

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: - (1937)

Heft: 829

Artikel: An appreciation of Pastor Hoffmann-de Visme

Autor: [s.n.]

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-695832>

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>

FOREIGN FUNDS.

At a meeting in Berne on Friday last the Council of the Swiss National Bank unanimously approved the proposal made by the chairman with the aim of preventing, in the interests of the country, a new influx of foreign funds and of inducing the withdrawal of foreign capital which has taken refuge in Switzerland in excessive quantities.

LOCAL.

ZURICH.

The Engineering Works Oerlikon have increased their rate of pay by 4 centimes an hour for adult workers and 3 centimes for juvenile and female hands. The rates for piece work are increased by 4½%. Since the beginning of this year the firm has given additional employment to over 400 workers.

* * *

At the post office Fraumünster a novel idea has been put into practice. You insert a two-penny piece in an automatic machine, press a lever, and have at your disposal a type writer for the space of 15 minutes. Progressive indeed!

BERN.

The Municipal Council of Bern has resolved to present the city of Berlin with a bear. Germany's metropolis with its coat of arms of a bear rampant is to follow Bern's example, by erecting, or rather excavating a den for bears.

GLARUS.

The former National Councillor Heinrich Jenny of Ennenda is retiring from his post as president of the cantonal bank of Glarus, a position which he has occupied since 1920.

BASEL.

Mr. A. Müller-Jäggi, for twenty years in charge of the station buffet at Basel, is retiring at the end of this year. From a multitude of applicants, Director J. Seiler-Bovin, for the last seven years director of the crack hotel of the East, the King David Hotel at Jerusalem, has been chosen as his successor.

ST. GALLEN.

Some time ago a small book was published in St. Gall dialect under the title "Chomm, mer wend us freue" which was very favourably received. Several of the poems have now been set to music and will be published shortly under the title "Chomm mit us ginge." These ventures, for preserving our dialect, can be thoroughly recommended to all friends of Sanggallerdütsch.

* * *

The final accounts of the Cantonal Singing Festival shows a net profit of 15,378 francs.

* * *

The appointment of Dr. jur. et phil. W. A. Jöhr as lecturer in national economy at the Commercial High-school in St. Gall has let loose a storm of indignation on the part of the populace, on the grounds that Dr. Jöhr was at one time actively identified with the National Front and that from his writings as well as from his speeches he may be said to be opposed to the existing democratic form of state and liberty. The Municipal Council will have to deal with the matter.

GRISONS.

Heavy rains caused a landslide near Silvaplana whereby a part of the Julier pass was blocked up. Traffic has been interrupted.

* * *

Dr. med. Carl Spengler, director of the Alexanderhaus, Davos, a well-known specialist in tubercular disease, died at Davos. Medical science has lost an eminent research worker. His father, a German emigrant during the troublous days of 1848, was the first to recognise the beneficial climatic advantages of Davos for diseases of the lung and may be said to have been one of the most prominent founders of the now world famous health resort in the Grisons. His son worthily upheld the tradition set by his sire.

* * *

Work is expected to begin next month on the construction of a funicular railway from the Pass above Pontresina to the famous Diavolezza Glacier. The proposed railway, which will rise 3,000 ft. in 1½ miles, will connect with the Bernina line running from St. Moritz, past Celerina and Pontresina over the Bernina Pass into Italy. The cost of the funicular is estimated at 2,200,000 Swiss francs.

AARGAU.

Mrs. Marianne Ursprung-Ryser of Ueken has celebrated the 100th anniversary of her birth in perfect health.

THURGAU.

"Mostindien" has been blessed this year with an abundance of fruit. Especially the apple trees are fully laden and the value of the crop is estimated at five million francs. Altogether the farmer has had a very good year.

TICINO.

Persistently bad weather has caused a threatening rise in the level of the lake Maggiore and the waters have inundated many of the villages on its shore. From Cannobio valley come reports of several houses having collapsed; the road has been blocked by falls of rock.

* * *

Ezio Gianferrari, from Bellinzona, a winner of many motor cycling events, was fatally injured near the village of Grono when he lost control of his machine and was thrown into the shallow waters of the Calanca.

AN APPRECIATION OF
PASTOR HOFFMANN-DE VISME.

By the death of Pastor Hoffmann-de Visme the Swiss Colony in London has lost one of the stoutest pillars it possessed. The tragedy is still oppressing our minds:— his sad passing, away from his family and away from his homeland alike, alone in Paris in the surgeon's hands. Both here and in Switzerland services were held for Divine Intercession and the recovery of his health. The gradual weakening of his resistance after the dreadful shock of the death of his beloved wife and the subsequent nervous breakdowns, apart from habitual overwork, — these were the reasons for bringing to an untimely end a life and a personality precious to the colony at large. Those of us who have taken his singular devotion to us for granted for so long perhaps recognise now that we have not valued, not honoured the man sufficiently in his lifetime. As we go along, we shall feel an increasing sense of loss, a void which it will take a long time to fill and to forget.

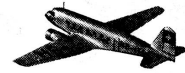
Pastor Hoffmann-de Visme's activities in our colony were so extended and diversified, so intermingled with every aspect of our social life, that many of us knew him better as the man than the priest. He, our spiritual head, unassuming but always optimistic, incurious yet always helpful, with his fine gift of speech, with his deep knowledge of the colony, never assumed direction or guidance where another good man filled a place usefully. Never idle for one moment, thoughtless of his own convenience or health, he devoted himself unsparsingly to his never ending work; he carried with him constantly the worries of his calling. I know that the segregation of a portion of the German speaking colony from his church in Endell Street and the later relations between the two churches was, apart from the loss of his wife, the greatest sorrow in his latter years. He did not desire this schism, he regretted it wholeheartedly, knowing that it could not be for the good of the colony in the long run.

He who had received during his London residence no less than 26 different appeals from various parts of the world to accept ministries elsewhere, with a fine and noble loyalty to his London colony steadfastly refused to accept any of them.

Perhaps the most difficult of all human professions is that of a Minister of the Church. There are other professions, such as the medical one, entirely devoted to the service of others, but none calls for such complete self denial, such absolute selfishness as that of a Minister. It is not only the essence of his calling to assist, sustain and comfort at all times, it is often enough incumbent upon him also to find the funds to be able to do so and this latter necessity is probably the greatest worry in the life of a minister. By it he may be exposed to the criticism of the very people who could be his greatest help, whose assistance he has invoked, but who do not fully approve of his schemes.

Pastor Hoffmann-de Visme was therefore often faced with difficulties not of his own making, but which his dominant nature urged him to solve, single handedly if necessary. To this end he sacrificed a great deal of his none too abundant leisure, depriving himself of the comfort of contemplation and the care of his nerves. The calls upon him became ever more insistent, with the result that he of the giant stature and apparently unbounded vitality was worn out before his time. It may be truly said that this was done in the service of his Faith and of humanity.

Pastor Hoffmann-de Visme and the writer were intimate friends. They were together in all manner of circumstances, sometimes at the church in Endell Street sometimes at the Sunday school outings to a favoured spot in Surrey, at other times on Committees and again in private intercourse. Yet whenever and wherever they met, the writer has never known him to complain either about his work or his health. His outlook was ever hopeful, his judgment sound and lenient, his faith paramount. Regrets he had few, only connected with his life's great tragedy, but he never spoke of them, though they might be in his eyes and voice. He loved sunshine, greenery, peace, and one glimpse of them would apparently suffice to keep him going for another week, another month.



To SWITZERLAND in
3½ HOURS by SWISSAIR

Fastest Service,
Stewardess on board, Luxurious Liner,
No travel trouble.

OPERATING ALL THE YEAR.

Croydon dep. 8.45, Zurich arr. 12.55.
Weekdays only, daily from 12th December
Single £8.2.0, 15 days return £13.16.0.

Lake Geneva, Bernese Oberland, Grisons,
Lucerne and Tessin reached the same day.

Booking by any travel agent or Imperial
Airways (General agent) tel. Victoria 2211
day & night, or Swiss Federal Railways,
11b, Regent Street, S.W.1.

BASLE - LONDON
& VICE VERSA
RHINE GROUPAGE SERVICE

1 to 2 weekly Sailings from Basle
in operation throughout the year

THE MOST ECONOMIC TRANSPORT SERVICE

Average time of transit to London 7 DAYS
to Basle 14 DAYS.

For further particulars apply direct, or
through your Forwarding Agent, to the:

General Steam Shipping Agency Ltd.,
Post Box 98, Basle 10.

Telephone Numbers: MUSEUM 4302 (Visitors) MUSEUM 7055 (Office)
Established 1867
50 Years.
"Ben faranno i Paganì Purgatorio C. zin. Dante
"Venir se ne dee glu tra' miel Meschini."
Dante. Inferno. C. xxvii.

PAGANI'S
RESTAURANT

GREAT PORTLAND STREET, LONDON, W. 1.

:: LINDA MESCHINI } Sole Proprietors. ::
ARTHUR MESCHINI }

SWITZERLAND

£ now buys 40% more Swiss money
yet—

- no formalities with money
- prices to suit every pocket
- quality remains unimpaired
- short and inexpensive journey
- direct rail and air services
- cheap petrol for motorists
- holiday centres for all seasons

Best value in Holiday Travel

INFORMATION from the Swiss Railways & State
Travel Bureau, 11-B Regent Street, London, S.W.1

Drink delicious "Ovaltine"
at every meal—for Health!

By his death we have lost our pastor, and with him more than we can tell to-day. Do not let us forget his work, the lasting good he has done us. Let us remember!

And if it be found that his family is not well provided with the necessities of life, let us stand together again and show our appreciation in a thoughtful and practical manner. Each one of us has lost a friend of high ideals, but his orphans have not lost this only — they have lost both their parents and sole support.

A la mémoire du pasteur R. Hoffmann.

Un culte commémoratif a été célébré samedi à 15 heures en l'église luthérienne du Bourg-de-Four, pour honorer la mémoire du regretté pasteur René Hoffmann-de Visme. De nombreux amis du disparu avaient tenu à témoigner leur sympathie à la famille affligée et à s'associer à l'hommage rendu à ce fidèle serviteur de Dieu.

M. le pasteur Fiedler, de l'Eglise luthérienne de Genève, beau-frère du défunt, ouvrit la cérémonie par la lecture de paroles bibliques, puis rappela quelques souvenirs illustrant la joie rayonnante, le cœur aimant, la foi vaillante de celui dont la vie a enseigné ces deux choses en particulier : il fait bon être chrétien et il fait bon servir par le don total de la vie.

M. le professeur Ad. Keller, au nom du Conseil de la Fédération des Eglises protestantes de la Suisse et comme ami personnel du pasteur Hoffmann, souligna l'œuvre à la fois chrétienne et patriotique accomplie par celui-ci parmi les Suisses de Londres, dont les jeunes surtout ont trouvé en lui un véritable berger. Aussi est-ce non seulement l'Eglise, mais la Suisse tout entière qui est en deuil.

M. H.-L. Henriod, ancien membre du Consistoire de l'Eglise suisse de Londres, collègue de R. Hoffmann en divers conseils et son ami, donne lecture de deux télégrammes de sympathie, l'un de M. le ministre Paravicini et l'autre du Consistoire de l'Eglise suisse de Londres. Il dit ensuite à son tour ce qui a été le disparu, sa cordialité enjouée, son intérêt pour la cause de l'Eglise en général et pour le travail œcuménique, son œuvre admirable auprès des pasteurs étrangers de Londres qu'il groupa en association, son courage dans l'affliction et son désintéressement.

M. Relfs, au nom du Bureau international contre la traite des femmes et des enfants à Londres et au nom du Comité suisse contre la traite des blanches, rappela avec émotion la grande part prise par M. R. Hoffmann à cette croisade, le rôle prépondérant qu'il a joué dans les congrès internationaux où son influence savait orienter les débats vers des conclusions claires et nettes, les services qu'il a rendus à tant de jeunes qu'il a retenus sur la pente de la ruine physique et morale.

Enfin M. le pasteur R. Ostermann, camarade et ami de R. Hoffmann dès leur petite enfance, montra dans le caractère et dans la vie de celui-ci les traces bénies de ses parents qui l'ont véritablement formé pour servir et dont il a reçu cette admirable capacité d'enthousiasme pour la cause de la justice, cette belle et saine exubérance de vie, son amour passionné de la vie et de la nature en quoi il voyait l'œuvre de Dieu. Tous ces traits ont fait du pasteur René Hoffmann un incomparable entraîneur d'hommes, d'Eglise et de jeunesse.

Une prière, suivie de l'Oraison dominicale et de la bénédiction, terminèrent cette émouvante cérémonie.

Tribune de Genève.

Photograph of the late Pastor René Hoffmann-de Visme.

Melles. Hoffmann and Matthay have received so many requests for a copy of Pastor Hoffmann-de Visme's photograph, that arrangements have been made for this to be on sale.

It is an actual print of post card size, finished and mounted with folder (7" x 11") by the photographer who took the original and of which a smaller reproduction appeared in the "Swiss Observer" of the 11th September last.

It will be on sale at 15, Upper Bedford Place, W.C.1, where Mrs. E. Meylan will be pleased to receive enquiries and orders (Telephone MUSEUM 3100).

Price 2/6 each post free.

(Postal Orders accompanying requests, to be made out to Mrs. Meylan.)

A few copies only of cabinet size are also available at 3/6 each post free.

Photographs may also be obtained from the "Swiss Observer," 23, Leonard Street, E.C.2, against the respective remittance.

Any surplus which might arise out of the sale of this photograph will be handed over to the existing small fund of the Sunday School of the Eglise Suisse.

SWITZERLAND AND DEMOCRACY.

By WILLIAM E. RAPPARD.

In the "Fortnightly Review."

For most members of the English-speaking community throughout the world, no doubt, Switzerland is primarily a playground. What interests them most about the Alpine republic is the state of the weather in summer, of the snow in winter and, in all seasons, the cost of transportation, the price of hotels and the rate of exchange between the pound sterling and the dollar on the one hand, and the Swiss franc on the other.

For the more thoughtful, however, Switzerland is also the home of a nation. And certain characteristics of that small, but peculiar, nation have struck the foreign traveller ever since the beginnings of the tourist traffic in the eighteenth century. The general standard of living seemed higher than in the surrounding countries, which was all the more surprising as it was obviously not based on any natural advantages of climate, soil or sub-soil. Furthermore, the people appeared to enjoy an appreciable degree of education, which seemed to account for the discrimination and independence they displayed in judging local and foreign events and institutions. To these features must be added the multi-lingual character of the population and the ancient republican tradition, which has been maintained uninterruptedly ever since the end of the Middle Ages. The question is whether Switzerland deserves the title of traditional home of democracy — the honour freely bestowed upon her by her politicians on all festive occasions. That claim needs to be examined, explained and qualified.

If, by democracy, we mean a régime in which the people rule, that is, in which the majority of the people freely choose and dismiss their rulers and approve or condemn the policies proposed by them, then Switzerland was certainly not a democracy prior to 1830.

Until then, the Swiss people had never been their own masters in the modern democratic sense of the term. To be sure, they were neither, as a national whole, under foreign rule nor, as local units, particularly dissatisfied with their traditional masters. But prior to 1798, large districts had for centuries been administered as subject provinces by some or all of the thirteen sovereign cantons. Moreover, in the latter, the countryside was generally governed by the capital cities, in which public authority was vested in a small number of privileged families. These families together enjoyed powers wider on the whole than those of an absolute monarch, since, by right of birth, their members possessed not only executive and legislative, but also complete judicial authority. The whole political structure, built up on a basis of military and economic power, rested on a tradition which, even if seldom challenged and though never supported by much actual force, was certainly not synonymous with expressed consent.

How is it, then, that, even before the nineteenth century, the Swiss should have been looked upon, if not as a democratic nation, at least as a body of particularly free citizens?

The fact is undoubted, and its explanation is not difficult to discover:

In the first place, Switzerland owes her national independence to the successful resistance which the free peasants of the valleys surrounding the Lake of Lucerne offered the authority and the encroachments of the Hapsburgs at the end of the thirteenth century. Thus, from their very origin, national independence and civic freedom were, in Switzerland, closely related, even if not undistinguishable, ideals.

The reputation of the Swiss as a free, self-governing people, has, in the second place, been enhanced in the opinion of Europe by the fact that from the beginnings of their history the first three cantons which constituted the primitive nucleus of the Confederation, enjoyed institutions which were called democratic and which may truly be so considered. They have recognized no authority superior to their *Landsgemeinde*, the periodic gathering of all male citizens, in which each has an equal vote. As for over five centuries, in these cantons, all magistrates have been annually elected and all laws regularly approved by the *Landsgemeinde*, they may well be held to be the cradle of European democracy.

To be sure, the political importance of the small and poor rural *Landsgemeinde* cantons was soon overshadowed by that of the aristocratic city states of Lucerne, Zurich and Berne, with whom they allied themselves in the course of the fourteenth century. To be sure also, the *Landsgemeinde* cantons themselves, by refusing full citizenship to the immigrants into their territory, by accepting the authority of a limited number of powerful families, whose control was facilitated by the lack of all secrecy inherent in the constitution itself, and by long opposing all progressive measures within their own territory as well as in the Confederation, have displayed a spirit very unlike, and indeed often consciously opposed to, that of modern democracy. But

these facts, however, significant in themselves, did not prevent the ideas of Switzerland and democratic government from becoming and from remaining associated in the minds of most political observers.

Now in the eighteenth century, before the French Revolution, the ideas of republicanism and democracy were commonly identified. Most progressive reformers of the age were critical of the monarchical despotism which prevailed in the surrounding countries. Switzerland, although far from democratic, had never recognized the supreme authority of any kings. The plurality of her rulers, however autocratic, oligarchical and illiberal, made of her a republic or a confederacy of republics which, as such, was acclaimed as a more popular form of government than monarchy. Nor was this entirely an illusion. On the very eve of the French Revolution, when the urban aristocracies which ruled over the greater part of Switzerland had become more exclusive in composition and less liberal in spirit, than ever before, there obtained a far greater measure of local self-government in the cantons than in almost all other parts of Europe.

Then, again, the neutrality which Switzerland had been able to maintain throughout most of the wars of the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and the state of internal contentment which prevailed throughout the country had allowed her to do without any standing armies. This also made her governments appear less oppressive to critics of the institutions of that time.

Finally — and as a result of all these conditions — there prevailed among the Swiss people a spirit of independence which impressed most foreign observers. Thus, one of the most intelligent of these observers, William Coxe, M.A., Rector of Bemerton, who had travelled extensively in Switzerland at the end of the *ancien régime*, wrote, after referring to the recent pacific history of the country:

"The felicity of Switzerland, however, does not consist merely in this peculiar exemption from the miseries of war; as there is no country in which happiness and contentment more universally prevails among the people. For, whether the government is aristocratical, democratical, or mixed; a general spirit of liberty pervades and actuates the several constitutions: even the oligarchical states, which are usually the most tyrannical, are here peculiarly mild, and the property of the subject is in general securely guarded against every kind of violation."

That, in spite of all these traits, Switzerland was not a modern democracy at the end of the eighteenth century was clearly shown by the attitude she adopted towards the French Revolution. Not her aristocratic governors only and the Swiss regiments which protected Louis XVI, against his revolted subjects, but the vast bulk of the Swiss people were bitterly critical and suspicious of the happenings in Paris long before the French armies invaded the country in 1798, to free them from their alleged tyrants. The moral and material sufferings which Switzerland endured during the dark period of French domination which followed have not yet been forgotten. Although rarely mentioned in public discussions to-day, their memory may perhaps help to explain the present attitude of the majority of the Swiss people towards Soviet Russia, the Spanish civil war and even the French Popular Front.

All revolutions abroad, when accompanied by active propaganda in Switzerland, arouse profound distrust in a people that has never forgotten the imposition by foreign force at the end of the eighteenth century of a system of representative democratic government very similar to that which they have developed of their own free will in the course of the nineteenth century.

After the collapse of the Napoleonic régime in 1815, the traditional Swiss aristocracies, which had been overthrown by French revolutionary armies, were restored under the reactionary auspices of the Allied Governments. The beginnings of the national movement towards modern democracy in Switzerland date back to this period. The people, having tasted of liberty and equality, even though in the poisoned cups of foreign invasion, no longer submitted in passive contentment to the oligarchical rule of the privileged classes, whom they had for centuries obeyed.

From 1815 until 1830, the substitution of modern democratic for the existing traditional institutions became the goal of all popular leaders. Speaking, in the spring of 1830, at the annual gathering of the Helvetic Society, then one of the most active organs of public opinion, Judge Schinz, of Zurich, employing what was to become President Lincoln's famous formula of democracy, declared: "All Swiss governments must recognize that they are but governments of the people, by the people and for the people."

When the liberal revolutions broke out in Paris and in Brussels, in the Summer of the same year, and when it became apparent that the Powers of the Holy Alliance regarded as the guardians of the régime of the Restoration, were