

Switzerland today [continued]

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countries and Sweden show marked signs of improvement.

SWITZERLAND'S POSITION IN THE WORLD ECONOMY.

During the course of the last quarter, the economic negotiations between Switzerland and Great Britain have ended in an agreement. An overall balance of payments has been agreed upon between Switzerland and the whole of the sterling area for a further period of a year, that is to say until March, 1950. The economic agreements with Egypt have been extended for a further period. The agreements concluded at Berne in September 1948 with a delegation of the Yugoslav Government have been ratified, and came into force on March 15th.

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          SWITZERLAND TODAY.
          (Continued).
    By: E. Merz, Auckland.
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Our tenancy in Spiez terminated the end of June, and meantime, we had an offer, in response to an advertisement, of a modern flat with garden on the slope of the Sonnenberg in Lucerne. This is probably the most popular tourist centre, apart from Lugano or St. Moritz, and we spent two and a half very enjoyable months in Lucerne. Along the fine promenade, shaded by chestnut trees, are dozens of hotels, some famed the world over like the Schweizerhof or the National. But to us, the old town was of much more interest. How often did we walk across the two old wooden bridges with scenes of historical pictures painted on the sides and roof, or we went to the old town hall with its unique collection of old weapons and banners. The ancient great walls, with their towers and battlements still stand today, perfectly preserved, and at night, up to 11.30 in Summer. eight of the towers are flood-lit, and viewed from the Sonnenberg, looked like a lighted crown above the city and lake. Our apartment was two minutes walk from the famous "Gutsch" Hotel, about 200 yards above the city, and we often had dinner, or a cup of "cafe melange" on the spacious terrace overlooking the finest view of Lucerne. Do not miss to visit the Gutsch when there, the lovely pine forests all around the hotel, the natural situation is really something to admire.

During the sojourn in Lucerne, as well as in Spiez the previous months, I made it a practice to rise at 6 a.m., and before breakfast had a brisk walk of 1½ to 2 hours. These outings counted among my most precious experiences. I went through miles of stately pine-forest; in Spiez way at the other side of the Kander river along the slopes of the Niesen, I often came across grazing deers or hares; or in Lucerne along the Sonnenberg past Kriens through lucious meadows, watching the farmers cutting grass for their cattle. The air is very invigorating and to walk sharply for two hours seemed no effort at all. The farmers today appeared better equipped, I saw few cutting grass by hand; most of them had a small petrol driven machine, manipulated by hand and quite efficient and quick. Practically every farm had an electric pump for manure, with long pipes attached, which could be spread across the adjoining fields.

Lucerne, spread along the shores of the Lake and both sides of the river Reuss, is the most ideal centre for tourists. Countless excursions near and far, are possible for weeks on end, each more charming than the other. After we had thoroughly explored the city, not forgetting the wonderful Lion Monument, the lovely wood-carving shops, the fine bathing beach Lido, the new art-gallery where a matchless collection of paintings could be viewed, we commenced a series of day excursions. The first fine day we went on a round trip over the lake. This is an experience one cannot easily forget. Along the water's edge, you see lovely kept gardens with many charming homes or large hotels and the ever present green meadows. We sailed past the beautifully kept Kastaminbaum Hotel; the Burgerstock station with the imposing hotels about 3000 feet above, in the middle of pineclad hills and on towards Rutli, the cradle and foundation of our Confederation. Further up towards Fluelen we admired the much depicted view of the Tellskapelle with the imposing background of the Urirotstock and the

Bristenstock. On the way back in the afternoon (lunch is served in a fine Dining Room on the ship), we passed Brunnen, Vitznau and Weggis. At this place we left the boat to pay a visit to our New Zealand compatriots, Mr. and Mrs. Schlatter of Wellington, who were also on holiday in Switzerland. There are indeed few more charming places in the whole of Switzerland than Weggis, and I am sure the Schlatters enjoyed it very much. At the foot of the famed Rigi, the view across the lake with the lonely Pilatus on the right, the Burgerstock directly opposite and the chain of snow-capped peaks behind, has inspired many of the beauty of our land.

Our next tour was the Rigi. Again we had perfect weather, although as a whole July-August were rather inclement. We left early in the morning across the lake to Vitznau to ascend by electric rail. As previously remarked, thousands visit this famous peak, in fact it is by far the "most visited" mountain in all the world. From the summit, which stands alone, (together with the Pilatus), like a sentinel at the northern approach of the Alps, we enjoyed a very extensive and wonderful view of Central Switzerland. The Jungfrau group and all the other great Bernese peaks could be easily distinguished at the far distance. Whilst there we unexpectedly met a family from Australia who travelled with us on the same vessel from Sydney to London; proving that everybody goes up the Rigi.

Although a comprehensive view of the lake is afforded from the Rigi, we thought the Burgerstock has a much more attractive and charming panorama, being somewhat lower down the lake level. The Burgerstock is connected from the lake by a very steep cable rail, terminating at the base of one of the three large hotels; thence you walk along a lovely path for twenty minutes, and reach the famous outdoor elevator. This is a lift ascending 544 feet direct, from a 3000 feet precipice to the crest of the mountain, a thrilling ascent, believe me, and looking straight down from the platform, more than twice the height of the Eiffeltower, takes quite steady nerves.

Another exciting climb is the Pilatus. This railway was built in 1888 and apart from the Jungfrau, is probably the most celebrated. From the shore at Alpnachstad this fine electric cable-rail is climbing up to 7000 feet and some sections are the keenest engineering feats we have seen. The line skirts precipices and climbs sheer rock barriers which are so wild and steep, that one cannot stop admiring the spirit of enterprise of the builders. The view from the top was more inspiring to us than from the Rigi, as all the various arms of the lake of Lucerne are spread right in front of you, and the view of the Alps is even more extensive.

Engelberg is another attractive resort, both for Summer and Winter sport. After crossing the lake to Stansstad, a narrow gage electric rail leads to Engelberg and from there everybody ascends to the Jochpass about 8000 feet up. This trip is done in three stages, each with a different mode of transport. First by cable-rail to Gerschnialp, comparatively a short stretch, from there by an "aerial railway" to Trubsee. This type of "rail" is really a suspended lift, from 50 to 200 feet above the ground. The lift has room for twenty passengers, and the great cables are suspended on enormously high steel posts. From the terminus of the aerial, we walked along the shore of the little, quite greenish looking lake of Trub. The third and last stage to the pass is climbed by "chair lift" more thrilling and interesting than all the others. Now we were among the highest mountains in central Switzerland. Glaciers, rocks, forests, all combine in a magnificent scene, and way down below we could see Engelberg in the centre of a charming valley. The descent was full of interest and beauty and after reaching Lucerne at 10 o'clock, we were well satisfied with the many fine and interesting experiences.

Shortly after arrival in Switzerland, we obtained a six-months Season ticket for the Federal Railway, enabling us to travel freely around the country wherever we wanted to go. These tickets also include lake travel and a 50% rebate on most of the mountain railways. Thus, we had some excursion every week and made many trips which, however, would be too long to describe.

Geneva, we always wished to see and we travelled from Lucerne over the well-known Brunig-pass to Interlaken, thence to Montreux and along the interesting and

