

**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:** - (1929)

**Heft:** 376

**Rubrik:** Prepaid subscription rates

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**Download PDF:** 02.04.2025

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# The Swiss Observer

Telephone: CLERKENWELL 9595

Published every Friday at 23, LEONARD STREET, LONDON, E.C.2

Telegrams: FREPRINGO. LONDON.

VOL. 9—No. 376

LONDON, JANUARY 5, 1929.

PRICE 3d.

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UNITED KINGDOM AND COLONIES	3 Months (13 issues, post free) . . .	3/6
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SWITZERLAND	3 Months (13 issues, post free) . . .	Fr. 12.—
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## HOME NEWS

The Socialist Party has deposited a motion asking the Federal Council to prepare and publish a list of those members of the two Houses of the Swiss Parliament who are directors of public companies or derive pecuniary benefits from their relationship with other commercial or industrial undertakings.

Through relinquishing as from the beginning of this year the existing transit fees for motor cars, the canton of Uri is sacrificing an annual income of about Frs. 300,000.

At the instance of the Federal Council, the winning gymnasts belonging to the Swiss team competing at the Olympic Games in Amsterdam have each been presented with a 100 Frs. piece as a Christmas present.

A considerable amount of theft having taken place at post offices in Geneva, a number of arrests have been effected; these include a postal clerk and former town councillor, who had been spending the proceeds at Nice in company with a ballet girl.

## EXTRACTS FROM SWISS PAPERS.

**L'hommage de l'Académie des sciences morales à Gustave Ador, Eugène Ritter et Francis De Crue.**— Au cours d'une de ses dernières séances l'Académie des sciences morales et politiques a entendu prononcer l'éloge de trois citoyens genevois morts récemment et qui appartenaient à l'Institut: M. Gustave Ador, comme membre associé, MM. Eugène Ritter et Francis de Crue, comme correspondants.

Voici en quels termes s'est exprimé M. Lucien Lévy-Bruhl, président:—

M. Gustave Ador était, parmi les membres associés de l'Académie, un de ceux dont nous étions les plus fiers. Né à Cologne, près de Genève, en 1874, il fut élu, comme on sait, président de la Confédération helvétique. A la mort de Gustave Moynier (qui fut aussi notre confrère), fondateur du Comité international de la Croix-Rouge, Gustave Ador devint le président de ce comité, qui, malgré son caractère purement privé, a joué pendant la grande guerre un rôle d'une importance capitale. Il n'a pas hésité à rappeler au respect des conventions signées ceux des Etats belligérants qui les violaient. Les gouvernements en reconnaissaient l'autorité et ils entretenaient avec lui de constants rapports.

C'est surtout à Gustave Ador que le Comité international de la Croix-Rouge a dû ce prestige, dont il a fait le plus noble usage. Personne n'ignore le merveilleux parti que M. Ador a su tirer de cette organisation pour répondre aux appels suppliants qui lui arrivaient de toutes parts. Il ne suffisait pas au Comité international de la Croix-Rouge de venir au secours des blessés et des malades; il se préoccupait aussi de ces autres victimes que sont les prisonniers de guerre. Dès le mois d'août 1914, le Comité avait constitué à Genève une agence internationale de prisonniers. Bientôt on y reçut trente mille lettres par jour. Elle procurait aux familles tous les renseignements possibles sur les disparus. Grâce à elle, en maintes occasions, sur le rapport de ses envoyés spéciaux, la condition des prisonniers, dans certains camps, put être améliorée. C'est elle encore qui, à force de patiente insistance, a fini par obtenir l'échange des grands blessés, l'internement en Suisse des prisonniers malades, l'échange des pères de famille, etc. Que de douleurs, que d'angoisses, que de tortures sans nom ont été abrégées ou adoucies par l'activité infatigable de Gustave Ador et du groupe dévoué d'hommes et de femmes qu'il dirigeait! Esprit fertile en ressources, net et précis, voyant haut et loin, rompu aux affaires, habile à résoudre vite les difficultés d'ordre pratique et les problèmes d'organisation, Gustave Ador a su, pendant plus de quatre années, mener de front son action politique et sa tâche d'humanité, chaque jour plus complexe et plus lourde. L'histoire n'oubliera pas son nom.

M. Eugène Ritter, correspondant de la section de morale, est mort en juillet dernier, à l'âge de quatre-vingt-dix ans. Sa longue et belle vie a été

consacrée tout entière à l'enseignement, en même temps qu'à de nombreux travaux d'histoire littéraire, d'érudition et de philosophie. Ce sont surtout les études originales de M. Eugène Ritter sur Jean-Jacques Rousseau qui ont porté au loin sa réputation; non seulement les trois volumes bien connus qui ont pour titre *la Famille de J.-J. Rousseau*, *Recherches sur les Confessions et la correspondance de Rousseau*, *la Jeunesse de J.-J. Rousseau*, mais aussi beaucoup d'études de détail, nettes et suggestives. M. Ritter a fait là oeuvre d'initiateur. Il a ouvert la voie à des historiens comme Pierre-Maurice Masson, l'auteur de la *Religion de J.-J. Rousseau*; il a donné le ton à l'excellente revue que fait paraître la Société Jean-Jacques Rousseau; il a rendu possible enfin la belle publication de la *Correspondance* de Jean-Jacques qui se poursuit actuellement.

M. Francis De Crue, correspondant de la section d'histoire, était né à Genève en 1854. Il s'est fait connaître par d'importants travaux sur le XVIIe siècle français, en particulier sur le comte de France Anne de Montmorency. Docteur de lettres de la Faculté des lettres de Paris, il enseigna l'histoire aux Facultés de Rennes, puis de Poitiers, avant d'être rappelé à l'Université de sa ville natale.

Par sa formation d'historien, par l'objet favori de ses travaux, par son enseignement dans deux de nos Facultés, M. De Crue se sentait étroitement attaché à la France. Il sut lui donner une preuve efficace de son affection lorsque, pendant la guerre, il eut, en sa qualité de recteur de l'Université de Genève, à présider l'oeuvre suisse des étudiants prisonniers de guerre.

Nous n'oublierons pas les services que M. De Crue a rendus pendant ces années cruelles.

—*Journal de Genève.*

## NOTES AND GLEANINGS.

Among the alluring reports recording the merry-making during the festive season at the fashionable hotels we have come across a short notice depicting a simple, old-world Christmas in one of the minor resorts; it sounds like a voice from the wilderness. It appeared in the *Newcastle Evening Chronicle* (Dec. 22nd):—

### Christmas Eve in the Alps.

"Making an enforced sojourn among the mountains of Switzerland last year, I found Christmas Eve there a new and unaccustomed experience.

Outside it was Christmas of the greeting card variety—deep snow, hard dry frost, and sleighs drawn by spirited horses jingling over the white roads. Santa Claus in red cloak and with his bag of toys was the only feature needful to complete the illusion.

At the little "pension" where I stayed we were a mixed gathering, including Germans, Swiss, Austrians and British, and after "Abendessen" we assembled in the modest "salon" to await the arrival of our hosts. Decorated with evergreens, the room presented a festive appearance, and at one end stood an enormous Christmas tree decked out in tinsel and ornaments and numbers of wax candles, a sight to warm the heart of any child.

But we had not to wait long, for soon the proprietor and his wife appeared, attended by other members of the family and the staff. Greeting having been exchanged, the lights were put out, and our host proceeded with due formality to light the candles upon the tree. This done, the pianist struck a warning note, and with one accord the company raised their voices in unison to the tune of "Stille Nacht," the favourite carol of the German-speaking peoples.

German "Weihnachtslieder" are many and various, remarkable more for their simple, pious intent than for any inspiring fervour, but, having sung them since childhood, the natives know them word for word, and they sing them with that easy freedom that comes only from long familiarity with both tune and context. And this is the time for carols; the morrow, Christmas Day, they will keep quietly, "en famille."

With scarce a pause for breath the singers went on, verse after verse and carol after carol, all taken with that almost painful slowness and solemnity that is their habit upon this evening of the year.

It is a long ceremony, tedious perhaps to those whose knowledge of the language is slight, but as an earnest of the singers' simple piety not without interest.

But the "pièce de résistance" came with the tableau accompanying "Am Weihnachtsbaum die

Lichter brennen" (On the Christmas tree the candles are burning).

The first two verses picture the illuminated Christmas-tree, surrounded by bright-eyed children and old people gazing Heavenwards. Then, with the third verse, as the words tell, two angels appear—guests or members of the household clad in white robes with tinsel wings—and, kneeling before the tree, bless the company ere they unobtrusively leave while the gathering concludes with a final stanza.

Thereafter, in houses where there are children follows the distribution of the presents which in this part of Switzerland as in Germany are laid around the foot of the tree. But joining in our carols, alas! there were no children's voices and so further carols were sung until the last of the candles was burnt out.

The rite was finished then. After a spell of desultory conversation our hosts took their leave with a "Gute Nacht" and a "Frohliche Weihnachten," and, the staff bringing us measures of hot punch and biscuits, the evening was over and we were left alone. And so to bed.

Altogether, not an unpleasant way of spending the eve of Christmas."

The life of one of the country markets at this time of the year has taken the fancy of a writer in the *Liverpool Echo* (Dec. 22nd), who describes the entrancing scenes of the

### Christmas Market at Vevey.

"The great Alps are dressed in their ermine robes, and their spotless reflection is thrown back by the blue waters of the shimmering lake at their feet. The winter sun shines brightly on the glittering, frozen snow that carpets the Market-place of Vevey, one of the loveliest in Switzerland; and the much-bellopped plane trees along the side of the Lake Léman lift stark boughs to the clear sky as if in mute protest of the outrage done them last year, when their leafy branches were unmercifully trimmed in order to erect the huge amphitheatre seats for the Fête des Vignerons.

The ever-hungry gulls snatch greedily at the pieces of bread thrown them by a kindly market-woman, while the swans, disclaiming the noisy clamour of their rivals, dispute with them the tit-bits fallen into the water. Passers-by, hurrying to choose their Christmas-tree, cast an amused glance at the well-known squabble, but do not stop. It is too cold for one thing, and, for another, trees in the "little forest" sell so quickly that no time must be lost in making one's choice.

For this market, the week before Christmas, is a very special affair. In the centre of the market-place there is a tall electric lamp, and every year at its base the peasants arrange circles of fresh fir trees, ranging in size from tiny things some twelve inches high to imposing saplings well over six feet. All the trees are cleverly fitted into a stand of wood with a tripod, and those buyers who are in the know always carefully examine the stand to make sure that there will not be any painful surprises as to the stability of their Christmas-tree when once it is placed in room or hall.

The "little forest" is speedily thinned, the best trees going first, and fresh loads of trees are continually being brought in by blue-smocked, bearded men in fur caps, whose long wooden carts have had their wheels replaced by runners, to which the frozen snow is still clinging. Not only Christmas-trees lie heaped in these horse-sleighs, but piles of Christmas greenery as well. Holly and Ivy, lovely drooping branches of pine with great pine-cones attached, cut branches of fir, and ivory-berried bunches of mistletoe are flung in heaps around the temporary forest. Special permission has to be applied for to bring the mistletoe into the towns, for it is a perfect plague in the apple orchards, and its juicy berries tempt the hungry birds, who let drop its seeds *en route* upon some unlucky apple tree, and the mischief is done unknown to its owner till too late.

Gay splashes of colour are afforded in this colour-scheme of blue and white and green by the heaps of oranges, tomatoes and aubergines, while a whole scale of varying greens is presented by the turnips and cabbages. The portly market-women, wrapped in their thickest shawls, keep their feet warm on the queer little wooden stools, with their open-work top and charcoal embers inside, and add a fillip to circulation by steaming cups of the inevitable café au lait.

The roast-chestnut men do a roaring trade in the Christmas market, and so does the cheapjack,