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FLIGHTS FROM ARCTIC TO EQUATOR

Lecture by Walter Mittelholzer on April 15th,
at King George's Hall, Tottenham Court Road, W.

(Continuation).

At last — oh, what luck! — a somewhat more open place, where the forest had been held back a little by a wide sand bank, appeared before me; then quickly a curve to reconnoiter as far as was possible; then a glide, and the Switzerland settled gently on the stream where it was hardly more than 60 feet wide. Almost immediately we grounded firmly on a sand bank.

So luckily landed after all! Safe and sound our great bird rested. The water lapped lightly against the floats. The moon, which now rose, threw its mild, silver light and illuminated our bivouac in the midst of the virgin landscape. Thousandfold hummings and chirpings of millions of awakened insects surrounded us. Everywhere the sparkling lights of the fireflies twinkled through the warm tropical night.

A refreshing bath and a short, light meal made us forget all our hardships. We drew our mosquito nets before the cabin window — it was very necessary — and lay down, tired, on our blankets. My mechanic was already sleeping soundly when, after about half an hour, out of the forest, five natives, carrying a lantern, cautiously approached the machine.

Curious to know exactly where we were, I got out. "Does one of these Gentlemen speak English?" — was my first question. To my great joy, one of the natives came forward and answered in the affirmative. As I had rightly judged, we were on the upper arm of the Pungwee, which flows into the Indian Ocean near Beira. The nearest native village, Nyarupari, which is not noted on any map, I was told, was six days' march — about 75 miles from Beira. The natives then retired and I again lay down on the floor of the cabin.

Hardly was I half asleep when I was aroused by another lantern light on a native canoe. I saw a mulatto take out a notebook and shine his light on the letters of the name "Switzerland." Then he shook his head several times, as if not believing what he saw.

Once more in my night shirt, I came out of our "house" and spoke to the people. A native explained to me in English that the mulatto was the postmaster, who very much wished to know whence the curious bird, which had literally fallen from the skies, had come. To my answer "Switzerland," Suisse, Svizzera" they all believed it to be a town in England, until I explained that our homeland lay between France, Germany and ... England.

Evidently a light dawned on the postmaster, as a beaming smile exposed his glittering white teeth. With the greatest obligingness he then asked me if I needed anything at all, which, I fortunately was able to answer in the negative.

Needing sleep as I did, I bid him goodbye with my best thanks for his friendliness.

But the Fates had written that I should get little rest. Towards 11 o'clock a knock came from without. There were the natives who had been there before, bringing me two large boiled fish and half a dozen eggs on a dish. I was deeply touched by this hospitality in the midst of the apparently uncivilized virgin forest. So these were the terrible savages described by writers with fantastic imaginations!

Sunday dawned with a beautiful red glow. At the first sign of light we cooked a delicious breakfast, which we supplemented with the cold fish and eggs brought by the natives the night before.

In the meanwhile the whole population of the neighbourhood had assembled round the plane. It was just as well, for it needed more than 20 stalwart men, spurred on by continuous shouting and encouragement on my part, to get the Switzerland free of the sand bank. After an hour of effort the plane was again afloat on the river, which had dropped more than a foot during the night. Now full gas! Suddenly my comrade, who had taken his place in the cabin, struck on the controls. "Stop the motor!" Three natives were sitting on the floats and hanging on for dear life! Then they let go, plumped head over heels into the water, and swam to the bank in a couple of seconds. What a pity that this scene could not be retained on the film.

Lightened of the weight of the unwilling passengers, I again gave full gas. To my joy, the machine leaped forward and in a few seconds was off the water. Then I turned into a narrow ravine and was immediately high above the waving tree

tops of the illimitable forest. With lightened hearts we raced towards the Indian Ocean. After about 10 minutes we came out of the forest. A plain stretched before us. New tributaries fed the Pungwee from both sides until it poured into the Bay of Beira as a broad river. Fifty-five minutes later, I circled above the clean Portuguese seaport, the streets and open places of which were suddenly packed with people. Two "rounds of honour," and the floats of the Switzerland touched close to the quay the salt waves of the ocean which washes the shores of India and Australia.

Two years later I received a request from Baron Louis Rothschild, of Vienna, to take his hunting party as quickly as possible, by air, to what is, without doubt, still the richest district in the world for big-game hunting, the Serengeti Plains in Tanganyika Territory, a seemingly inexhaustible game reservation, where the expert photographer, Martin Johnston, has "shot" hundreds of lions and tens of thousands of gazelles and zebras with his camera.

Based on the experience I had gained and the technical progress made in air traffic, for this trip I used, for the first time, a three-motored Fokker plane of the same type as that with which Admiral Byrd carried out his Atlantic flight from New York to Paris.

According to programme, our December flight carried us over the Alps over Vesuvius, and the highest crater in Europe, Mount Etna. Along the barren coasts of Tripolis-Benghazi and Sollum, I reached Cairo in three days. From there the small town of Nairobi in the Kenya Colony, was reached in a four-day flight.

From Nairobi, where there are several thousand white residents, attracted by its elevated and healthful situation, we carried on to the great grass steppes of the Serengeti Plains, where I found ideal landing grounds at all points.

While my friends hunted lions, rhinos, leopards and gazelles there, I undertook several reconnoitering flights over the interesting High Crater-land, where I flew over and photographed dozens of extinct giant craters.

On January 5th, 1930, we flew over the 17,000-foot Mount Kenya almost without difficulty, whereas the crossing of the 19,000-foot Kilimandjaro made great demands on both machine and pilot.

On January 8th I started with my assistant pilot, with much photographic material on board, from the aerodrome in Nairobi. We flew past hundreds of zebras and antelopes, and stampeding Grand Gazelles almost came under our wheels as we flashed by.

We took to the south, and after a few minutes could see the characteristic outline of the two independent peaks of the Kilimandjaro, on the left the pointed cone of the Mawenzi, 17,286 feet, and to its right the brilliantly lighted lines of the Kibo, 19,450 feet high, rounded off regularly on nearly all sides. The high plateau of the Athi sank rapidly below us. At seven o'clock at a height of 13,000 feet, we crossed the railway line which connects the large soda works on the Magadi Salt Lake with the Uganda Railway. A monotonous, brown-red desert landscape, void of all trees and bushes, extended before us for at least 60 miles. I was fully conscious that thanks only to the lifting wind on the broad north front of the mountain was it possible to reach such an abnormal height as 20,000 feet with our heavy transport machine. I therefore held on from the beginning in the region of the upward-flowing air currents, as they became known to flyers a few years ago, through the art of air sailing.

At about 8.30 I espied, above the concave glacier cap of the eastern flank of the Kibo, the sharp southwest ridge, falling in steep rock walls to the crater, and of which the highest point has a height of 19,717 feet. This "piling" resulted in our having reached a 19,500-foot level. For the 600 to 1,000 feet still lacking, which were necessary for a safe flight over, we needed another 10 minutes' ascent.

Meanwhile a most remarkable, unexpected picture spread out below us. The outer ring of the old, extinct crater is marked out by sharp rock and ice ridges. Gradually the ring deepens to a gigantic arena, at the bottom of which the one-and-a-half-mile-wide orifice of the former fiery abyss yawns, reminding one of the Cyclops eye in

a mythological picture.

How often I have seen things from the air which no human eye had seen before without having felt any special thrill. To us flyers the new experience is such a matter of course. To-day however, as I looked down from this hitherto never-experienced height on to this fantastically formed, enormous peak roof, the joy of success tingled in my veins, the pride of the discoverer. My plane thundered, 21,000 feet high, over the Kibo. When exactly over the ghostly crater the plane was shaken by wind gusts, so that I had to hold fast to avoid being thrown over. — To the east, of the Kibo the 17,771-foot Mawenzi with curious towers, seemed to beckon to us above an undulating sea of clouds, but I reserved a visit to this high rock stronghold for a later flight and gave my companion the signal to throttle the motor and fly back to Nairobi.

Although our motors were almost shut off, we sank but slowly. Somewhat tired from all the brilliance of the ice region and the perpetual exertion, I landed at 10.40 in the aerodrome at Nairobi after a good four-hours trip.

After this flight, which was the most interesting of all my experiences and of which the photographs can give but a feeble idea of the reality, we flew home. Our return from this two-month African sojourn was made in seven one-day stages of about 600 miles each. Again according to programme via the Sudan, Egypt, the Mediterranean and Greece.

Africa, the continent of so many charms and secrets, had now fascinated me. With joy I accepted a mandate from the well-known American financier and sportsman, Kingsley Macomber, to carry him by air in the winter of 1930-31, to Lake Schad, that enormous inland sea spun round with unending enchantment, from the vicinity of which a few decades ago only, gruesome reports of slavery and superstitious massacres trickled through to Europe.

On this third African flight I had now the opportunity of making thorough acquaintance with the Sahara, for thousands of years the dividing barrier between the white and black races. Thanks to its natural landing places, often of enormous dimensions, it is the thoroughfare par excellence for future air traffic to the fertile regions of Central Africa, and to the gold and copper mines of the Belgian Congo, which are of such economical importance.

On December 8th, 1930, I reached the ancient sultans' town of Fez, in Morocco, via Spain, the Mediterranean, and the rugged Rif mountains. From Marrakech, the largest town in Morocco, the highest chain of the High Atlas was flown over towards the Sahara to the oasis of Colomb Béchar, which was to be the point of departure for the actual desert crossing of 1,200 miles.

Thanks to the excellent civilising work of the French, who have established a network of aerodromes in their widely extended colonial territory, from the Mediterranean to the Gulf of Guinea, we were able to carry out our programme without a hitch.

On Christmas Day 1930, with our congenial client, we reached Lake Schad from Kano, in British Nigeria. The extent of the lake varies according to the height of the water, the greatest depth of which is now not more than 7½ feet.

Via the Niger and Senegal country, we came to Dakar, on the west-coast and then flew over the dreary coast of Rio de Oro, partially populated by nomad robbers, towards Casablanca.

There you have a brief outline of my career in aviation. — And now flying has outgrown its days of geographical exploration and has developed into a vital part of world communication. The various air traffic companies now cover roughly a million kilometers a day with their regular services.

Imperial Airways flies to time-table over the routes through Asia and Africa, some of which I was the first to fly and which at that time were considered risky affairs. Progress in the last few years has been enormous. Flying speeds, for instance, have been doubled — we now fly at least 160 miles an hour instead of a mere 80.

My own small country — in a way the turntable of Europe — has in the last ten years been linked by regular air services to the capitals of all its neighbouring countries. — And now this

spring we have stretched our continental line out over the sea to our friends in England, so that thanks to the new Douglas high-speed planes (which you see here flying over the Alps) there are now only three flying hours between us.

A Swiss business-man can see to his morning's mail in Zürich, embark in our plane at 9 o'clock and flying via Basle — be in the city, in the greatest town in Europe, by one o'clock mid-day. — Some difference compared with 18 hours rail journey including a channel crossing! (and should he have a dinner appointment in Zürich, he can be back by 6 o'clock the same afternoon).

Our Swiss line is not to be considered as a competition to Imperial Airways — on the contrary, it is a supplementary line and is especially intended to serve the passenger who, be he business-man or holiday-maker, wants to fly the shortest route between England and Switzerland. The excellent service with which Imperial Airways with their comfortable and accordingly slower "air omnibuses" have been connecting London and Switzerland for years, flies via Paris. In order to avoid all rivalry, Swissair and Imperial Airways fly according to a pool arrangement.

Ladies and Gentlemen — the advantages which a regular air service has to offer are so manifest, that I am sure that you will all hasten to avail yourselves of them.

These big planes are so steady — the noise problem has been so admirably solved on the new Douglas machine and the double security which enables the plane to fly, if necessary, on a single engine without you ever noticing a difference, is so reliable — there are the main reasons why flying has become such a matter of fact and such a preferred means of travelling. And remember the most up-to-date instruments for blindflying, the automatic pilot, the constant wireless communication with the ground and so on, enable us to fly with perfect safety even in bad weather and fog.

I know that everyone who has once made a flight above the clouds and has seen the Alps near at hand cannot be anything but enthusiastic about flying and that is why from year to year more and more people are becoming air-minded. And that is what we are all aiming at.

And at the same time, I sincerely hope that we are not only bringing England and Switzerland literally nearer to each other, but that above all we are doing our part towards bringing the two nations nearer to one another and helping to deepen the friendship, esteem and appreciation which they enjoy with each other.

* * * * *

This most interesting lecture, illustrated by beautiful slides, was greeted with great applause and on behalf of the audience, Monsieur C. R. Paravicini thanked Mr. Mittelholzer for the great pleasure with which everyone present followed his exciting narrative.

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NEWS FROM THE COLONY.

"OLD FRIENDS" DINNER. UNION HELVETIA.

Once a year the Union Helvetia asks their "old friends" to a little dinner at their headquarters, 1, Gerrard Place, W.1.

This year's "rally" took place on Friday last, and about a hundred guests answered the call; and sat down to an enjoyable dinner in the nicely decorated Banqueting Hall.

If there were any grumblers about the lateness of the start of the dinner, they were soon appeased when they were served with a really excellent repast, and the stewards Mr. and Mrs. Wymann are to be heartily congratulated both for the excellent fare and the arrangements that were made.

It goes without saying that a gathering of this kind is quite an informal affair, and it was therefore devoid of the usual "Banqueting oration" (For which everybody was truly thankful).

After the usual toasts, Mr. Indermaur, President of the "Landesverwaltung" of the "Union Helvetia" welcomed the gathering, expressing his pleasure at seeing so many old friends, who, year after year turn up to spend a few happy hours in congenial company. His statement that the "Union Helvetia" has, in spite of the still difficult times, managed to close their accounts with a small profit, was greeted with much acclamation, and this satisfactory state of affair is undoubtedly due, to a great extent, to the untiring efforts which Mr. Indermaur and his various committees are making to bring back prosperity to the Club.

Mr. Indermaur, then extended a hearty welcome to the few guests amongst them, M. P. Hilfiker of the Swiss Legation, M. G. Marchand, Vice-President of the City Swiss Club, M. H. Senn, Mr. and Mrs. A. Stauffer of the Swiss Observer and Mr. F. Hediger, President of the "Schweizerbund."

M. G. Marchand, on behalf of the guests expressed the thanks for an invitation which is always very much appreciated by the recipients.—

During the dinner, such old and trusted friends of the U. H., as Mrs. Rossier, Mrs. Aebersold and Mrs. Schaefer entertained the company with their splendid repertoire, I have now heard these charming ladies for many years (I am sure they do not want me to mention how many), and I am puzzled at their great vivacity, they simply refuse to grow old, and I wish they would give me the tip how they do it.

Mr. Edwards, also an old friend of the Club eulogized the Ladies, and that everyone agreed with the compliments, which he paid to the fairest of the fair, was proved by the great applause which he received on resuming his seat.

As one compliment deserves another, one would have expected that the responder to this toast would now in return say a few nice things about the Gentlemen present, I am sorry to say, however, that Mrs. Rossier in her reply had but very little praise for us poor men; but perhaps she knows us too well, and a little home truth does not do any harm. Did she really realise though that there might follow a "rebellion" in some of the homes? A friend of mine has just told me, that after this speech, his wife not only asked for a new hat but for a new frock too; I suppose it is that Jubilee spirit!!!

After coffee was served, the Hall was cleared, and dancing was started which lasted up to 2 a.m.

It was altogether a most enjoyable evening, and the authorities of the Union Helvetia, including the untiring Secretary Mr. J. J. Keller, are heartily to be congratulated for their efficient arrangements.

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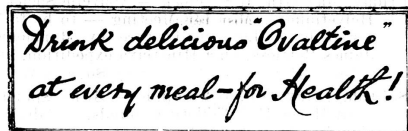
SWISS MERCANTILE SOCIETY LTD.

A social evening will be held on Wednesday, May 8th, after the monthly meeting, to which members and friends of the Swiss Mercantile Society are heartily invited.

Mr. Ernest Sewell the well known entertainer and companion of Sir Harry Lauder has been engaged, in addition a section of the Swiss Orchestral Society will play. Mr. v. Bergen, Mr. A. Gandon and Mr. R. Chappuis have also promised their support.

CITY SWISS CLUB.

Members of the City Swiss Club who desire their sons to be entered into the boys relay Race are requested to communicate at once with M. G. Oltramare, 46, Threadneedle Street, E.C.2.



Victor
P. CERESOLE
Manager of the
London Agency
of the
Swiss Federal
Railways.

We have great pleasure in publishing the portrait of M. Victor P. Ceresole, who has, at the beginning of this month taken over the management of the London Agency of the Swiss Federal Railways.

M. Ceresole, who is 40 years of age, was trained as a mechanical engineer. He has, however, had a wide experience in the general export trade in this country, on the continent and overseas.

For the last 12 years, M. Ceresole was with the Nestlé and Anglo-Swiss Condensed Milk Co., of which he was for eight years Advertising Manager at the head office in Switzerland.

We are extending to M. Ceresole our best wishes on assuming his responsible position to which he is so eminently fitted.

We also take this opportunity to once again express the thanks of the whole Colony to the late Manager, M. A. Duruz, who has rendered great services to our country during nearly forty years.

JUBILEE CELEBRATIONS.

In accordance with the precedent observed on previous Jubilees, the Swiss Colony of London will forward a Message of Congratulations to His Majesty the King. This Memorial is intended to be signed by the Presidents of all the Swiss Societies in London.

The Document will be on exhibition at the offices of the "Swiss Observer," 23, Leonard Street, London, E.C.2, for a few days from Wednesday the 8th inst., and the Presidents are invited to append their signatures to the Document during that period.

SWISS SALVATION ARMY BAND IN LONDON.

The Swiss Minister accompanied by Madame Paravicini, attended the Concert given by the Zurich Band of the Salvation Army on Saturday last, at the Congress Hall. The Minister was received on his arrival by Colonel Hamilton, Commissioner and Mrs. Howard and other officers. Madame Paravicini was presented with a bouquet in the national colours. Monsieur Paravicini, on taking the Chair expressed in a few words his pleasure to preside over the meeting. He then gave, as the programme went on, explanatory indications about the songs and pieces which were played and, at the request of the officers on the platform, made certain remarks on the Swiss Yodel, explaining its history, its characteristics, its use in the Alps and so forth, pointing out especially its distinctive character in comparison with South German and Tirolese yodelling.

Monsieur Paravicini mentioned that Switzerland numbers 124 Corps with nearly 600 officers, 300 outposts and 30 important social institutions.

The Band, which was dressed in National costume, received great applause for their performance. (Band Playing, singing and recitations).

The Concert was repeated on Monday last, at "The Citadel" Chalk Farm Road, under the Chairmanship of Mr. A. Brauen, the Swiss Minister was represented by M. W. de Bourg, Counsellor of Legation. The Swiss Press was represented by Mr. A. Stauffer from the Swiss Observer.

Here again our Swiss Salvationists met with great success.

THE ACADEMY CINEMA, Oxford Street.

"SON AUTRE AMOUR."

The film now showing at the Academy Cinema is described as giving a "new angle on Child Psychology" and belongs to the class of film with which we were made familiar by Emile and the Detectives, Poil de Carotte, Le Petit Roi.

But like most good things, it can be overdone and especially is this true in the case of children who are supposed to exhibit their psychological reactions on the screen.

I do not want you to imagine that "Son autre Amour" is not a good film, because it is well acted and in parts reaches a very high level,