

Oberhasli and the late king Albert

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OBERHASLI AND THE LATE KING ALBERT.

The classic mountaineering peaks of the Oberhasli, the Engelhörner, (Bern.Oberland), will ever remind the people of Meiringen that they have lost a true and noble guest, who returned to them faithfully every year. How popular King Albert was! Not because of his rank, but because of his sportsmanship. He avoided all the fuss and excitement that usually attends a Royal Visit, withdrew quietly to his villa in Lucerne. And when he reappeared, it was in simple mountaineering dress, alone. Then he would mount his motor-cycle or get into his car and drive himself over the Brünig Pass to Meiringen. His guides were waiting for him, and he picked them up as he reached their homes; one sat beside him, the other in the back of the car. The party was complete. Each of the three mountaineers carried his own gear, his own rucksack; what was used by all was equally divided. The King had become an Alpinist. In the hut, each had his allotted tasks; chopping wood, kindling a fire, drawing water, washing up after breakfast, folding the bedding, cleaning the floor. The King never shirked, or needed waiting on - he was a man and a mountaineer like his companions. But more than even they, perhaps, he knew the reward of those who love the mountains, the sweetness of solitude.

The tours he loved were for the experienced, the difficulties encountered not easy for a man nearer sixty than fifty. But he did his share of the work; he would have it so. He was the first to ascend the Kleine Wellhorn with a rope; in 1931 he climbed the Kleine Gelmerhorn, and, two years later, the Bächlistock. That was his last big tour.

During the last five years of his life he was to be seen in Oberhasli every summer. But, much to his disgust, his "democratic" mountaineering attracted journalists and sensation-seekers, all of whom spoke and wrote and invented until they had given the world a distorted picture of the Mountaineer King. But King Albert made no comment - he went his way silent and undisturbed. - Why did he return again and again to Oberhasli? The question is easy to answer; he found there mountains and men with whom he liked to be. Oberhasli will not forget him.

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"ZIBELEMÄRIT" (ONION MARKET) and "CHACHELMÄRIT" (CROCKERY MARKET).

One of the quaintest and most typical traditions preserved by the peasants of Switzerland is the Bernese Onion Market, which in the course of decades has attained about the same degree of importance as Nottingham Goose Fair. On the last Monday in November, the streets and squares of Berne are thronged with the population of the whole district. Onions and vegetables of every kind are brought into the town from the surrounding countryside, the arcades and thoroughfares of the old town are barricaded with the stalls of the peasants and the great variety of their wares. On this day the whole of Berne's supply of vegetables and other agricultural produce is purchased for the Winter. The Onion is the symbol of the day. It is to be seen everywhere, in yard-long plaits on the stalls, and even in the form of marzipan decorations for hats, button-holes and watch-chains. Till late in the evening the merry hustle and bustle goes on. As soon as a favourable opportunity appears, youth takes charge of the situation and a confetti battle ensues, varied by every form of fun and mischief that can possibly be thought out. -- The traditional scene of the Crockery Market is the Theaterplatz, and here everything that could by any effort of the imagination stop a gap in the household stock of china is on view. Every kind of ware from the finest Fayence and Majolica to the humblest of household china is sold and bought. An old tradition has it that the Bernese swain should present the damsel of his choice with a pretty china cup bought at the Market. And, on November 25th, there is no other present that she would treasure more.