

Why this discontent?

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WHY THIS DISCONTENT?

My friend and valued collaborator "M.G." raised in his Football article of last week the question, whether some of the regular contributors to the *Swiss Observer* have gone stale, and as he, amongst others, mentioned the *famous* (?) ST. (which does not stand for Saint) I will endeavour to answer his query.

No,— happily I have not yet reached that stage, although there are some disturbing symptoms apparent, which bring me dangerously near to that state, which my friend calls "Stale," one, and almost the principal reason being the fact, that things in general are in such a chaos all over the world, that one needs a special and extra dose of optimism and *joie de vivre*, injected in order to put anything cheerful or inspiring on paper.

In spite of the criticism, which some of the articles of my friend Kyburg have evoked, at having dared to give vent to his opinions on happenings of a political nature, outside the boundaries of our own country, I intend, regardless of the consequences, to follow in his footsteps.

I do not agree with *Regular Reader*, that subjects of a political nature, concerning some foreign power should not be commented upon in the columns of our paper: as far as I am aware, such comments in the past have only been made, when they had a distinct bearing on the political or economic situation in Switzerland, as *f.i.*, in the various "Fronten" articles, etc., etc. The field of activities of the *Swiss Observer*, is to my mind already very limited, and further restrictions are hardly possible.

The "Fronten" movement is still very much to the fore in Switzerland, heated arguments for and against are filling the columns of the numerous dailies. I have lately had the opportunity to peruse a number of "Frontist" papers, which have come into being recently, the reading of which had a most distressing effect on me; and which had a great deal to do with giving my pen a rest.

On perusing some of the *Leaders* of these apostles of the much heralded "*Nationale Erneuerung*" one would imagine that people in Switzerland, are forced to live under conditions, similar to those prevalent in darkest Russia.

The government is denounced as practising a despotism of the worst kind, our highest magistrates are painted as a band of incapable inebriates and old washerwomen, because they are the guardians of our constitutional liberties, because they still uphold the fundamental principles of a democracy which has in the past well stood the test, and has earned Switzerland the esteem of all those countries, where law and order, freedom of speech and action, are treasured as sacred heirlooms.

It is an old truth that mankind never appreciates what it possesses. Some of our young bloods at home are hankering after something new, they do not exactly know what they want, but it must be exciting, something after the pattern of a dictatorship. They see, in the institutions of some of the neighbouring countries their Mecca, to them it is the "blessed" land wherein the buds of their political aspirations can blossom out, from where a tired world can expect the long deferred salvation, and yet but few of them have ever visited one of these "heaven blessed" lands.

Those who have travelled in Russia, Germany, Yugo-Slavia, etc., will on their return know how to appreciate the liberty of a democracy. In these countries one has to be day and night on guard, not to let fall a word, or make a gesture which might be misconstrued as treason to the state, by an overanxious official. I shudder to think what would happen to all the "Bierisch Politiker" in Switzerland, there would be no prison big enough at home to accommodate them.

The Press of these countries, day by day sings the praise of their respective rulers, who can do no wrong, and as no foreign papers are allowed to enlighten them, they live under the comforting impression that "everything in the Garden is lovely."

Who, *f.i.*, would think it possible, that travellers in Yugo-Slavia, are not allowed to cross the frontier with a newspaper, every foreign paper has first to pass the censor before it can be released for circulation. Political murders are frequent occurrences in these "earthly paradises." — Switzerland does not know them, — in some of these countries, people are living in constant fear and uncertainty hence the huge and costly Police apparatus. In Yugo-Slavia, I am told, the signalmen and linekeepers on the Railways are armed, and stand to attention with fixed bayonets whenever the train passes by. Do we see that in Switzerland, or do we wish to see that?

Then again, there are many lands where the unemployed do not get any assistance from official sources, and friends of mine, who have lately visited such countries as Spain and Poland, have told me harrowing tales of distress prevalent in the big towns, where the public parks and buildings are packed with these unfortunate ones. Again, do we witness such scenes at home?

In spite of the crisis, the standard of living is still remarkably high; Switzerland can still afford things which other countries had to give up long ago, besides the bare necessities of life, our people can still indulge in some of their favourite extravagancies.

This all goes to prove that, although, here and there one has to restrict, there is no reason to grumble and grouse, on the whole one is still better off in Switzerland than in many other countries.

The main reason that Switzerland is still a country, worth while to live in, is to be found in the fact, that it has been faithful to its democratic inheritance. We need not look down on countries which have departed from this form of governing their domains, that is *their* affair, but in return, we are not going to be told, what would be good for us, by some foreign mob orators. We have implicit confidence in the men who are directing our destiny, they are not infallible, who is? but they have sailed the ship of state through stormy waters, and have brought it safely into port, for this they are entitled to the appreciation of a grateful country, and not to the abuse of a certain clique of political green-horns, who have so far nothing better to offer.

Let us therefore drop that grouching and grumbling, let us, with united forces fight that greedy spectre, called crisis, which is knocking at our door: let us remember that Swiss blood is still flowing through our veins, that blood which has ever been ready to help a neighbour in distress, Swiss blood which has loyally defended our constitution and our land.

* * *

That same unity, which is so necessary to our people at home, also applies to all the Swiss living far from their motherland, perhaps in even a larger measure. How can we then help each of us to bring about a closer co-operation, and a better understanding?

It can be done by trying to appreciate the difficulties under which so many of our compatriots labour, by trying to render a helping hand to those who are severely hit by the economic conditions.

The social season of the Swiss Colony is rapidly approaching, and again opinions, whether one should or should not indulge in festivities are divided, some wish a severe curtailment, others advocate the holding of the usual functions. I feel inclined to cast in my lot with the latter ones, as long as the arrangements are in the right proportion with the economic conditions of to-day.

The curtailment of festivities practiced last year was effective and necessary, and did not unduly penalize our brethren in the Hotel profession, who have a right to live, and who are entitled to the same consideration which we expect from others.

I cannot help but congratulate those who are in charge, on their happy initiative to provide us again with a few banquets and dances; happy hours spent in congenial company amongst one's countrymen, act as a stimulant, and give one courage to face the sturdy battle of life, with its daily disappointments and vexations.

The first official banquet of the season will be the one of the City Swiss Club, at the Grosvenor House, Park Lane, on the 24th of this month.

I am looking forward to this evening, especially as I have been assured by some responsible authority that the speeches will be this year considerably shorter. A City Swiss Club Banquet is always an event in the Colony, and incidentally by attending same, one has an opportunity to help our countrymen, who are in a less fortunate position, as year after year a generous donation has been given on this occasion to the *Fonds de Secours pour les Suisses pauvres*.

Through personal intercourse we begin to know and understand each other better; the Committee of the City Swiss Club has left nothing undone, in order to assure the participants of a happy and enjoyable evening, they extend their invitation also to a wide circle of friends, with the idea of making that evening a real happy meeting place of our compatriots in Great Britain.

ST.

NEWS FROM THE COLONY.

NOUVELLE SOCIETE HELVETIQUE.

FILM SHOW.

A very special treat was reserved for those members of the Swiss Colony and their friends who responded to the N.S.H.'s invitation to the King George's Hall last Saturday. Mr. Zimmermann, manager of the Bernina Railway, there gave us with the aid of lantern slides and films a very interesting lecture on his line, and the Grisons generally. This lecture, which was intended to bring us nearer again to our beloved native country, certainly did not miss its object.

The photographs in Mr. Zimmermann's collection are, without exception, masterpieces. Some are his own work, others betray the artistic touch of those masters of photographic art, Steiner, Gabarell and Feuerstein. Especially the magnificent views of the Bernina range, starting with the crossing of Piz Palù, along the Bellavista to Piz Zupò and on to Crast'Agùzza — the little Matterhorn of the Engadine. — Those from the Marco e Rosa hut — particularly the one of dawn — then Bernina with its south ridge and Biancograt, Scerscen, Disgrazia and so on, must surely rank among the most wonderful alpine photographs.

The animal film, which is entirely the work of the lecturer, was also highly interesting. Remembering that the chamois and the ibex (Steinbock) are the wildest and shiest animals of the alps, one must heartily congratulate Mr. Zimmermann on his wonderful achievement. He is the first man who has filmed a herd of ibex in the wild state, and I am sure that this film represents many days or weeks of very patient work.

The film of the two types of snow ploughs in action appealed to all. To see the gigantic rotary monster digging its way through 15 - 20 feet of snow was a rare spectacle.

Again, the delicately coloured flower slides and the sport film spoke for themselves, and impressed in particular the younger members of the audience.

Last but not least we have to compliment Mr. Zimmermann on his commentary. His rare sense of humour and his simple and clear way of treating the subject were equalled only by his photographs.

This lecture did certainly awake in everybody's heart memories and hopes — memories of holidays and of childhood spent in this beautiful corner of Switzerland, and hopes to go there and contemplate these imposing scenes of which Mr. Zimmermann has given us a foretaste.

A. TALL.

GRETA CALLOW — JEANNERET.

A NEW SINGER IN OUR COLONY.

The Swiss Colony in London has acquired a new member of high artistic distinction by the recent marriage of M. Pierre Jeanneret, for many years active partner in a City firm, to Miss Greta Callow, a very charming daughter of Australia with a superb soprano voice, great musical talent and the very stature of a born singer. Once more Australia has produced in one of her daughters that powerful yet subtle, crystal-clear yet naturally warm voice, for which that Continent is justly famed. And to the voice was added the training by the immortal Melba, who more than once selected Greta Callow for special concert appearances with herself. Since she left her native country some years ago Miss Callow has been continuing her studies in London and Brussels. She has sung at recitals in both capitals and received very encouraging press notices of which we may quote the following:

La cantatrice australienne, Melle. Greta Callow, qu'on entendit pour la première fois à Bruxelles, fut très applaudie. Voix jolie au timbre pur de cristal, elle chanta avec beaucoup de grâce plusieurs mélodies, dont une "Le Rossignol" écrite par Armand Crabé fut très appréciée spécialement.
"L'Indépendance Belge," 1er. novembre 1931.

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Les Suisses résidant à l'étranger choisissent de préférence des titres de père de famille. L'éloignement où ils se trouvent les empêche de surveiller leurs titres de façon permanente et de prendre de rapides dispositions. Aussi la sûreté de leur patrimoine est-elle le premier de leurs soucis. Depuis 20 ans, notre Banque est agréée par le Conseil d'Etat du Canton de Zurich pour la conservation de biens de tutelle. Adressez-vous à nous quand vous aurez à faire des placements de tout repos.



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