

Sargans 1200 years old

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THREE FAMOUS SWISS WOMEN IN GREAT BRITAIN

On the occasion of the 100th Annual Banquet and Ball of the City Swiss Club, Monsieur B. de Fischer, in his address, referred to three Swiss ladies who, in the course of the years have added colour and glory to the Swiss community in London.

"First I should like to say a few words about Lady Salisbury, born Catherine de Grandson at her family's splendid castle on the shores of Lake Neuchâtel, and a sister of William de Grandson, Bishop of Exeter. She was not only one of the most beautiful women of her time, she was also one of the best dancers, and it is fitting that we should remember her tonight, because of the remarkable consequences of her dancing. As she performed a minuet one evening at the Court of Edward III, she lost her garter which, as you know, became the origin of the highest order of chivalry in England. But Lady Salisbury was also the ancestress of Edward IV and Richard III, as well as of William Pitt, Earl of Chatham. Does that mean, asks Professor Straumann, that there was Swiss blood in two or three of the greatest English statesmen? "Honi soit qui mal y pense."

Another famous Swiss lady in England, a great woman of action, was Madame de Staël. Proscribed by Napoleon, she came over to this country as a refugee — "as the Moslems went to Mecca", she said. Here, inspired by Godwin, she wrote her astonishing "livre des passions", in which she so curiously linked the passions of the heart with the happiness of nations. Here, the authentic version of her other famous book, "De l'Allemagne", suppressed in France, was published by Murray. And here, too, she got to know the Duke of Wellington, with whom she exchanged a series of famous letters for the purpose of inviting him to bring peace and stability to France instead of occupation. She looked on him as the saviour of the Continent from Napoleonic oppression. In a moment of despair she wrote to him: "I must see you again, for in gazing upon you my soul grows stronger."

"The third lady I should like to talk about is Madame Tussaud. The daughter of a Bernese officer, she was also the niece of the famous wax modeller Curtius, of Paris, whom she soon excelled in his art and whose studios and museums she inherited on his death. Remarkably gifted, she became art tutor and companion to Madame Elisabeth, the sister of Louis XVI, at the Court of Versailles, and was there able to model the whole royal family from life. During the French Revolution she was a fervent Royalist. But to save her life she had to work for David, the official artist of the Revolutionary Tribunal, and so she shaped the portraits in wax of a number of personalities both of the condemned aristocracy and of the nation's new ruling class. Taking advantage of the Treaty of Amiens, she brought her wax exhibits to England in 1802, where she showed them with understandable success. It is really marvellous to see how this young woman, quite alone and solely by her courage, by her artistry, and with her own financial means, succeeded in organizing and developing the extraordinary show which is today a world-famous curiosity and at the same time a very valuable help to lovers of history.

"The lives of these three women whose destinies were closely linked with England supply us with lasting food for admiring meditation."

SARGANS 1,200 YEARS OLD

The first historical mention of the town of Sargans, St. Gall, with its castle which looks over a steep outcropping of rock down to the broad Rhine Valley below, took place on 15th December, 765 — 1,200 years ago. Archaeological finds, however, have indicated the presence of prehistoric settlements there. During the thirteenth century Sargans became the property of the family of the Counts of Werdenberg-Sargans. During subsequent centuries, the village and the castle constituted a single fortified location which was twice besieged: in 1405 by the Appenzellers and in 1445 by the early Swiss Confederates. The village was conquered and plundered, but the proud castle remained standing. The older part of the town within the ancient walls was destroyed by fire in 1811. A proposal by the Cantonal Government of St. Gall to rebuild it was rejected by the local inhabitants. In 1906-7 the main highway was relocated on the plain below, where new residential districts have since developed.

[S.N.T.O.]

A GENEVA MANUFACTURER'S OUTSTANDING SUCCESS IN THE ELECTRICAL CONTROL OF RAIL VEHICLES

A prototype, automatically controlling the speed of trains, has been installed and tried out on a 5,000 h.p. locomotive belonging to the French National Railways. This new device, known as "set-speed control", is produced by the Sécheron Engineering Works in Geneva. It allows trains to run at 150 m.p.h. without the engine-driver having continually to regulate the power developed by the locomotive, thus enabling him to concentrate his attention on the signals. The tests having proved conclusive, the French National Railways have ordered eleven similar devices from the Geneva firm for locomotives running at speeds between 110 and 150 m.p.h. Two other devices have been fitted on self-propelling rail-cars in the northern suburbs of Paris. At present, Sécheron is manufacturing fifty of these devices for use in the northern and western suburbs of Paris. The same electronic system has been adapted to the modern self-propelling tramcars belonging to the town of Zurich, thus allowing a single driver to control a string of trams, transporting some 360 passengers, with smooth starts and braking, which will cut down the consumption of current. Twenty of these electronic devices ordered by the Zurich tramways are in the process of manufacture.

[O.S.E.C.]

NEW STATUS FOR SWISSAIR BASLE MANAGEMENT

In view of Basle's increasing importance in air transport, Swissair's district management there has been raised to the new status of General Management for Basle from 1st January 1966. The new organisation will be responsible directly to the company's vice-president Traffic and Sales. The previous district management for Basle came under the management for German and Italian Switzerland.

Also from 1st January, Mr. Hermann Sommer has been appointed General Manager for Basle. He was previously manager of Swissair's Traffic Division. His deputy will be Mr. Jules Perrin, formerly Basle district manager.