The Lucerne passion-play

Autor(en): **J.R.**

Objekttyp: **Article**

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

Band (Jahr): **- (1938)**

Heft 884

PDF erstellt am: **26.04.2024**

Persistenter Link: https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-695463

Nutzungsbedingungen

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Inhalten der Zeitschriften. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern.
Die auf der Plattform e-periodica veröffentlichten Dokumente stehen für nicht-kommerzielle Zwecke in Lehre und Forschung sowie für die private Nutzung frei zur Verfügung. Einzelne Dateien oder Ausdrucke aus diesem Angebot können zusammen mit diesen Nutzungsbedingungen und den korrekten Herkunftsbezeichnungen weitergegeben werden.
Das Veröffentlichen von Bildern in Print- und Online-Publikationen ist nur mit vorheriger Genehmigung der Rechteinhaber erlaubt. Die systematische Speicherung von Teilen des elektronischen Angebots auf anderen Servern bedarf ebenfalls des schriftlichen Einverständnisses der Rechteinhaber.

Haftungsausschluss

Alle Angaben erfolgen ohne Gewähr für Vollständigkeit oder Richtigkeit. Es wird keine Haftung übernommen für Schäden durch die Verwendung von Informationen aus diesem Online-Angebot oder durch das Fehlen von Informationen. Dies gilt auch für Inhalte Dritter, die über dieses Angebot zugänglich sind.

Ein Dienst der *ETH-Bibliothek*
ETH Zürich, Rämistrasse 101, 8092 Zürich, Schweiz, www.library.ethz.ch

http://www.e-periodica.ch

with white tablets out of a medicine bottle, it was very kind of him to be so helpful to others, although I saw him swallowing some himself, when nobody was looking. I took two myself just for curiosity sake and lo and behold — " it went."

Luncheon was taken at the Myllet Arms, Great Western Road, where our compatriot Mr. Widmer, who is the proprietor, supplied us with an excellent Luncheon.

Then onwards in pouring rain to Windsor, during a short lull we were able to visit the castle grounds and St. George's Chapel. Tea was taken at the White Heart Hotel and then a string of cars went back to Fitzroy Square, where a glass of Sherry was offered, thanks to tuis generosity of the Society, I was able to make up for what I had missed the previous evening.

Mr. Isler, a member of the Swiss Delegation, then thanked in perfect English, the Society once again for the great hospitality which had been extended to them, a hospitality which will linger for many days in grateful memory.

Mr. Steinmann subsequently officially closed the Golden Jubilee festivities.

In concluding this lengthy report, I would like to heartily congratulate everyone who helped to make this Jubilee Festival a success, first of all the members of the Jubilee committee, who saw that everything went according to plan, and it is greatly due to their efforts that no hitch occurred; but two members I would like to single out, who have done more than anybody else to make a success of it, namely Mr. J. J. Boos, who throughout acted as a most efficient aide-de-camp to the Swiss Delegation and Mr. J. J. Schneider who unsparingly put his services at the disposal of everyone connected with the arrangements, and last but not least, all those who attended the various functions are to be thanked for their support. —

And now I wish the Swiss Mercantile Society, on behalf of all the readers,

A Happy and Prosperous Future.

ST.

SWISS LETTER.

The Tendency of Swiss Economics.

Many economic problems have been discussed in Switzerland of late, for example, the price of bread, the milk problem, etc. In reference to the latter, a solution has been found which consists of reducing the price paid to suppliers by one centime, while increasing by one centime the price asked from the consumer. The Milk Producers Association, which has to guarantee the price of milk to the peasants no matter what the price of dairy products may be in foreign countries, thus benefits by a supplementary margin of two centimes per litre which, it is hoped, will save the Confederation the necessity of important new subsidies in this direction.

Another problem is increasingly occupying the attention of the public. It is the question of the big government programme for the strengthening of national defence and the creation of possibilities for work, for which measures, a sum of more than 400 million francs is estimated. A parliamentary commission is at the present time putting the final touches to the project and above all examining the financial aspect. Critics there are: some maintaining that a more important sum should be ear-marked for commercial expansion in foreign countries, others criticising the fact that, in the same project, two entirely different matters are dealt with: national defence and the question of political economy; and again there are those who attack the financing of part of the suggested measures by a tax on the turnover of the big shops during a period of 16 years and propose the contribution of the profits realised by the Swiss National Bank at the time of the devaluation of the franc. This latter point does not fail to excite public opinion as it touches a question of principle in Swiss monetary politics. Thus, the National Bank will prepare a report on the problem which will enable the Federal Council to decide this matter. In order to prevent the very urgent works for the strengthening of national defence from being delayed by the discussion of the complete problem the Federal Council has proposed a partial programme for the most urgent work; one which could be adopted by an urgency vote, without being submitted to the vote of the people.

This programme will include the spending of 70.3 million francs, of which 15.3 million francs will be for military measures, 10 million francs for economic preparation in case of war, and 45 million francs for the creation of work, which will be in addition to the measures already taken. The full programme of 400 million francs could then be studied at ease and submitted to the popular vote next Spring.

In the meantime, it may be stated that the position of Swiss economy is not too serious, taking into account the depression which weighs heavily over many countries. For the month of August exports were maintained at the same level as during the corresponding month of the preceding year. Unemployment also remains practically stationary; at the present time there are 50,000 persons seeking employment, which is 2,500 less than a year ago, and 30,000 less that at the same period in 1936. There remains, as a sign of the depression which menaces the country, a marked reduction in transport receipts, and the increase in the Confederation's budget deficit which is foreseen for next year.

A considerable liquidity is still the prominent feature of the Swiss money market and private banks have not had need to seek credits from the emission bank. The capital market has of late been under the influence of the political situation in Europe. Considerable sales of paper-values have taken place, probably for reasons of ready-cash, and this has not failed to influence the values of different shares and bonds.

THE LUCERNE PASSION-PLAY.

There is nothing grandiose about the Lucerne Passion-Drama; the production is of the simplest, and the players — men, women and children — chosen from every class of the population of Lucerne.

A brief history of the Lucerne Passion-Plays is interesting. The clergy used to play them in the Cathedral from about 1450 to 1470, when the Brotherhood of the Crown of Thorns was founded. (Incidentally the oldest amateur dramatic society in Europe.) From that later date they were played by the people on the " Weinmarkt," which is still almost untouched to this day. Thanks to the manuscripts which were kept, largely the work of the clergy, a complete record is available of those early productions, and contains the minutest details; sketches, notes, actors, costumes, which have been preserved in the city's archives.

For the production, large stands were erected round the " Weinmarkt " with seating accommodation for some 3,000 people. The performance generally lasted for two days — sometimes longer! Altogether, about 350 people took part (in keeping with the times men took women's parts) and the audience included the Papal Nuncios, Dukes of Savoy, and other equivalents of our present-day " diplomatic corps."

Renwart Cysat (1545-1614) is the most famous figure connected with the Lucerne Passion-Plays of the Middle Ages. He is regarded by many as the father of Swiss folklore and Folk Drama. Employed as an archivist in the town, he was in an excellent position for furthering his studies, and it is due largely to him that the records have been preserved in the archives. He was stage-manager for the productions in 1571, 1583, and 1597, and also prepared the play of 1616, but unfortunately died before the performance. His writings include a play " Discover of the Cross " and a Carnival. Undoubtedly the Lucerne Passion-Dramas reached a higher standard under the guidance of Renwart Cysat than at any time previously.

The man responsible for the Passion-Plays of 1934 and 1938 is Dr. Oskar Eberle, the reviver of the Swiss Folk Theatre. For from the time of Cysat, the " Volkstheater " gradually declined. It is difficult to find an adequate explanation, and is not satisfactory to attribute this decline to one of the periodical cycles of depression which seem to steal over a nation's Folk Drama. A more likely and sensible reason is that the rival cantons in Switzerland, through their warring instincts, tended to disrupt all form of Art, and that once the magnetic influence of Cysat had gone, there remained no one capable of holding together the tradition and custom connected with a Passion-Play.

Dr. Eberle is certainly the most famous stage-manager since Cysat. His efforts and work have resulted in a remarkable growth of public interest towards the hitherto latent Folk Drama, and his " History of the Theatre in Central Switzerland " proves him an able and capable exponent of the peculiar conditions governing the Swiss " Volkstheater," and of European Drama as a whole. Admitted by all students in Central Europe as an acknowledged authority, he became an international figure when he stage-managed the unique festival of Calderon's " World Theatre " which was played before the pilgrims' Church of the 1000-year-old monastery of Einsiedeln.

To meet him is an unforgettable experience. Tall and commanding, he is possessed of terrific energy and zest for his subject, and is undeniably " a man of the theatre." It is his belief that a general revival of world interest in Folk Drama is necessary before the standard of the popular play can be raised; better the simple than the elaborate; the natural to the sophisticated; the simple beauty which is born of the Folk Theatre, the poetry of the people, is the material at hand for the would-be dramatist.

The performance of the Passion-Drama in front of Lucerne Cathedral was an experience which I am never likely to forget. Tiny lights glittered high up over the players; the famous organ of the Cathedral, constructed by the Salzburger Master Hans Geissler during the eleven years 1640-1651, accompanied the bells, and the choirs of angels and people. These were the stage-effects; for the rest, the University professor acted side by side with the accountant or book-keeper or factory worker; a typist played Mary — a shop girl Magdalene. This was the real Folk Drama of which I had dreamed; beauty, simplicity, tragedy, and the hope in the resurrection possessed a new meaning.

The text was by Dr. Eberle, and the music by Von J. B. Hilber. The latter aided greatly the general performance, but what impressed me most of all was the grouping. I noticed that it followed the Greek tradition of being well in the wings. At the trial scene they were well able to move forward and thus complete the picture, allowing the stage from back to front (centre) to remain perfectly clear for Jesus, with soldiers (a colourful display) up stage left and right.

This production definitely stamps Dr. Eberle as a leading man in the contemporary world theatre.

J.R.

(Drama).

LA POLITIQUE

Un programme irréalisable.

L'Assemblée fédérale aura une nouvelle session qui s'ouvrira le 7 novembre. Le choix de cette date a donné lieu à une longue discussion, car le Conseil des Etats, où siègent de nombreux magistrats cantonaux, objectait qu'en novembre se réunissent plusieurs Grands Conseils. Mais le 24 octobre était considéré, par le bureau du Conseil national, comme une date trop rapprochée de la session régulière d'automne, et qui ne permettrait pas aux commissions d'avancer suffisamment leur travail. Quant au premier mardi de novembre, il avait l'inconvénient pour les députés catholiques, de coïncider avec la fête de la Toussaint. Durant plusieurs jours, M. de Weck et M. Hauser se lancèrent et se relancèrent la balle sans résultat. Finalement, les sénateurs cédèrent. La session extraordinaire durera une semaine. Mais mérite-t-elle encore ce qualificatif? De plus en plus fréquemment, les députés reviennent à Berne dans l'intervalle des quatre sessions habituelles, dont deux sont déjà surajoutées.

Puisse l'été de la Saint-Martin inspirer utilement les législateurs! Ils vont se trouver en présence d'une situation vraiment paradoxale. Car, en septembre, le Conseil national a voté les 70 millions qu'on lui demandait à titre provisoire sur le programme des grands travaux; et ce projet va passer maintenant devant les Etats, dont la commission doit se prononcer mercredi. Mais tandis que les représentants des cantons examineront l'espèce d'acompte réclamé par le Conseil fédéral et déjà accordé par le Conseil national, celui-ci a l'intention de s'attaquer au morceau de résistance, c'est-à-dire au projet d'ensemble. Il y a là quelque chose d'un peu bizarre; car si l'un des conseils délibère déjà sur le plan général, l'autre aura l'impression de la carte forcée en discutant le programme réduit.

Le plus curieux de l'histoire, c'est que l'on n'est pas plus avancé aujourd'hui qu'en été en ce qui touche à la couverture financière des " grands travaux." Après la consultation de la Banque nationale et des directeurs cantonaux des finances, l'idée d'un prélèvement sur le bénéfice de dévaluation doit être abandonné. It était du reste bien clair, depuis qu'on en parle, qu'elle ne serait jamais admise par les esprits réfléchis. La sauvegarde du crédit national passe avant les fantaisies de ces messieurs des Lignes directrices; et ce n'est certes pas au moment où l'Europe vit dans l'instabilité et l'incertitude que l'on peut s'exposer à des aventures où le franc suisse risquerait de chavirer. Mais l'impôt sur le chiffre d'affaires des grands magasins n'apparaît pas non plus comme un moyen acceptable de couvrir les énormes dépenses proposées. Dans toute la Suisse, il a soulevé de vives protestations, émanant des milieux les plus divers, et non pas seulement de ceux qui semblent directement intéressés. On s'est fort bien rendu compte qu'en définitive cette taxe démagogique, que ses protagonistes espéraient mettre au bénéfice de l'axiome " Ce sont les autres qui paient," serait profondément préjudiciable à l'économie nationale et aurait pour effet immédiat le renchérissement de quantité de marchandises.

On est donc dans la plus complète incertitude, du moins pour ce qui concerne les travaux