

A work camp in Switzerland

Autor(en): **Praise, H.L.**

Objekttyp: **Article**

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

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

Heft 854

PDF erstellt am: **20.04.2024**

Persistenter Link: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-689684>

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.

NEWS FROM THE COLONY.

SWISS ORCHESTRAL SOCIETY.

Amongst the numerous Swiss Societies in London is the Swiss Orchestral Society; a Society, it is true, which does not advertise itself much, but every year they give to their supporters and to the Colony at large a concert, just to prove that they are by no means a dormant or extinguished concern.

Apart from this special concert, they are and have been ever ready to take part in the various functions which are held throughout the year in the Colony; I need only mention the "Fête Suisse" at the Westminster Hall, where their performance before a Swiss audience of over a thousand has become the star turn in the programme.

The orchestra has also rendered a helping hand at several functions arranged by the Nouvelle Société Helvétique, in short they have ever been ready when their services were required, and by doing so, they have often strained their slender financial resources to the breaking point.

It would be wrong to say that their collaboration has not received due appreciation, as many members of the Colony, have, on various occasions, either privately or publicly expressed their pride that the Swiss Colony, alone amongst all the foreign colonies in this Metropolis, should have such an excellent orchestra.

Although this has been very gratifying to the Society, they would like to see their services honoured in a still more tangible way, either by swelling the ranks of their contributing members, or perhaps even more, by a substantial audience at their Annual Concert.

Unfortunately the Annual Concert during the last few years has often suffered from lack of attendance, which is greatly to be regretted, as these performances have reached a remarkably high standard.

This omission, or one might call it by its proper name, viz., lack of interest, should be remedied at once, and I am glad to say that there is a splendid opportunity to do so almost immediately.

The Swiss Orchestral Society, under the leadership of its energetic conductor, Mr. E. P. Dick, is giving their Annual Concert on Tuesday, March 29th, at the Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1.

I make a fervent appeal to the readers of this paper and their friends, to show the Swiss Orchestra their appreciation for so many enjoyable hours which they have given us in the past, by attending in full force.

The events of the last few days have cast on many of us a gloom, let us forget it for a few hours, and enjoy a few fleeting moments in the realm of music.

Monsieur C. R. Paravicini, the Swiss Minister, under whose patronage the concert is taking place, has promised to be present.

The programme is a very varied one and I have not the slightest doubt will appeal to the audience.

As mentioned in our last number, amongst the soloists will be two youngsters, one of whom, Mr. Theodore Weil, has on previous occasions shown that he is an artiste of no mean accomplishments. He is an excellent violinist and his performance promises to be a real musical treat.

Miss Rosemary Pfander, the other youthful artiste, is going to play the Adagio movement from Haydn's Concerto in D for Violin and orchestra. Little Rosemary Pfander is eight years old and has performed in public since the age of four, when she played a piano duet with her brother Raymond.

The Orchestra will be augmented to its usual concert strength of about 30 performers, the programme comprises the "Ruy Blas" overture by Mendelssohn, the overture of Mozart's "Le Nozze di Figaro," a selection from Puccini's "La Tosca," etc., etc. It is a programme which studies the taste of all sincere music lovers.

There is thus no excuse for not booking this evening and turning up in large numbers on Tuesday, March 29th, at Conway Hall, it will be, I am sure, an evening well spent.

ST.

A WORK CAMP IN SWITZERLAND.

In this country the work camp seems to be comparatively rare. There are various organisations which run camps for unemployed and others where a little work is done in order to lend a contrast to the recreation which is to follow; but very few in which work is the primary object. This, however, is not the case on the Continent, for almost all the Western European countries except Spain and Italy hold work camps, in which students spend three weeks doing rigorous manual labour, with or without a number of unemployed men.

The camps are organised in Switzerland by the National Union of Swiss Students, in conjunction with similar organisations in other countries, under the auspices of the government concerned. The camps supply labour for harvesting and road making where it is difficult to obtain, or where, but for the existence of the camp, the work would not be done at all. The workers are not paid, but the Government makes an allowance for each student, so that his cost of living is either nil or very low, and in most cases his railway fare to the camp is free or very substantially reduced. In this way both parties to the arrangement are well satisfied, the Government since they get very cheap labour for useful though not essential work, and the student, who gets an excellent holiday and also a very valuable and interesting experience equally cheaply.

One of this year's Swiss work camps was held in the valley of Malvaglia in Tessin. The site was magnificent, four thousand feet above sea level, and ten miles from the nearest station. Though the sides of the valley were so steep that the sun did not appear until 9 a.m., and disappeared again about 4.30, the air was beautifully clear and very dry.

On arriving at Malvaglia Station the party of forty was met by the Kolonieleiter, the Mayor, and a number of inhabitants, who waved flags and lit fireworks, although it was only 2.30 p.m. (this did not matter — it was noise they wanted). An hour's adjournment for refreshment with the Mayor followed. To one who likes his English beer, the Swiss equivalent was very disappointing, the first glass merely serving as a warning to drink no more. During this time several speeches were made in German, French and Italian, all of which were quite incomprehensible to a very insular Englishman, though they were, no doubt, of a welcoming nature. Meanwhile, it became increasingly obvious that there were no other Englishmen present, and no one volunteered a word of information on the subject. This was a great shock to one who loves his chatter as himself, especially as the camp had been officially labelled 'International.' However, on arrival at the camp after two hours' grilling march, it was found that the luxury of two English speakers had been provided — an Englishman from London University, and an American studying at Leipzig. This was a great comfort. It now transpired that sleeping accommodation was in hay lofts on palliasses and blankets supplied by the Swiss Government. These were very comfortable, though conditions were somewhat overcrowded.

On arrival a meal was provided; the meat seemed shockingly high to the aliens, but apparently the Swiss liked it that way. In any case, the food was very welcome. After supper a camp fire was lit, round which both students and peasants sang songs. One remembers particularly three pretty little girls of six, singing a folk song with a charming mixture of coyness and naivety. During the sing-song frequent rumours were heard as to the time of getting up. Most insistent was the hour of 4.30, but this I considered merely an example of Swiss humour. However, at 4.30 next morning the camp was roused, and work started at 5 o'clock. Personally, I arrived five minutes late, and, on being cross-examined as to the reason, I said I had been washing. The reply was unexpected: 'On no account shall you perform your toilet at the future before work. It is not necessary, work will make you again dirty at once!' Having made the obvious answer, I proceeded to gain my first day's experience as a manual labourer.

Possibly the word road-making gives a wrong impression, for in fact the work consisted of cutting a nine-foot mule path out of the side of a very steep valley. That is to say that, in cross section, a right-angled triangle was being removed from the side of the valley. The route was marked out by carefully placed T-squares at intervals of thirty yards, the outside edge of the course and the level were marked by sticks pushed into the ground horizontally at intervals of four feet. These were positioned by moving a third square of the same size as the markers up and down the valley until the cross-piece was in vertical line with the fixed cross-pieces of the fixed squares. Very efficacious this method was, for looking across the valley at the finished road the gradient was absolutely uniform and unvarying throughout.

The work was mainly of the pick and shovel variety. A lighter kind consisted of removing and replacing turf, but this was arduous by comparison, as it was entirely without interest. Also there was the dreaded 'branca.' To be detailed off for 'branca' work was almost like being sent to Siberia. The instrument of torture is merely a wooden stretcher used for carrying boulders about, but it begins to feel uncomfortably heavy soon after beginning work, and gets continually heavier. Being one of the biggest in the camp was a disadvantage, for I was thought to be a heaven-sent 'branca' man.

The day's routine was unvarying. Work started at 5 a.m., and breakfast was served at 7 a.m. Work began again at 7.45, and continued until 10.30, when a twenty-minute rest was allowed, and an extraordinary beverage provided. It was called tea, but it was made by putting partially dried lime leaves into cold water and boiling the whole lot. At 10.50 work started again, and continued until 1.10, making a total of seven hours. It was amazing, how slowly the last hour seemed to go.

After work the majority bathed and washed in a stream where the temperature was seldom more than five degrees centigrade; it was refreshing but for a short time only. Shaving was not a common habit, and many took the opportunity of growing youthful beards.

Lunch was at 2, and one was then free for the rest of the day. Occupations during this time were diverse, but for the first few days sleep was the most popular. Later, bathing and, above all, laundering came into their own. The latter would have delighted any English housewife, for clothes dried, even when there was no sun, in an hour and a half, so low was the humidity of the air.

There was also plenty of time for exploration, and one journey ended in the surprise discovery of a remote village, whose normal language was Soho English. The men migrate each year to London during the winter to sell roast chestnuts and pay this remarkable tribute to their adopted tongue. Dinner was at 6.30, and was followed by some impromptu form of entertainment.

By far the most valuable and interesting aspect of the camp was the opportunity of talking with one's foreign contemporaries. The Swiss are good talkers, and the ready and anxious to discuss their institutions. Their own particular form of compulsory military service, limited to three weeks a year seemed in its effects a very satisfactory compromise. The Germans, too, were far more open to discussion and argument than I had been led to believe.

It is not necessary to look far to find the reason for the success of the work camp. It is a hard life, but a healthy one and, above all, a very sociable one. In some cases parties of friends came together, but those who came alone very soon found themselves entirely at home, in an atmosphere where nothing is hampered by convention. Amid such surroundings and in such conditions men are most natural.

H. L. Pearce.

(The Oxford Magazine.)

SUMMER SCHOOL OF EUROPEAN STUDIES
WILL BE NEW FEATURE AT ZÜRICH.

In July 1938 the Summer School of European Studies will be inaugurated at Zürich. The school is a new departure in Vacation Courses in that its main object will be the study of European civilization as a whole, and the main course on "Europe To-day," which will be held in English, will be devoted to the vital question whether a unity in European civilization can be perceived in history, philosophy, psychology, sociology, etc. The school is entirely non-political and is open to anyone interested in questions of European culture and international intellectual relations.

The first series of "Europe To-day" will be given at 20 Münsterhof, Zürich, from July 11th-24th. The Committee has been fortunate enough to secure for the main course the collaboration of a number of lecturers of European eminence, including Prof. Gilbert Murray, Regius Professor of Greek at the University of Oxford, President of the International Committee of Intellectual Co-operation; Prof. J. Huizinga, Professor of History, University of Leyden, President of the Royal Academy of Sciences, Amsterdam; Prof. C. G. Jung, Professor of Psychology, Swiss Federal Institute of Technology, Zürich; Don Salvador de Madariaga, Fellow of Exeter College, Oxford, Spanish Ambassador to U.S.A. in 1931, and to France in 1932-34; Prof. William Rappard, Professor of Public Finance, University of Geneva, Director of the Graduate Institute of International Studies; and Prof. Emil Brunner, Professor of Protestant Theology, University of Zürich.

The above main lectures will be given from 10-12 in the mornings and will be followed by discussions. There will also be lectures on the contributions of various European peoples to the totality of European culture. This second set of lectures will in some instances be given by the before mentioned group of professors and by such distinguished men as Prof. Bernhard Fehr, Prof. Paul Ganz, Prof. H. Lüdecke, Dr. H. Straumann of the Universities of Basle and Zürich.