hotel keeping, and they christened their new discovery 'the playground of Europe'.

But now that Bohemia has come to Bloomsbury and two world wars have upset the Psyche of British youth, now that it has become fashionable to doubt that Waterloo was won on the playing fields of Eton — it has become equally fashionable to sneer at the Swiss. The accent has come to rest heavily on the Arts and the long-haired Bloomsbury-ite has zealously condemned anything that looks in the least like earning him a decent meal. (What, after all, are Aunts for if not to provide decent meals.)

The process was begun before its time by Max Beerbohm who said that 'They exist by and for the alien tripper'. But he was wrong, for Switzerland's by now much expanded tourist trade still produces little more than ten per cent of her income! Last year, through the medium of the film, another crack was made — a slighting reference to their many years of peace and prosperity, which ended by accusing them of having produced nothing save the Cuckoo clock. And yet it forgot to mention that the export of watches and watch movements accounts for nearly fifteen per cent of Switzerland's foreign income. How they are mistaken, and indeed what happy memories have so many people of their visits to this mountain mecca.

Unless you are a Mahomet or a Swiss, there is little you can do with a mountain (the English, of course, kill themselves by the dozen each year trying to get to the top), but the Swiss have done much. Their Hydro-electric system, the backbone of their extensive

and excellent railway, has provided them with a terrific mileage of Iron Road and the facility to extend their industry to all parts of their difficult terrain. And electric power is behind the huge figure for Aluminium exports. So what? So they are rich, so they have a hard currency, harder even than Uncle Sam, and in every country in the world (near enough) there is somewhere the brass plate of a Swiss Insurance company. Swiss Banks are sound, and Swiss families are happy. Are they, then, saints or sinners, parasites or masters of production and thrift? And the answer is, of course, neither.

They are hard workers, the larger part of them having all the Germanic characteristics of thoroughness. But there are in other parts Latins, who enliven their nation as yeast makes bread enlivened. To an extent they are a polyglot race, and yet never was any collection of men more united in their national pride and more welded by their quite unorthodox and uncompelling government. It is hard to believe that a country which speaks three or four languages, is largely German, partly French and has a 'little Italy'. can possibly represent in the mind (or on the books) of an exporter a single market. And yet the Swiss are so united in their freedom that they do, in fact, form a single 'buying mind', and as customers they are, rightly, and most spoiled in all the world.

With all the world as their suppliers (and most of the world buying from them) only the best will do. The best best, that is. No buying for style alone here, no medicine for the label, no car for its colour, no house for its site. It must be good, the best. For *The Ambassador* this is an interesting state of affairs, for in our field England is pre-eminent. Only English cloth will do . . . 'no one would dare', we are told, 'sell a gentleman a suit in any other cloth'. One can sometimes wish that a Swiss would dare a little to endeavor himself to us more; but the customer is always right, and nowhere is this better understood than in the Bahnhofstrasse in Zurich. And so it is from Zug to Brugg (and come to that, from Zanzibar to Brazil): the high name and renown of British fabrics is their best selling point.

There is probably no country in the world where the value of a branded name was recognized as early as in Switzerland, and Swiss brands are to-day known the world over. It is only necessary to think of Swiss chocolates, Swiss watches, etc., and a number of names, household words, spring to mind at once.

This recognition of the branded name in Swiss selling, coupled with the Swiss customer's strong critical mind when it comes to selecting the 'right merchandise', has been taken up by the British manufacturer doing business in Switzerland. And whilst it is still 'English worsteds' that are asked for, it is no surprise therefore that our photographs show 'Rawnsello' and 'Yates' worsteds, Harris Tweed coatings, 'Braemar' sweaters, 'Harella' and 'Rensor' suits, etc. All these goods are sold in Switzerland not only for their British origin but also on the strength of their branded names, i.e. their quality.

Our editorial team has recently been to see. Jay flew the Channel with Jay's car and a model, and they motored on to the never-never-land of prosperity and edelweiss, to see the British fabrics on the job and the British fashions holding their own in the most fussy market of all Europe.



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