

Swiss abroad

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SWISS ABROAD

By Paul-Emile Schazmann (Berne)

Paul-Emile Schazmann, born in Geneva 1902, is a Doctor of the Universities of Geneva and Paris (Literature Faculty). He has dedicated several books to famous Swiss abroad. P.-E. Schazmann has directed the Department of Ancient History and Swiss History and Culture at the National Library in Berne since 1939, in particular "Switzerland Abroad" from its inception. His investigations, published in several countries, are equally relevant to the poets and artists who have been to Switzerland and are intimately acquainted with the Alps and mountains.

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Switzerland, a small country when compared with other nations, has always reached out far beyond the confines of her own territory. Despite her constricted living space, she has in fact been able to emit an intensive radiation extending right across the world. The most important and most energetic bearers of Swiss ideas abroad are, as they have always been, our compatriots in foreign countries.

Apart from those daring sorties undertaken by the Helvetians long before the first Confederation was founded in 1291, neither conquest nor territorial ambitions have ever been at the root of our urge to emigrate. And even in the most recent times, when the Swiss settled down beyond the seas, it was not — in the sinister sense of the word — to colonise. One is inclined to wonder, therefore, what prompted so many of our compatriots to quit their homeland, or rather what attracted them to other climes, first in Europe and then in all five continents.

There were some who felt urged to carry their art, their profession, their knowledge out into the most remote regions of the Far East, the Cordilleras of the Andes, and the Antipodes, and to practise them there. Others felt the need to get to know the world at large, process their newly acquired knowledge and pass it on to their fellow-men.

The majority of these emigrants were artisans, craftsmen and farmers. Abroad, the most different destinies were in store for these people and left their mark on their achievements. Many assembled into communities from which grew the Swiss "colonies". Others made their way alone and acquired rank and reputation in "Switzerland Abroad".

The Swiss communities abroad

When we speak of Swiss communities, of course, we also include the various outstanding figures born to lead — the founders of towns and Swiss "colonies". One of these was Christophe de Graffenried, who founded the town of New Berne, today a vivacious, flourishing little

city. Besides this classic example of Switzerland Abroad's Old Guard, however, quite a number of American towns bear the names of the hometowns of their respective founders. Thus we have New Freiburg in Brazil, Engelberg in Kentucky, New Glaris in Ontario, Geneva, also in the United States, and, like our own Geneva, situated on a lake. In many of these places the descendants still speak our dialects, handed down to them through generations of immigrant Swiss.

There are curious documents associated with New Switzerland in the State of Ohio. Immigrants from the Vaud settled there in 1903 and started an entirely new trade. They had emigrated with the firm intention of introducing viniculture to the regions of their choice. Within ten years they were employing sixty-six Swiss in their venture, and their vineyards covered 37,000 acres. One of these enterprising Vaudois, Jean-Jacques Dufour, having acquired experience of the United States, wrote "The American Vinedresser's Guide, and the Process of Wine-making, Adapted to the Soil and Climate of the United States".

The men who started these very various ventures and worked them up to name and fame were tough and courageous; and hardly one of them but had at times to cope with enormous difficulties all on his own. It is only when we recall their feats that we obtain an idea of the ideal and practical value of "Switzerland Abroad". An untold number made little of their achievements, and it is perhaps these who deserve to be specially mentioned by name. It is they who personify the endurance — the hardiness and the patience of typical Swiss enterprise and took there qualities with them and rooted them in foreign soil.

Bridges, canals, aqueducts

Swiss engineers build bridges and canals. The bridge of Neuilly-sur-la-Seine, for instance, and the Pont de la Concorde in Paris were the work of Jean-Rodolphe Perronet, whose father hailed from Château-d'Œx in Switzerland and was an officer in the Swiss Guards at Versailles. Perronet also built many of the French canals, and approach roads to the capital.

In 1839 Franz Mayor de Montricher, a Vaudois, who had grown up in Bienne, began work on the 1,230 ft. long and 272 ft. high aqueduct which still supplies the city of Marseilles with drinking water. On completion of this work he commenced draining Lake Fucino, in the Abruzzi (Italy) and transformed a plain infested with malaria into a vast fertile agricultural area. Thus he accomplished a feat which had thwarted the efforts of the Roman Caesars Claudius, Trajan and Hadrian — and centuries later the German Emperor Friedrich II as well.

Another gigantic project, the construction of the great Trans-Andean railway across South America from Buenos Aires to Valparaíso, was the work of the Argovian Alfred Schatzmann, assisted by the Genevan Dominicé. Schatzmann had graduated in engineering at the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology in Zurich, and between 1874 and 1890 he built the amazing railway which traverses the Andes at an altitude of some 19,700 ft. This engineering masterpiece is used by many tourists who have no idea that it was built by a Swiss.

Chevrolet and watches

But let us turn to our own times. Chevrolet, whose family came from the Bernese Jura, was born in La Chaux-de-Fonds and attended technical school there.

He gave his name to the automobiles of his own construction which, today, are to be seen by the tens of thousands on the roads of the world. And the roads themselves? It was another Swiss, the Valaisan Guglielminetti, who developed the idea of asphaltting them.

It was to the art of Swiss watchmakers working in Paris that the *Quai de l'Horloge* owes its name. Among those who became particularly famous in the eighteenth century was Breguet, from Boudry. But Swiss watchmakers also supplied their masterpieces to the Sultans of Turkey, the Emperors of China and the Shah of Persia.

The watchmaking families who settled abroad have produced many a prominent artist. There was, for instance, Jean Petitot, Louis XIV's enameller, and Louis-David Duval, goldsmith of the Russian Czars at St. Petersburg, where he was joined by his compatriots Ador and Soret, while Hedlinger, from Schwyz, was the famous medal-maker of the Swedish Kings.

Artists

The greatest artists that Switzerland has produced all spent part of their lives abroad. In the front rank, of course, is Holbein, who immortalised the kings of England in his masterly portraits. Steinlin, on the other hand, took his artistic themes from the lives of the common people and social conditions in Paris. Wyrsh, from Buochs, became a well-known portraitist in Besançon where he founded the *Académie de Besançon*. Frank Buchser and Carl Bodmer — the one a painter, the other an engraver, depicted the life of the American Indians.

An outstanding figure in plastic art was Bustelli, from the Ticino. He created those lovely figurines for the royal manufactories in Germany. His porcelain statuettes delight us even today: they seem to glide, dance and pirouette before the footlights as in Mozart's day. It was the Genevan sculptor Pradier who embellished the Luxembourg and the Tuileries gardens with his plastics. Probably the best-known are his magnificent figures in the Tympanons of the Arc de Triomphe in the Place de l'Etoile and those in the crypt of Napoleon's Tomb in the Invalides.

Swiss architects have added characteristic features to the countenance of numerous foreign cities. Fontana, Borromini, Maderno in Rome, Trezzini in St. Petersburg designed the lovely buildings for many of the famous squares in these cities; in our own time it was Le Corbusier who ushered in the age of modernity, revolutionising architecture with his skeletal designs. He evolved new forms for dwellings, concentrating on practical requirements and noble proportions, and dispensing with all superfluous embellishments.

Poets and authors

The works of Swiss poets and authors abroad are so extensive and of such literary importance that they cannot be fitted into a brief summary.

Many of them contain fascinating accounts of the careers of Swiss abroad. A typical example of this is Blaise Cendrars's book "Gold", which describes the remarkable life of General Suter. Copious, too, is the work of the Swiss writers who depicted the political life of the countries to which they emigrated. Their accounts, and the literary quality of their writings, aroused world-wide attention in numerous cases. There was, for instance, Louis XVI's minister Jacques Necker, and his daughter Madame de Staël, who wrote the two books "De l'Allemagne" and "Dix années d'exil". Benjamin Constant, too, and Albert Gallatin aroused echoes which have never faded. Constant is known as the friend of Madame de Staël, as a psychological writer and a liberal politician; while Gallatin, who had left Geneva as a teacher of French, soon rose to the rank of Minister in George Washington's Government.

Helvetia mediatrix

It is not only in Switzerland proper or in institutions based in Switzerland — such as the International Red Cross, the Basle Mission or the Great St. Bernard monks in Tibet, that this country has functioned as a mediator and emerged as the champion of European and international thought. The Genevan Jean-Pierre Vieuzeux, having defied Fouché (who had accused him of having damaged the Continental Blockade) and gained Napoleon's respect, travelled Europe as a merchant — without, however, acquiring wealth in the process. Then Vieuzeux opened his famous Literary Cabinet in Florence, a veritable Athenaeum for the Florentines and the visitors to that city of culture. By his publishing activities and the celebrities he gathered about him, Vieuzeux contributed greatly to the intellectual movement which spread from Tuscany throughout Italy. The significant part played since then by Swiss publishers abroad is too well known to need further comment. Foremost among them are Ulrico Hoepli, of Amriswil, in Milan, and Julliard and Payot in Paris.

In 1863 the famous English writer Thackeray introduced to the editors of "Punch" the Vaudois Francis Burnand, who had written some *feuilletons* and comedies. A few years later Burnand became editor-in-chief of "Punch". As a witty observer of the Victorian scene — he was eventually knighted — and the reign of Edward VII, who had been a fellow-undergraduate at Cambridge, Burnand mirrored the brilliant and more or less carefree epoch in "Punch" and on the stage. All his writings were, and indeed still are, distinguished by a flavour of piquancy and originality.

Another Swiss who became outstanding in London was Madame Marcet. She was the daughter of the banker, Haldimand from Yverdon, who had settled in London. Marcet, her husband, was a doctor and also of Swiss origin. It was he who founded the city's medical and surgical society, while his wife made a name for herself as a pioneer in spreading the knowledge of the sciences to the general public.

She was, for instance, the author of "Talks on Chemistry" which familiarised the reader, pleasantly and simply, with a number of the chemical elements and compounds. The book went into sixteen editions in less than fifty years.

Frédéric Soret was another case in point. Publication of his discussions with Goethe, his translation of Goethe's botanical works, and his richly exploited stay in Weimar did a great deal to bring poets and writers of different tongues closer together. His teaching activities

at the court of Duke Augustus of Weimar, whose sons he tutored, raised Soret to the circle of those Swiss pedagogues at the courts of European princes, the most famous of whom was César-Frédéric de La Harpe, who as the former tutor of Czar Alexander was able to exert a beneficial influence during the Congress of Vienna.

Natural sciences

Medicine, too, owes a great deal in the way of progress to Swiss physicians abroad. Among these was Théodore Tronchin, who introduced vaccination at the European royal courts, where previously smallpox had taken an appalling toll of life. Alexandre Yersin, from Aubonne, was the first to discover the plague bacillus — he had spent many years combating disease in Indo-China. In point of magnitude, his discovery is on a par with that of the tubercle bacillus by Koch.

One of the greatest Swiss natural scientists working abroad was Louis Agassiz. He was for many years a Harvard professor and attained particular distinction as founder of the museum in Cambridge, Mass.

Towards the end of his life he even voyaged round the two Americas; starting on the Atlantic coast he passed through the Magellan Straits, all along Chile, and ended his travels in California. He was equipped with the most up-to-date instruments known at the time. For him the oceans were laboratories. His dragues descended into abysses twice as deep as Montblanc is high.

But Agassiz, like the typical Swiss he was, never forgot his homeland and his native village on the Lake of Morat. It was there, in the garden of the rectory where he was born, that he had converted a pool into a fishpond so that he could study aquatic life. "Actually", wrote the celebrated Harvard professor, "I dreamt about all these things back in Switzerland. But I came a long, long way from my homeland before my dreams came true". When Agassiz was buried in Cambridge, Mass., his last wish was fulfilled: as a tombstone they gave him a polished stone brought all the way from the Lauteraar Glacier.

On the summits of Peruvian mountains Jean-Jacques de Tschudi collected the material for his works on Peruvian fauna, publications greatly admired even by Humboldt. De Tschudi's major work, however, was on Peruvian antiquity and based on the finds made in the same region. Jean-Jacques de Tschudi was one of a widespread group of selfless scientists who dedicated their lives to the exploration of the countries in which they had settled and who had studied to prepare themselves for the task either as philologists, ethnologists, or natural scientists.

The archaeologists Edouard Naville and Gustave Jéquier carried out excavations in Egypt, Paul Schazmann sen. at Pergamon in Asia Minor and on the Greek island of Kos, Bandelier on the shore of Lake Titica in Bolivia and brought submerged necropolises to light, whereas Max von Berchem deciphered the Arabic inscriptions on mediaeval monuments.

Innumerable members of the Swiss colonies abroad, on their own initiative and aided by understanding Swiss diplomats, have created valuable fields of activity for themselves and come to prominence in the process. Each of them gave his best in their respective fields: in agriculture, in trade, in the hotel industry, in art . . . Whether they wore eighteenth century wigs, or turbans, or the back-to-front cloth caps of the automobile pioneers, they remind every Swiss that he has a job to do in life. Some find it at home, others on the far side of the world.

("Swissair Gazette", December 1966.)

"GESTERN, HEUTE UND AUCH MORGEN"

In 1964, the "Basler Nachrichten" published a book containing important views, comments and statements from articles by their Editor-in-Chief, National Councillor Peter Duerrenmatt. It was issued to mark his 60th birthday. The publishers now address the Swiss abroad and friends of Switzerland with this most interesting publication. It is divided into sixteen chapters, each containing quotations by Mr. Duerrenmatt from his leading articles. The subjects cover "*Die Schweiz und Europa*", "*Wehrbereitschaft und geistige Selbstbehauptung*", "*Demokratie im Umbruch*", "*Meinungspresse*" und "*Sprachverhinderung*". The problem East-West, women's suffrage, neutrality, defence policy, atomic problems and federal finances are all covered, and each chapter is headed by a paragraph which sets the points for direction and mood of the subject under discussion. Example: "*Das Bestreben nach vermehrtem Föderalismus bei der Gestaltung der Bundesfinanzen, das Begehren nach einem unreglementierten, vertrauensvollen Ton zwischen Steuerzahler und Verwaltung, das sind Forderungen, die nicht oft genug wiederholt werden können*".

Mr. Duerrenmatt does not have the answers for every problem, but his high principles as a politician and his gift of expressing his constructive views in clear and precise language make the reader think deeply and usefully on many questions of vital importance for Switzerland.

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A CENTURY OF SUCCESS IN KNITTING MACHINE CONSTRUCTION

It is a century now since the foundation at Couvet, on the banks of the Areuse, in the canton of Neuchâtel, of the Dubied knotting machine factory where a young Swiss engineer of the same name planned to manufacture hand-knitting machines, according to the patents purchased from an American inventor. Right from the start, the firm met with success, under the management first of all of its founder and then of his son, who extended the manufacturing programme by going in for screw-cutting too. In 1895, thanks to electricity, the factory produced its first motor-driven knitting machine, all of whose movements were automatic. In 1920 the offices were transferred to the town of Neuchâtel. During the second world war, as lathes were no longer available from abroad, the firm began to manufacture them itself; its 3,000 r.p.m. hydraulic lathe was the focal point of the 1942 Basle Fair. Today, in all countries where there is a knitting industry, Swiss Dubied knitting machines are to be found. The Dubied group at present comprises five factories, three of which are in Switzerland, one producing knitting machines and general machines, a second lathes and sharpening machines and the third needles for knitting. The other two factories are in Italy — where the firm has a branch — and manufacture hand-knitting machines and simple automatic machines. Sales are carried out by independent agencies in big towns all over the world. At present the firm of Edouard Dubied & Co. Ltd. employs some 2,700 men and women, nearly 2,100 of whom work in Switzerland. It exports 87% of the output of its Swiss factories.

[O.S.E.C.]