

Notes & gleanings

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NOTES & GLEANINGS.

Several correspondents in *The Times* have taken up the challenge with regard to excessive hotel charges in Switzerland, and their rejoinders offer quite pleasant reading. One states that he is staying at a good hotel near Montreux and is paying a pension price of Frs. 22.— per day for himself, wife and child, whilst another one rightly points out that the much assailed Kurtaxe is merely a contribution for the making of mountain paths, opening up places of interest, and putting up seats for the benefit of visitors. But the best is a little article entitled "My Swiss Village" in the *Evening News* (Aug. 16th) from the pen of Joan Kennedy, who writes as follows:—

"Ting-long, tong-long, dong-long!"

All day long you hear it—the music of the cow-bells as the beasts graze upon the mountain slopes. When the herdsmen drive home the cows, as dusk drops down the valley, the chime of the cow-bells sounds the curfew to the gently Swiss peasant, whose life runs smoothly in this pleasant land.

There is music, too, in the wind as it blows through the pines and in the many mountain streams as they come tumbling down the ravines.

Life goes in leisurely pace. The peasant women bring down the family washing to the village fountains, where an endless stream of water provides the rinsing bowl. Washing-day is gossip-day, for every passing friend stays awhile to chat.

There is good gold in the Swiss pocket, and plenty of it. Paper money may be in circulation for convenience, but not from necessity. To the Briton part of the joy of a visit to Switzerland comes in chinking good twenty-franc pieces in his pocket, as though there had been no war. Other joys are cheap tobacco and chocolate.

We eat peaches as though they were blackberries, and the fruits of the local vineyards come via the bottle to our glass.

But even in rich little Switzerland there is a reminder of troublous times. Madame and Monsieur, who usually pass from France to French Switzerland for the summer holidays, are staying away. That vast difference in the exchange is too much for them. So, too, with the usual German visitors. None of the hotels and chalets are overcrowded, although the English-speaking peoples are normal in numbers.

One cannot live in Switzerland at pre-war rates, even in a Swiss village. At my chalet Madame tells me that her maids demand more francs per month and more freedom—even as runs the tale with the English housewife. But the Swiss are not profiteering on their visitors. Prices, except in the matter of baths, are fair. One lives in comfort for 10 francs per day, when one leaves behind the hotels de luxe."

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Zermatt and the Matterhorn take at present a very prominent part in the published accounts of travellers. The "Zermatt Camp" (referred to in *S. O.* Aug. 12th) and its doings are recorded in the *Western Morning News and Mercury* (Aug. 11th and 16th) by a churchman in a captivating style that will not fail to attract further adherents to this novel movement. The syren charms of the Matterhorn and the heroic tale of its many would-be conquerors are impressed upon our mind; we quote the following few lines:—

"Most visitors to Zermatt get their first view of the Matterhorn from the window of the little train which four times a day climbs the Visp Valley. When nearing Zermatt a magic word is whispered, there is a general movement towards the carriage windows, the engine whistles, the line takes a sharp curve, and there, before wondering eyes, stands the most beautiful mountain in Europe.

It would be difficult to find anyone who has forgotten that first carriage window view of the Matterhorn, and it is not too much to say that for every look at any of the neighbouring mountains, glorious and wonderful as they are, the visitor instinctively takes ten looks at what Ruskin calls 'the most noble cliff in Europe.'

The Matterhorn exerts a strange fascination over many minds. Nor is this to be wondered at. There is something about its strange triangular form which suggests that long ago

it was chiselled by a giant hand; something about its sides, along which clouds in fantastic shapes may in bad weather often be seen chasing each other; something about its summit, around which tempests often rage of which the dwellers in the valley know nothing, or about which, in the bright sunshine, little filmy clouds dart about like swallows, or, running together, lengthen into gay streamers of sunlit cloud. There is something fascinating even about the base of this mountain, which rests upon a bed of ice and snow; to this must be added its strangest feature—it stands alone, aloof, and apart from its neighbours, some of which are higher and more massive, but none more majestic."

* * *

The English edition of Prof. W. Oechsli's "History of Switzerland" has been welcomed and most favourably commented upon by the English press. The volume ought to be in the library of every Swiss in this country, it will offer fascinating reading to the old and introduce the young, brought up and educated in English-speaking lands, to the history of their forefathers. The following is reproduced from the excellent review which appeared in the *Birmingham Post* (Aug. 15th):—

"The work of the translators has been admirably done, in regard to both clarity and style; and there are provided an exhaustive bibliography and maps of the Confederation at different periods. A useful addition might be a map showing the distribution of races and religions—if only for the purpose of checking the tendency to label Catholicism as a purely Latin and Protestantism as a Teutonic phenomenon.

Professor Oechsli's task was not easy. Swiss history is the complex tale of the varying development of over 20 Cantons, differing—and to a large extent consciously accentuating the difference—in every conceivable social characteristic. The difficulty is enhanced by the lack of any central town, such as London or Paris, or any number of striking figures, as may appear in a line of monarchs or party leaders. Such factors tend to centralise historical interest: but Swiss society has been wholly and jealously provincial, and her leaders merely local spokesmen. We know it is given to few men to be considered prophets in their own village—or the next; and in such a case they are likely to be stoned—as was Zwingli. This lack of personalities or central institutions is one obstacle to a unified and dramatic story; another consists in the long uneventful stretches of Swiss history when purely local interests have been paramount. For the Swiss have shunned the limelight save at two short periods—and this for two reasons.

Mainly, of course, their strategic, but precarious, situation between France and Austria has forced upon them a policy of official self-effacement; but another reason is to be found in their national temperament, which is as unsentimental and level-headed as their mountains are dizzy and inspiring—to those who dwell elsewhere. Lord Bryce has testified that there is more unspecialised wisdom and less gullibility toward party cries than in any other modern democracy; and, although the Alpine tourist may describe Switzerland as a region of sublime but uncomfortable beauty, the atmosphere of Swiss politics breathes the solid comfort of a model Bourgeoisie. But Prof. Oechsli has avoided the risk of dulness by grouping history skillfully about the great crises of his country's development, and he has kept well in the foreground the three main questions of perennial interest: The internal question of federal or cantonal supremacy; the external question of neutrality or an ambitious foreign policy; and the religious question of mutual toleration and secession, which nearly split the Confederation through the Catholic leagues of the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries. These vital questions divided the Swiss until the triumph of Liberalism and unity in 1848, and since then party spirit has so much flagged as hardly to impede that sound working of democratic institutions which gave Lord Bryce a basis for his optimism in 'Modern Democracies,' upon which the later sections of the book form an illuminating commentary.

Those portions, however, which compel most admiration are the brilliant expositions of the two periods when the Swiss risked their independence in the intricate game of diplomacy—viz., the protectorate of Milan and Savoy in the early fifteenth century, and the Napoleonic period of the Helvetic Republic and the Act of Mediation. The representations of the great Cardinal, Matthew Schinner, of Zwingli, and of Calvin, are in every way adequate, and reveal the men; but the figures of St. Carlo Borromeo and Rousseau are more shadowy—perhaps from a certain lack of sympathy in the former case."

Dealing with the preservation of wood, S. E. Winbolt, in the *Teachers' World* (Aug. 9th) depicts antiquities, such as chariot wheels, pan pipes, mortised posts, etc., over 2,000 years old, which are being exhibited at the museums at Windisch and Neuchâtel.

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At a lecture delivered last week at the Rotary Club in Dublin it was stated that the electricity generated in Great Britain amounted to 60 units per head, whilst in Switzerland the figure reached 1,000 units per head.

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The Scotsman (Aug. 15th), in reporting on the International Prison Commission, whose first meeting since the war was held last month at Berne, gives a full and appreciative description of the Penitentiary Sanatorium of Witzwil, a large penal farm colony near the Lake of Neuchâtel:

"It began in a small way with the reclamation of peat land, which was formerly under water. Now they have about 2,500 acres of land reclaimed entirely by labour of the prisoners and vagrants in the colony, who now number about 350. The whole extent of ground has been equipped with excellent farm buildings, and roads have been made throughout; electric power is installed from one end to another, and at the time of our visit the land presented all the appearance of being highly cultivated, and was yielding rich crops. Very heavy grain crops were being harvested, and we saw groups of inmates working all over the estate, while others were employed at the farm, where the crops were being brought in in four-wheeled waggons, and threshed in a large barn by electric power.

A stock of over 200 milk cows is kept, besides a large number of young cattle. The whole expenses, including the expense of the buildings and maintenance, have been met by the profits derived from the sale of the agricultural produce.

The majority of the inmates are kept in separate cells or rooms, not unlike those in our own police stations, in which they spend the night and also have their meals. The new building now in course of erection is in many respects very similar to the new prison now being erected at Edinburgh. There are no walls outside the prison blocks, though at the present time a small wall enclosure is being built, with a new block within it for dangerous prisoners sentenced to closer confinement. Notwithstanding the fact that prisoners are employed all over this wide area of ground, the number of escapes is not large. Last year ten escaped, of whom seven were brought back. There is a system of telephones to the houses of the staff which are placed round the outside of the land, and this facilitates capture if an inmate runs away from his work-party. No escapes have taken place from the buildings. Certain selected inmates live in association in detached blocks, in some cases at a distance, under the care of officers living in the same building. These inmates are those who are personally selected by the Superintendent, and who are chosen to look after horses, cattle, etc., and whose hours are in consequence different and who are given greater freedom.

There are large workshops thoroughly equipped with up-to-date machinery. At the time of our visit a single man was operating a sawmill and handling very large timber, which in this country would have required several men. The smith's shop is fitted with power-driven hammers and other machinery; there is also a large leather shop, where boots and shoes are made, and also the saddlery required on the farm. Practically everything needed for the institution is made in the shops, and this employs a considerable number of inmates, but the larger proportion are employed on the farm, particularly during the summer months. During the winter more time is given to the education of the inmates.

The staff is in a proportion of one to every 5 or 6 inmates, but they are not limited to an eight-hour day, and consequently in summer work is carried on in the fields for long hours. In the winter prisoners are employed in draining the land, making roads, and other work of that kind.

This institution belongs to the Canton of Berne, for in Switzerland prisons are managed separately in each Canton, but by an arrangement prisoners are received at Witzwil from other Cantons. The Swiss are so satisfied with the working of this institution, which is under the management of M. Kellerhals, that a similar one has been started in another Canton.

This visit afforded members of the Commission an interesting opportunity to see the practical application of what has been attempted in other countries, particularly in America, for

the employment of prisoners upon the land. To the older members of the Commission it also afforded a very pleasant opportunity of meeting the former general secretary of the Commission, the Venerable Dr. Guillaume, of Geneva, now in his 91st year, who came over to help to entertain the members at the place, with the starting of which he had so much to do."

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The absence of possible Swiss masters at the International Chess Congress at the Central Hall is hardly a matter for regret, for their chances against the "Big Four" were negligible. Senor Capablanca was an easy first and left his English competitors far behind, the running-up being done by foreign talent. We believe there are a good many chess amateurs amongst our compatriots, and those engaged in the City will rejoice that the English Ladies' Chess Championship has been won by Miss Price, the genial and popular manageress of the "Gambit," Ltd., 3, Budge Row, E.C. 4, who received a rousing ovation on returning to the chess rooms last Monday.

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We referred in our last issue to Mr. John Knittel's play, which will be produced on September 12th at the Apollo Theatre, with Maurice Moscovitch in the leading rôle. The scene of the play, which is named "The Torch" (not "Arnold von Winkelried," as we previously stated) is laid in Sempach, and the action centres in a modern and imaginary family of Winkelried.

HERE AND THERE.

By J. H. Corthesy.

The stranger who stopped, struck with admiration, before the two sentries in front of the Horse Guards in Whitehall, and later asked a passing boy if they "belonged to a circus," provides one example of the comical conclusions often drawn by the uninitiated foreigner, and it is a wonder the stranger did not want to know if they were "for sale." Rich American citizens are always ready to lay out their dollars for anything of an ancient origin or a rare nature. Mark Twain's compatriots possess also remarkable ways of expressing themselves. The Grimsby fish merchant who received a letter from the U.S.A. with the stamp fixed with a pin and the flat of the envelope similarly attached, got the explanation: "This country is so dry, I can't wet the gum!" But young America is, above all, out for "thrills" and novel sensations. "Your country looked like one big, beautiful garden dotted with snowballs, which must have been sheep. We have nothing like it in the U.S.A." This from a party of thirty-two Dakota college girls who crossed the "herring pond" on an educational tour through Europe and landed at Croydon. The girls had only one complaint, that "there were not more thrills and shakes" during their air trip from Le Bourget aerodrome, Paris.

Not much more than four years ago things might have been different, and perhaps the idea that the air-route is not far from the zone where the world's most terrific orgy of blood was raging so recently, fired the young imaginations with thoughts of the "thrills" that were. Of sudden "shakes" there were none. The whizzing sound of a passing projectile came not to tell them they had just escaped instant death or being crippled for life. For are we not "at peace"?

* * *

The American girls are not alone in wanting "thrills and shakes"; the remaining part of the world is of a very like mental disposition. The whole world cries for peace, but it seems at the same time to revel in the element of