

# Our fatherland [continued]

Autor(en): **E.M.**

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## OUR FATHERLAND

(Continuation)

### GRAUBUNDEN

(Second part)

Should you intend visiting the Engadin, as countless thousands do every year, you would board the non-stop express Zurich-Chur and thence onwards by the Albula railway. This famous line, completed in 1903, despite its 40 tunnels, offers the traveller a succession of mountain scenery which almost takes his breath away by its beauty. First you pass numerous small valleys, through which the train mounts steeply at times and yet at an astonishing rate of speed, swinging round bends and dashing through long and short tunnels, until finally you reach St. Moritz.

In the fourteenth century St. Moritz was already a place of pilgrimage and 200 years later the mineral springs were famous, attracting ladies of fashion arriving in sedan chairs and gentlemen on horseback, to drink the health-giving water. Today you read as if the resort is solely for foreign princes, film stars and millionaires, but happily this is not quite the truth. And if St. Moritz is not yet spoiled by cosmopolitan wordliness, it is due to the sturdy sense of its native inhabitants, who, encouraged and built up a wonderful variety of open-air sports. It was this type of people who, for instance, were tobogganing vigorously during the seventies of last century and who commenced constructing the famous "Cresta Run," over a long and steep descent that still held solidly for the Olympic Winter Games in 1948. Today the Cresta ice run is renowned the world over. There, every winter, race the low, very heavy steel toboggans. The sletch's skeleton has a sliding body on which the prone rider can drag himself forward, like a rower who moves his body quickly backwards. It is most interesting to read some rules of the Bobsleigh Club founded in 1897, when bobsleighs were using public roads and descending traffic had to give way to any ascending vehicles and maybe were greeted with insulting shouts from indignant drivers. Among others these old rules provided that "there shall be no bobbing on Sunday, and that each crew must carry at least two ladies. The crew could, if it wished, get up speed by a running start, pushing the bob and then leaping on it, and doing the same on the line of descent if they cared." Such sport is certainly informal, involving plain human character and a good deal of mirth. Good teams today, competing vigorously, equipped with crash helmets and electric timing, often finish the course within seconds of one another. The modern race today tends to be like a test with obedient machines, all timed to split seconds by a stop watch. There is no

doubt, however, that the Cresta races call for high courage. On the other hand, should you care for the "Curling" sport, which is a variety of bowls played with large, round, polished stones, with handles attached to them, it would be about as sedate an occupation as can be imagined.

You may find some totally other aspect of native life, when you walk in St. Moritz's paved streets: a long herd of cows, with loudly ringing bells, may take possession even of the pathway and making one feel, what is quite true, that it is still they, and the many village children on the way to school, and the parents as well, who are the real owners of the place. One of the cows even may stray to the village fountain and, despite the interference of numerous small boys, linger awhile, as thought to assert her independence as a true Engadiner. Nor are any of the companions in the herd to be hurried any more than she; conscious of their right, and to the loud clanging of the bells they slowly go their way.

Though the Albula railway ends at St. Moritz, one can go by comfortable Apline Post car along the beautiful lakes through Silvaplana, to Sils Maria and on to Maloya from where these Post-cars run right through a corner of Italy to Lugano. Sils Maria has often been called the prettiest village of the Engadine and is in an admirable centre for many fine walks. At Maloya you can see something not often found in Switzerland; a rich man's folly. This is the Chateau Belvedere, in a magnificent situation, overlooking the valley towards Italy. It was begun in 1884 by a Belgian capitalist, who also built the picturesque and large Palace Hotel nearby. The Chateau was never finished and was never occupied; only tourists inspect the partly ruined walls and gardens where one sees several pot holes left by ancient glaciers.

Pontresina, south of St. Moritz, can easily be reached by the Bernina Railway, and is one of the most delightfully situated spots in the upper Engadine. The dark pine forests which surround the village provide ideal walks for non-mountaineers. And from Pontresina, the railway follows the old Bernina Post Road over the high pass to Tirano in Italy, through some truly magnificent scenic country. The Bernina Railway is the highest adhesion rail in Europe, that is to say the railway which reaches the greatest height above sea level without rack and pinion. The highest point is 7,400 ft. and the terminus, Tirano is 1360 ft. The descent from the Hospice to Poschiavo and further to Tirano offered great difficulties for the construction. Many tunnels were needed and by Brusio a complete spiral bridge had to be built. Enormous protection against avalanches and winter snows had to be built for the depth of snow on the pass averages between 15 and 20 feet in winter; and the rail

runs during the whole winter. The panorama from Alp Grum, just south of the Hospice, is most inspiring. In the foreground is a view deep down to the terraces of Cavaglia and deeper still, to the blue lake of Poschiavo. In the distance south, already into Italy, are the Bergamasker Alps. To the west a number of high peaks lead to the famous Piz Palu, from which descends a large glacier only a stone's throw from the viewpoint of the Alp Grum.

( To be continued )

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### **A Serious Blow to the Principle of Free Trade: the United States Raises the Duty on Watches**

The recent decision of President Eisenhower to accept the recommendations of the American Tariff Commission has resulted in the raising of duty on watches imported into the United States by as much as 50 per cent. This step, which seriously affects one of Switzerland's most important export industries, is at the same time a direct blow at the principle of the freedom of international trade. It has been received with great misgivings, not only in Switzerland, but also in the United States itself.

The Swiss watchmaking industry, represented by 550 factories employing some 55,000 workers, produces Switzerland's main export commodity to the United States. Watches, in fact, constitute nearly half of America's purchases of Swiss goods (1953: total of Swiss exports to the United States 852,000,000 francs, 402,000,000 of which were for watches). The increase of the present tariff by 50 per cent. will result in raising the customs duty on Swiss watches from 36 to 53 per cent. of their value, which corresponds to an increase of 17 to 18 per cent. It is feared, in competent circles, that this rise may have serious effects on employment and oblige factories to dismiss redundant workers. But it is not only one branch of production that is affected by this measure. Its effects will be felt by Swiss economy as a whole. Watch exports in fact provide Switzerland with one third of the dollars she needs to pay for her purchases in the United States. If the matter is considered on a higher plane, it must be admitted quite impartially that the recent American decision has a much more serious significance than just an unfortunate move with regard to Switzerland. It is the principle of the freedom of international trade that has been imperilled, and by the very country which has constituted itself the most ardent advocate of the principle.

### **Opinions of the Swiss Press**

The Swiss press is unanimous in deploring this move on the part of the United States which strikes such a severe blow at a Swiss industry exporting a third of its output to the United States and employing one-tenth of the nation's workers. The *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* qualifies this decision as a "world economic drama" which threatens to create a dollar problem in a country where it was hitherto unknown, and whose consequences cannot be foreseen. As a result of this action, the United States will lose the position of leaders in the economic field which they claimed and which they had held for some time. In the *Gazette de Lausanne*, Mr. Jean Seitz declares that "a powerful nation has deliberately struck a blow, hoped mortal by some, at the activity of a country which asks only to be allowed to live in peace, a peace based on skilled labour." The same commentator regrets that three American watch factories have succeeded in persuading President Eisenhower to take a decision "that risks destroying the high opinion in which America is held throughout the world and her doctrinal position among the nations."

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### **Swiss Exports of Capital**

Last year, Switzerland was the only European country which furnished important capital, emanating from private sources, for investments abroad. In 1953, five foreign loans were subscribed in Switzerland, two of them being issued by the International Bank for Reconstruction.

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### **A New Underground Electric Plant**

A new stage has been passed in the work of rendering utilisable the hydraulic forces in Switzerland. For, it was within the last few days that the finishing touch was put to the power plant at the Oberaar, on the Grimsel, thus crowning the vast construction job which has been going on for several years in the upper valley of the Hasli.

The Oberaar artificial lake is the fourth of its kind, created in this region, in accordance with a general plan. This reservoir is situated at an altitude of 2300 metres, and its waters come right to the foot of the upper glacier at the Aar. It possesses a capacity of 58 million m<sup>3</sup>. In order to bring it into being, it was necessary to build a dam, a hundred metres high and representing a mass of concrete amounting to 453,000 m<sup>3</sup>. The Lake of Oberaar supplies water to a power plant of the same name,