

News in brief

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LEARNING TO CLIMB.

Man can learn everything if he adapts his ideas to the purpose, grasps the sense of things and masters their association. But just as little as the infant in the cradle can be told in advance whether he will ever learn how to live his life worthily, so little does the mountaineering novice know whether he will ever succeed in mastering the immense textbook which the alpine world and the life of a mountaineer opens for him. Mountaineering is neither a science nor an accomplishment - it is a creed, a passion. It is therefore immaterial whether one ends one's career as master or apprentice; to be included in the guild is the ultimate matter. The man in whose breast the real affection for the mountains awakens will derive exalting spiritual values from his intercourse with nature. He does not need to conquer any virgin granite wall, and no one expects of him an uninterrupted record of peaks achieved; it is sufficient if he feels himself drawn to the mountains, if the very idea gives him promise of joy.

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NEWS IN BRIEF.

AMDEN has 3,000 inhabitants and no doctor. During the tourist season a medical practitioner makes two calls a week, but this community seems to have very little need of help. They are firm believers in Alpine herbs, of which nature has bestowed upon them in plenty.

BASLE: The highest level of Sunday tourist traffic was reached on the 8th August last. 34 special trains from Ostend, Boulogne and Rotterdam brought 13,000 holiday-makers from England and Holland, while previously the usual average was about 24 trains per Sunday. Since the beginning of this year's season, 200 special trains have reached the Federal Railway Station of Basle, conveying a total of 80,000 tourists.

WASHINGTON: The U.S.A. Ministry for Commerce estimates that the Americans touring Europe this season have spent about 600 Million Dollars, about 100 Mill. more than last year. Let us hope that Switzerland received a fair share of it.

THE FRUIT GARDENS OF WALLIS: Within a very few decades great changes have taken place in the lower Wallis. Extensive draining has hemmed the inferior and swampy soil into a veritable fruit-garden. Last year's figures of fruit and vegetables are enormous and a wonderful example of what soil of poor quality can produce if correctly treated. 1936 has been a rather poor season for fruit excepting strawberries. The quantities of the various crops were as follows:- 481,000 kilos asparagus, 1,550,000 kilos strawberries, 482,000 kilos apricots (1934 total 3, mill.) 2,2 Mill. apples, $\frac{1}{2}$ mill. kilos pears, 177,000 kilos grapes, etc. The city of Zurich bought 40% of these products, Berne 10%, etc. Nearly 700,000 kilos of apples went to France.

PORT OF BASLE: Although Switzerland has no direct access to the sea, it is nevertheless, connected, by Basle, with the great maritime traffic. The pending regularization of the Rhine between Basle and Strasburg, together with the use of the Kembs Canal, will give a great extension to Swiss Rhine navigation. A sum of 30 million Swiss francs has been employed to equip the port of Basle with the latest technical improvements. In 1936 its total traffic amounted to 1,999,887 tons - nearly 2 Million tons.

The merchandise arriving at Basle by river is not destined to that city only, but is distributed over the whole of Switzerland; such was the case for an average of 84% of the tonnage unloaded between 1924 and 1927.

A large modern railway station allows for the rapid transportation of the goods to their respective destinations, oftentimes by direct goods trains. In view of favouring the above, the Federal Railways grant an important tariff reduction.

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SPORTS IN SWITZERLAND.

Switzerland, long known as "the Playground of Europe," has, by degrees, become the "Playground of the whole world," a fact which is clearly proved by the choice of Lausanne as the permanent seat of the International Olympic Committee. Abundant facilities for sports of every kind are provided by the various hotel-keepers' associations, tourist offices, railway and steamer companies, etc. Bodily exercise, in the shape of games, sports, mountaineering etc. also occupies a prominent position in every scholastic establishment. Gymnastics are compulsory in all classes, both for girls and boys. Football, hockey, tennis, boating, swimming, skating, ski-ing and tobogganing are practised according to the season. Nearly all private schools not situated in alpine regions migrate to the mountains for a certain period in summer and winter, in order to give their pupils the benefit of mountain air and sunshine, and to train them in the arts of mountain-climbing and ski-running.

There is no school, however modest, that has not its clubs, teams and colours and which, following the example of English schools, has not one or two yearly matches with rival establishments.

Baden Powell's Boy Scouts have found a ready emulation in the schools, where a great number of sections, groups and squads were formed. At Kandersteg there is an International Home for Boy Scouts. Schools of every description compete with one another in the arrangement of sports events. There are also riding and fencing-schools subsidised by the authorities, allowing extra reductions to students. Sports are no less practised at the Universities, where powerful organisations are found, such as the University Club at Zurich. The academic Alpine Clubs have built several Club huts in the mountains at their own expense.

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