

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

Herausgeber: Federation of Swiss Societies in the United Kingdom

Band: - (1924)

Heft: 148

Rubrik: Mother-wit from the Mother of Parliaments

Nutzungsbedingungen

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist die Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Zeitschriften und ist nicht verantwortlich für deren Inhalte. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern beziehungsweise den externen Rechteinhabern. [Siehe Rechtliche Hinweise.](#)

Conditions d'utilisation

L'ETH Library est le fournisseur des revues numérisées. Elle ne détient aucun droit d'auteur sur les revues et n'est pas responsable de leur contenu. En règle générale, les droits sont détenus par les éditeurs ou les détenteurs de droits externes. [Voir Informations légales.](#)

Terms of use

The ETH Library is the provider of the digitised journals. It does not own any copyrights to the journals and is not responsible for their content. The rights usually lie with the publishers or the external rights holders. [See Legal notice.](#)

Download PDF: 14.03.2025

ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, E-Periodica, <https://www.e-periodica.ch>

MOTHER-WIT FROM THE MOTHER OF PARLIAMENTS.

The Bill would do a great deal for some hundreds of thousands of ex-Service men who were taking up pig and fowl keeping. Foreign eggs ought to be marked. If a foreign C3 egg came here, it ought to be sold as such and not as a British A1 egg. On a former occasion evidence came out that the Chinese lizard was in active competition with the British fowl, and it was only fair that we should defend our hens and poultry on this side of the water. When they came to cheese, there was not only English Cheshire, but Dutch Cheshire. As regards honey, he had heard the claim made that Scotch heather honey was the best; and he wanted to protect the Scotch bee against the American or Jamaica bee. Oatmeal was the national food of a very great people, and it was important that they should have good Scotch oatmeal. This Bill would save the country from Chinese cheap labour and help the poor Yorkshire hen struggling to keep the household together against the lizard thousands of miles away.

Admiral Sir Guy Gaunt (U.) on March 7th in moving the second reading of a Bill to mark merchandise of foreign origin.

Children in Germany used to amuse themselves by trying to distinguish what was in the ordinary sausage. They would lay several tin lines on the table, remove one from the centre, and if the others all moved up one place they knew they were made out of cab-horses. He was sorry Sir Guy Gaunt had not included a provision for a boundary commission to determine the relation of the sausage to other meat. The only way to determine whether an egg was C3 was to put it through a medical board. The ideal solution would be to produce a breed of hens that would automatically mark the date on which the eggs were laid. There were 2,000,000,000 eggs in-

Feuilleton.

A LUCKY STRIKE.

The following is reprinted from the April number of the "Swiss Monthly," edited from Lausanne by Miss Emily Keen Barnum, who sings the beauties of Switzerland, and, in a delightful fashion, familiarises English-speaking people with our ancient history and modern aspirations. The same number contains an editorial, entitled "Optimism," the romance of the last two dukes of Zaehringen, articles by Prof. F. F. Roget and Arnold Luon, poetry, illustrations, etc.

On returning from my three months' military service, the general strike of 1918 broke out, and as I did not hold with syndicates, I told my boss that I was willing to work.

Moreover, it was necessary to earn money for my wife and two small boys. Accordingly one morning I donned my carpenter's clothes, and catching up my kit set off.

To face my companions, thus rigged out, was as much as my life was worth, and I knew it.

Soldiers were on duty at the station, and several men, chatting and smoking, stood round feeling luxuriously idle; among them I noticed several of my fellow ex-workers.

One of my chums advanced to meet me; astonishment was written in big letters all over his face.

"What on earth are you up to, Pierre?"

"I need some cash for my wife and little ones," I answered.

"That's not the way to go about it!" was the stern reply.

"Look here, Jacques Mullin," I retorted, "if you care to supply the funds I've lost these last three months, I'll gladly lay down my tools right now, otherwise I go to work, and none of you shall stop me!"

That was enough for them; in a trice the four were upon me.

My kit was a handicap, but I had reasons for not discarding it.

I fought like the desperate man I was, parrying blows in all directions. In less than five minutes from the start, my two coat sleeves were torn out of the arm-holes, and my waistcoat and shirt slashed in ribbons.

The affair began to look nastier still when Jean Ronelli's talon-like fingers aimed at my throat.

I shouted hoarsely above the din:—

"I give you all fair warning, or I strike!"

Not one of them paid the least attention—if anything, they redoubled their efforts, and Jean, an altogether inferior workman, began to get the better of me.

The face of my wife and children rose before me; I had to outwit these stubborn sheep-like men somehow.

My breath came in short gasps, and my knees began to tremble under me.

It was high time to produce my trump card.

In a flash I drew forth a very solid hammer and held it aloft. "Let go of me, or I strike!" I shouted.

Jean Ronelli was closer to me now, and his fingers gripped my throat.

ported into this country every year, and if they were not good there would be no repeat order. He asked the supporters of the Bill to be honest and include butter. With regard to oatmeal, he was afraid Scotsmen had given up both the Shorter Cathecism and porridge. He did not know whether the decline in the consumption of oatmeal in Scotland explained the rise of the Labour Party.

Mr. Hogge (L.) in moving the rejection of the Bill referred to.

I understand Mr. Hogge accused me of having been a Liberal. We have had a terrible lot of trouble in our family, but we have never had a Liberal.

Admiral Sir Guy Gaunt in a repartee.

Betting was not a crime when pursued in moderation, and there was a certain amount to be said in its favour. It was sometimes the only method of arriving at the truth, because people made the most astounding assertions, and if called on to back them with money they would probably decline to do so. He was not in the least ashamed to say that he sometimes betted, especially if he saw a good opportunity of winning and of being placed. Probably everybody present that afternoon had betted at some time or other. He did not even except the Archbishop of Canterbury, who, when he was a young man, shot pigeons. He dared say the Most Reverend Primate laid odds of 3 or 4 to 1 on the gun, like any of his fellow-undergraduates. He did not suppose he had ever suffered what the late Mr. Kruger called "moral or intellectual damages" from doing so. Many of the boys in the elementary schools in London betted on the Lincolnshire Handicap, and he believed that even the blameless Nonconformists in Wales actually betted on the number of hymns given out in their chapels and conventicles.

Lord Newton, on March 12th in the House of Lords, in advocating taxation of betting.

Swinging my implement round my head, I brought it crashing down on the fellow's skull. He fell to the ground with a terrible thud.

To all appearance the man lay lifeless at our feet.

With a howl of rage the three others fell upon me like so many devils released from hell; and had it not been for the timely intervention of the soldiers, my wife would have become a widow within a few minutes.

At sight of me my boss gave an exclamation of dismay and shook his head when I finished giving an account of things.

How I got through that day I don't know. When 6.30 came I picked up my kit mechanically and turned my foot-steps homeward. Had I killed Jean Ronelli?

No doubt, my wife would answer the question soon enough. How would that sweet-tempered angel greet me?

We lived on the second floor of a fairly large apartment house. Not bothering to use my latch-key, I rang the bell. To my surprise our next-door neighbour opened the door.

"Where's my wife?" I asked.

"She has gone to look for little Edmond; he has been missing since noon," was the astonishing reply. "Albert is asleep, and I promised to stay till her return," she added.

Night was coming on, and it was chilly autumnal weather, and my youngest son, aged four, was lost!

The bell rang, and we both ran to the door.

"I have trugged from one end of the town to the other," said my wife wearily, "Edmond is nowhere to be found, and I feel sure he has been stolen."

"I'll have a look myself," I said, "otherwise we must notify the police."

I forced my poor wife to eat some hot soup, and left her in the care of our good neighbour.

The boss had been kind enough to advance me a little cash, so I slipped a few francs into my purse in case of need, leaving the rest with my wife.

I had not the faintest idea in what direction to begin the search, and, strangely enough, I found myself going towards Ronelli's house.

It was a ramshackle old place, and before long would be condemned by the authorities. The nearest light came from a street lamp across the way.

Some irresistible impulse made me turn the rusty front-door handle and step inside. It was very dark, and I could distinguish nothing clearly, but a group of youngsters were seated on the stairs.

I stopped and listened to their childish prattle.

"My father's a carpenter," one of them said.

"Mine is too," answered a little girl's voice,

"but he is ill at the hospital, and mother's gone to see him."

I caught my breath, for it was Ronelli's little girl who, all unknowingly, gave me news of her father!

"I'm cold and hungry, and I want to go home," said the little boy.

An infant set up a terrible howl, so I gathered that Ronelli's child was nursing her baby brother.

"I am always hungry now, and the other day

We all desired to create the spirit of peace, but we still lived in an imperfect world. That was not surprising, because we had only had two months of Socialist Government in this country. They on his side were called sometimes militarists and jingoes, because they sought to keep the military and naval establishments of the country sufficient to meet requirements. They might as well say that a man who insured his life wanted to die, or that a man who insured against accidents wanted to be run over by a bus. He remembered an old Scottish lady who in the days before the Forth Bridge went down to Queensferry to cross to the Fife coast. It was a very stormy day, and she said to the ferryman: "Is there any danger?" He said, "Oh, yes, but we must always trust in Providence," upon which the old lady exclaimed, "If that is all you are trusting to, I am going round by Alloa Brig." She was perfectly right.

Sir R. Horne (U.), on March 25th, in protesting against the Government's policy of abandoning the Singapore base.

When people came to stay with him, they were very much more interested in his dogs than in him. At the same time, he thought it would be unwise to make exceptions of particular animals. Referring to the fact that different persons took a special interest in different creatures, he said that once, when driving with Lord Montagu of Beaulieu in the New Forest on a soaking day, he saw in front a wretched old tramp, wet to the skin. Lord Montagu said: "We must give this poor devil a lift." When they reached the tramp, he was found to be Lord Grey of Falloden, who had walked four miles to see whether on that day a certain bird was in a certain pond.

Viscount Knutsford, on March 25th, in moving the rejection of a Bill exempting dogs from vivisection and experiments.

I looked in the baker's shop, and a nice man gave me some hot bread.

"Was it good?" asked her small companion.

"Brother was hungrier than I was; how I wish I could give him some now!" said the poor child, trying to hush the baby's whimper.

"I'm lost; I want to go home to my mamma," sobbed the other one. How well I knew that howl of despair!

"Edmond!" I said softly.

"Papa!" cried a joyful voice. "Where are you?"

I soon hoisted my happy youngster on my shoulder and ran to the baker's across the way.

"Three fresh rolls, please miss," I said to the girl, handing her a franc. Pocketing the change, I took one from the paper-bag and gave the remaining two to Edmond, first, however, taking care to twist the corners well, so that he should not lose them.

"Run back with these to the Ronelli's, my child," I said, "and then you shall have yours."

On the way home I listened to adventures of the most thrilling kind which my youngest-born had ever been through.

"Mother will scold you for running away," I told him, knowing perfectly well she would do nothing of the sort.

When we arrived, I thought my wife would never stop hugging him.

Ronelli got better and was soon seen about again.

Everyone said he would do me up, if he had a chance, but for some time our paths did not cross.

Months passed, and as good luck would have it, an old uncle of my mother's died and left me a snug sum of money, so that I was soon able to buy out my boss, for I wanted to feel independent.

Ronelli, I heard, had great difficulty in obtaining regular work, and his wife and children were half-starved.

During his illness I had paid the doctor, and given his family presents. I looked upon this as a duty, though, of course, he got a certain amount from his syndicate.

One morning there was a loud knock at Ronelli's door.

"This is the first letter I've ever handed you, Ronelli," said the postman smiling, "and it's a registered one too."

The man signed his name with difficulty, and called to his wife. Together they broke the seal in great excitement.

"Here's a cheque for a hundred francs!" exclaimed Ronelli. "Surely, there must be some mistake!" said his better half. The cheque bore my signature, so it was quite in order.

There was a letter as well, offering Ronelli good work and a fixed salary. At first, I heard, he was sullen about the whole thing, but poverty and hunger are sometimes wise counsellors.

To-day Ronelli earns good wages, and we are on the best of terms with each other.

One evening, not long ago, he said to me:—

"It's a pity young fellows are led like sheep by those delegates; if you hadn't knocked some sense into my head with that hammer of yours, I might still be out of work."