

Two Swiss cities observe fascinating old customs in carnival time

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"Of course I do. His name is General Montgomery."

I received, when I was in Switzerland, a very moving letter from a Swiss in which he paid a noble tribute to the British who fought not only for their own freedom, but also for ours. England's traditional policy of "balance of power" was a protection for us, for Swiss freedom is endangered the moment that one power on the Continent assumes a dominating position. The much-abused "balance of power" policy merely means that it is not in England's interests that any big bully should make things unpleasant for the little nations; and for this reason "the balance of power" is a doctrine which commends itself to none more than to the little countries like Switzerland.

All Switzerland waited in suspense for Mr. Bevin's first speech as Foreign Minister, and all Switzerland rejoiced when they heard in that speech the authentic voice, not of party, but of England.

"It is easy," a great ambassador once remarked to me, "to pick holes in our foreign policy, and even easier to talk nonsense about 'Power Politics'; but, however much Continental nations may enjoy criticising us, there is one question they always ask when they are in a jam. 'Is England on our side?'"

The prestige of our own country was never higher in Switzerland than it is to-day. Unfortunately we are doing very little to take advantage of the prestige. The Americans are sweeping aside all war-time controls which are likely to hinder their export trade, and are making a great and successful bid to capture the Swiss market. As our hopes of skiing next winter in Switzerland depend very largely on our getting our share of that market, our failure to do so is bad news for British skiers.

TWO SWISS CITIES OBSERVE FASCINATING OLD CUSTOMS IN CARNIVAL TIME.

On February 28 Lucerne will have its traditional Fritschi Parade, also a Lenten play on one of the town's open squares. The origin of this merry-making goes back to medieval days when masquerades, archery and wrestling matches, also open-air theatricals were frequently arranged for the benefit of the inhabitants and neighboring towns. The latter in turn staged similar affairs to which Lucerne was invited.

Then came a time when war clouds dimmed Lucerne's carefree happiness. Many citizens enlisted for foreign military service and diversions became fewer. In those dull times the amusing sayings and merry pranks of Fridli an der Halden, generally known as "Brother Fritschi", became the topic of the day.

After his participation in the Burgundian wars Fritschi's fame as a humorist spread throughout the land. Once he was carried off to Basle and several hundred burghers of Lucerne marched to that city. They were welcomed by a reception committee attired in martial uniforms and Fritschi waved a greeting from one of the patrician residences. The mock warriors from Lucerne then were induced to enjoy several days of feasting at Basle.

Upon his return to Lucerne, Fritschi inaugurated a celebration whose main feature was a parade of men and boys in armor. This procession was held on the last day of the pre-Lenten Carnival and with the addition of several historical scenes it still is today an outstanding attraction of the Carnival season.

In addition to the Fritschi Parade Lucerne will feature a Gala Carnival Parade of the Weyzunft, one of the old guilds, on March 4.

On March 11, 12 and 13 Basle, the stately Swiss city on the Rhine, will be the scene of Carnival festivities, parades and balls. The Basle Carnival is known throughout Europe for its art and wit. In preparation for this gay event groups are formed and costumes fashioned with the greatest secrecy. Clever illuminated posters make allusions to events and personalities of the day and leading citizens need a good sense of humor, for they are never spared.

The festivities start at four o'clock in the morning, when all lights in the centre of the town are turned out. Then, to the sound of drums, groups arrive from everywhere on the market place, while piccolo players start to furnish a befitting accompaniment. Huge painted lanterns provide the only illumination, just as they did in the days when this ancient custom was born. Drum concerts are a speciality of Basle and school boys receive early training in this form of musical expression in regular drummers' schools. As a consequence drum playing in the Swiss Rhine city has been developed into a real art and achieves inspiring effects.

Inns and restaurants are duly prepared to receive the early paraders and delicious soup of roasted flour, as well as open-face onion pie, are obligatory delicacies served everywhere. After 7 a.m. the merrymakers usually proceeded to their respective daily tasks but at 2 p.m. the real festivities begin. A magnificent parade is first on the program, with balls and other gaieties following at night and on the next two days.

The second day of the Carnival belongs more to the children. They, too, have their masquerade parade.

Marie Widmer.

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SWISS PRODUCTION AND EXPORTS OF STOVES AND RANGES.

Several large factories in Switzerland are engaged in the manufacture of all types of cooking stoves and ranges. These factories produce only the top grades of stoves, and, despite the difficulties in securing raw materials, they have been relatively successful in maintaining the usual standard of quality. During the war, the shortage of raw materials caused a substantial decline in the volume of production and sales.

Stoves using gas or coal as fuel continue to be the most popular types in Switzerland. Electric stoves and ranges are produced to some extent, and those using oil as fuel are few. Combination stoves employing more than one kind of fuel are reported to be increasingly popular, gas and coal being the favorite combination.

Although moderate quantities of stoves and ranges were exported during the pre-war years, such trade has not been possible during the past few years. Swiss manufacturers, however, are looking forward to resuming this exportation.

In normal years the Swiss industry can satisfy the entire domestic demand for stoves. The production capacity of household gas cooking stoves for instance, is estimated at 15,000 units annually, whereas sales average only 8,000 units. The present shortage is due chiefly to lack of raw materials.

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SWISS EMBROIDERY INDUSTRY NEEDS AID.

Switzerland's embroidery industry faces extinction unless given financial backing, according to Swiss press reports. There are only about 800 hand embroidery machines compared with 16,988 in 1890; and only 794 shuttle and pantograph machines compared with 5,906 in 1916, of which not more than 470 are actually fit for