

Notes & gleanings

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house and calls George's lady friend a prostitute, the unnatural son goes so far as to give his father a blow. On this Jurg loses all his self-control, and in despair and sorrow he seizes the Torch and sets fire to the barn and the house. This dramatic end of the act, which would suffice for the end of a play, was the sign for extremely hearty applause and innumerable calls for Moscovitch. In the second act we see how Jurg quickly resigns as Mayor, to the sorrow of his fellow-councillors, who hold him in high esteem. But the chalice has not yet been drunk to the dregs. His friend Veitel rushes in and announces that his daughter, Margaret, has committed suicide because she was expecting a child of which George Winkelried was the father, and he had refused to marry her. Jurg Winkelried calls back a solicitor to whom he had refused to sell his land a moment before, and gives him the whole lot for 100,000 francs, and of this he sends 30,000 francs to Veitel as a small consolation. Veitel has, it must be mentioned, had a loan of 25,000 francs from Jurg Winkelried, and in his despair he had just confessed to having lost it through speculation. Jurg has now left only what he needs to pay off his debts, and as a poor man he must go out into the world. The third act shows a different milieu altogether. We are in the room of the editor of the "Red Flag" at Lucerne, where we hear the amiable remarks which the different comrades fling at each other. George works ten hours a day, but has not even a bed to sleep on. The atmosphere becomes even more electrical when Jurg Winkelried suddenly turns up and succeeds in having an interview, under two pairs of eyes, with George. He announces the news of Margaret's death and compels him by the aid of a revolver to write down a confession stating that he had seduced Margaret and promised her marriage. Winkelried, after having crushed the insolence of his son, leaves with this document in his pocket with the intention of having it published in order to save the honour of the dead girl and thus repair to a certain extent the damage brought about by the action of his son. The scene in which Winkelried forces his son's stubbornness to relent by counting ten, revolver in hand, was probably the most impressive of the evening, and a storm of applause arose after the curtain fell. The last act brings peace after all the turmoil. The model son, Abel, has come back from America, to the great surprise of the old Jurg Winkelried, who now leads a solitary life and does not want to see his children any more. Abel finally brings about a reconciliation, and when Jurg agrees to see his children there is no need to look far for them—for they are just round the corner. To make the happiness complete Abel has bought back all his father's land. Suzanne has married her stable boy; George has dropped Communism and has started to read the Bible; and Henry has been a clerk in an insurance office—if only for a week. Still, the family seems at least to have risen to a more decent standard than in the first act, and we leave them with the hope that they will improve still further.

A few remarks from the standpoint of a Swiss visitor may be of interest. Jurg Winkelried was very well played, but Moscovitch could not, of course, go beyond his natural limits, and certain passages were spoken exactly as a Jewish paterfamilias would do in real life, but not a Lucernois from Sempach. There was too much sentimentality here and there. On the other hand, the town councillors, Moser, Gschwind, Ruf, and Weber, were in make-up as in acting excellent and seemed so Swiss that I often expected them to continue in Luzernerdütsch. This also applies to the minor rôles of the solicitor, Holt, the policeman, Rosli, and the old Veitel. Also Winkelried's sons were very good, especially Henry and George. The only part which was entirely badly played was that of Alma Dalia, the lady Communist, who overdid her coquetry tremendously. She was not a Communist at all, but a prima donna. The Winkelried picture on the wall was genuine, but the Alps were far too near, and it looked as if Sempach were in the Canton Unterwalden. There has never yet been a play produced in Switzerland dealing with the conflicts aroused by Communist aspirations of the younger generation and the traditional echo of the older one. From this point of view alone this play will certainly not fail to interest many of our compatriots. Judging from the success which Moscovitch had in the title rôle, the play may have a very long run here. Still, one never knows, and it would be advisable to see it within the next week or two.

P. L.

The Publisher will be pleased to forward free specimen copies of the *Swiss Observer* to likely subscribers whose addresses may be supplied by readers.

NOTES & GLEANINGS.

We are pleased to note that several papers, notably *The Times*, have published correspondence with reference to the unsatisfactory and discouraging conditions prevailing in the TRAIN SERVICE FROM SWITZERLAND, especially the Basle-Laon route. Those who cannot afford the luxury of a wagon-lit are often subject to annoyance and vexations which can only result in deterring would-be travellers in future. The outward journey is not so bad, as one generally manages, with the help of some palm-oil, to slip into the seat one has booked beforehand in London; coming home, however, is nothing short of a tragi-comedy. The arrangements in the Alsace portion of the Basle station are a discredit to this otherwise admirably regulated railway junction. In the hope of success in the fight for a seat in the overcrowded train, people congregate long before the advertised time of departure and, while the train is being leisurely examined by the French Customs officials, are kept lingering in a primitive waiting-room, the overflow of which is enclosed on the platform, like wild animals in a cage. On a given signal the gates are opened, and a sort of football scrimmage is the result. Not everybody reaches the goal, and for the first hour of the train journey the conductors are busy in collecting the "also-ran" in the corridors in order to squeeze them into compartments where the complement seems capable of compression. The carriages of the Compagnie du Nord are most uncomfortable, without side-rests, straps or elbow partitions, and being perched four abreast for twelve hours is not an experience one covets to repeat. It is a pity that the French railways show so little respect and consideration for the comfort of their clients. The Laon route has outrivalled the Ostend-Brussels line only on account of the quick transit, but from every other point of view the Belgian route is the more attractive. The difference in the time occupied from London to Basle is, of course, considerable (21 hours against 16 hours), but it seems to us that this service could be considerably accelerated by reducing the stops at the intermediate stations to a minimum, as has been done on the Laon route.

* * *

Many interesting reports of holidays spent in Switzerland have again appeared in the English press. *The Primitive Methodist Leader* (Sept. 7th) records the doings of another church party similar to the one referred to in our last issue. *The Sheffield Daily Telegraph* (Sept. 4th) praises the charms of the Lake of Thun and Spiez, which latter place the writer considers an ideal centre to make headquarters.—A RECENT ASCENT OF THE MATTERHORN is circumstantially described in the *Western Morning News and Mercury* (Sept. 2nd) by the Rev. J. J. Haworth, B.A. Although no thrilling moments are chronicled, we reprint the major part of the article which gives such a minute and detailed description of the ascent as will convey a vivid idea of the climb to those who have the eager will and desire to achieve it, but lack the power or opportunity to make the attempt at gaining a closer acquaintance with this giant amongst the Alps:—

"It was a novel experience to start at 2.15 a.m. on July 8th an attempt to climb the Matterhorn, aided by three tiny lanterns and the half-light of a full moon which was ceasing to shine. The moon did not help us much. She was going down westward under the deep shadow of the mountain, which loomed big and black at that hour.

The route we took was the usual one from Zermatt—the ridge facing eastward. Seen from a distance this ridge appears sharp, even knife-edged. In reality it is not so, not at any rate where the climbing is done, though the ridge is touched

several times during the climb, and is as sharp in places as it appears when seen from Zermatt or the Rifflealp.

Starting, as we did, in the dark, and also descending—through fog—in the dark, I have no clear idea of what the base looked like. We seemed to be climbing for two hours or more gigantic heaps of ruins, huge boulders and massive rocks, as though split asunder by an earthquake, and washed bare of earth by the action of snow and rain. In the semi-darkness one groped about for foothold and hand grip, and, striking anything hard, one held on, then pulled oneself up to a friendly ledge and so followed the guide, whom one could dimly see carrying the flickering light of a candle in a small, collapsible lantern.

The six members of our party were distributed on three ropes, each rope having a guide and two climbers attached. For the first stage of the climb we were on "short rope," but on leaving the ruined base we were put on "long rope," for the higher we ascended the longer were the snow patches to be crossed and the bigger the surface of rock to be climbed. There is no track in the ordinary sense of the word, though to the guides the rocks were doubtless familiar enough. The leading guide had scaled the height about 50 times, and this knowledge gave us confidence.

Guides do not talk much when climbing; they know all too well that every atom of strength may be required before the return to the starting point. On one thing guides are most reluctant to speak at all, and that is about the weather, never more fickle than among the mountains.

After two hours' rock climbing a halt was called on a convenient ledge. It was now sunrise, and, sitting as we did, facing eastward, we could see the light of the rising sun mingling with the morning mist and just touching the snow-capped heights. Surely the sun, in his daily course, can see nothing more beautiful than the snowy Alps, the vast glaciers, the quaint chalets perched on mountain sides, the ice and snow-fed rivers of the Alps.

It was, I think, after our first halt that we were given longer rope. The climb became more varied by the crossing of small couloirs—that is passages or spaces between the smaller ridges generally filled with ice and snow. Here the guide would test the snow, cut steps in ice if need be, and, having crossed the snowy slope, would hold the rope taut whilst number two and then three crossed the dangerous place, the guide drawing in the rope as the couloir was crossed.

We then became aware of another danger to climbers—the danger from falling stones. In certain places the Matterhorn is rapidly disintegrating through the continuous action of frost, snow, rain and wind. Sometimes climbers are held up a long time—some climbers record having been held up for four hours at a time—by the falling of rocks and stones. Fortunately we were not held up nor hit by falling stones, and being near the ridge on one occasion watched the stones fall towards the enormous Matterhorn glacier 3,000 feet below, in which many boulders are embedded.

After climbing a long time—and the mountain seemed to grow bigger and bigger as we climbed—we came to the ruins of an old shelter (most probably Whympers') built on a narrow ledge of rock in a fearsome place. It was full of ice and snow; the few boards that remain are rotten and ready to disappear altogether. We were now told to look out for the new hut (Solway Hut), which we reached in about another hour's climb. The new hut is built in a recess. It is covered with snow, but is well made and would shelter from 15 to 20 people.

The rest and refreshment in the solitary hut were very timely, for the stiffer parts of the climb began with the first steps upward after leaving the hut. It is not easy to climb after a meal, and probably this accounted for the slow progress made in surmounting the rocky barrier outside the Solway Hut. Soon after this stiff climb we seemed to bear away from the left to the right of the ridge, and began to ascend more on the north side.

Soon we reached a long stretch of snow lying on a steep slope, which falls away into one of the greatest precipices of the Matterhorn. At this point fixed ropes were found, and, notwithstanding the swaying movement of the rope, the help afforded was invaluable. It was a case of hand over hand, pulling oneself up the slope foot by foot, with many a halt for breath. One took care not to look back towards the abyss, but forward towards the end of the fixed ropes, which I should judge measured about 400 feet. It was laborious, exhausting work, and made one marvel at the exploit of Whympers and those daring pioneers who zig-zagged their way up this steep, inclined plane of snow bordering an abyss without the aid of fixed ropes which help the climber of to-day.

After the snowy slope we reached the last and most formidable obstacle of all—the shoulder. It is here that many hopes are broken, here most climbers find it more difficult to breathe, for the height is now above 14,000 feet, here some suffer from mountain sickness, and others feel that they have not sufficient strength to scale what is an almost perpendicular rock about 300 feet in height. More rope and some chains are found here. These are fixed fairly close to the rock. The guide gives us assurance that we are not very far from the top, and, laying hold of the rope, climbs hand over hand a fairly long stretch of rock. A convenient ledge being reached, the guide signified by a tug of the rope that number one's turn has come to climb. On reaching a ledge which affords standing or sitting room, number one halts, and number two then climbs to the place vacated by number one. This arrangement is fairly safe, and is very convenient, for it gives the climber two breathing spaces to one climb, to say nothing of the halts asked for.

I cannot say how long it took to mount the shoulder, but once over the shoulder the climb was soon at an end. The gradient to the top is then slight. Whympers says that 'Crozes, the guide, and he ran a race to the top.' We were there almost before we knew it. The top had seemed so far away for so long a time that we could scarce believe we were there until the sight of a little flag fluttering in the breeze set our minds at rest. . . ."

* * *

The *Daily Telegraph* publishes further articles from Fred. J. Melville, the well-known English authority on stamps, who is one of the judges at the INTERNATIONAL PHILATELIC EXHIBITION AT GENEVA. He says the exhibits belong chiefly to Swiss amateurs who, as a whole, pride themselves a good deal upon quantity rather than quality, one exhibitor displaying 35,500 stamps. The small participation of collectors from abroad is due to the extreme difficulties created by the Customs authorities of the neighbouring countries; as an instance of this it is stated that—

"one French collection arrived accompanied by a representative of the French Customs. There is a heavy duty on stamps going into France, so to make sure that this exhibit is returned without new purchases or acquisitions, the officer insisted on its being locked up in a cabinet, and he has kept the key. Not even the judges can get access to it, and must form their opinion from the one page at which the album is open in the case."

The following history of the "DOUBLE GENEVA" will interest a good many of our readers, to whom it will also be news that in emphasizing the economic advantage of this stamp issue it was stated (already in 1843!) that "everyone writes more letters in his own interest or for his own satisfaction than in the interest or for the satisfaction of another":—

"Geneva, in 1843, gave us one of the oldest and one of the most curious adhesive postage stamps ever issued. It has been suggested on scores of occasions and in many letters to the Press that our penny stamps should be divisible for use as two halfpenny ones, and the idea, so far from being new, was actually put into practice in the first adhesive postage stamp of Geneva.

In May, 1843, Professor de Candolle whose memory is honoured in the street nomenclature of the newer part of the town, made proposals to the Grand Council of the canton for a reformed postal service, in which stamps for franking letters were to form part. M. de Candolle had been in London during the height of the Uniform Penny Postage agitation in 1839, and followed the movement 'with all the interest that a bold and ingenious plan is capable of inspiring.' In his remarks to the Grand Council he emphasised the advantages of repayment, in the interests of the Post Office as well as the public. He pointed out with justice that 'everyone writes more letters in his own interest or for his own satisfaction than in the interest or for the satisfaction of another,' and this led him to believe that if it were as easy to prepay a letter as to post it, a general feeling of delicacy and justice would cause the number of prepaid letters to be in excess of those on which the postage had to be collected from the addressee.

As a matter of economy M. de Candolle thought one stamp could be made to serve the requirements of the canton, instead of the two denominations, the 1d. black and 2d. blue, which had been adopted in England. This arrangement would be a needless expense in Geneva; it would be a saving to allow two labels to serve for a double letter; or one for every ounce. There were two rates of postage to be provided for, 5 centimes for letters delivered within the commune in which they were posted, and 10 centimes for letters passing from one commune to another.

The Grand Council adopted the general proposals, and instructed the Finance Department to prepare plans and to issue a 5 centimes stamp, one such stamp to be used on letters posted and delivered within one commune, and two on letters going elsewhere in the canton. There was so far no indication of the peculiar double form of stamp, and the first hint of this peculiarity is in the 'Feuille d'Avis' of the Republic and Canton of Geneva, Sept. 27, 1843, where the charges for the new stamps were announced as:

- 5 francs per sheet of fifty double stamps.
- 50 centimes per row of five ditto.
- 10 centimes per double stamp.
- 5 centimes per single stamp.

Oct. 1, 1843, witnessed the issue to the public of the stamps, which were the kind we now style the 'double Geneva,' among the rarest of European stamp treasures. They were produced by 'the lithographer Schmidt' in the town, in sheets of fifty double stamps. The printing is black on green paper; the design shows the arms of the canton in each part, with the inscriptions 'Poste de Genève' and 'Port local.' Connecting each pair is a tablet across the top, inscribed '10. Port Cantonal Cent.'

Of this curious stamp 600 sheets were printed, giving a total of 60,000 singles or 30,000 doubles. Contrary to the excellent M. de Candolle's expressed opinion, the etiquette of prepayment did not at once appeal to the Genevans, who continued to send their letters unpaid, so in March, 1844, the postal authorities tried to tempt the people to prepay their letters by selling the stamps at a rebate. From March 11 onwards the double stamp sold at 8 centimes and the half at 4 centimes. The full rates of 10 centimes or 5 centimes continued to be charged on unpaid letters.

This stamp, which the Genevans had to be tempted to buy for postal use in 1844, is the most sought after of all Swiss stamps now. It fetches more in Switzerland than on the London stamp market, being quoted at 7,000 francs Swiss unused (about £340) and 5,000 francs Swiss used (£217). The 'demi-double,' that is to say, one of the 5 centimes portions, is quoted at 1,250 francs unused and 1,000 francs used. There are many of them in the exhibition, one exhibitor showing the stamp in almost every possible philatelic state, namely (1) unused, (2) used, (3) used on an original letter, (4) 'interverti,' that is to say, with the halves in the wrong order."

* * *

LOVERS OF JASS, especially those who are devotees of this pastime near "Tons of Money," will be tempted by the following notice which appears in the current number of *Echo Suisse*:—

"M. H. Laeser, rédacteur à la 'Revue,' a fait partie du groupe de journalistes suisses invités à visiter la Pologne pendant l'été. Au retour de Zoppot, il fit la connaissance d'un Appenzellois qui lui confessa ainsi les ennuis de l'exil: 'Nous ne sommes que trois Suisses ici, impossible de jouer un schieber. Ces Polonais ne sont pas f... d'apprendre. Puisque vous êtes dans les journaux, faites de la réclame pour qu'un quatrième Suisse, sachant le jass, vienne. On lui remboursera la moitié du voyage.'"

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Hautes Nouveautés. Alterations and Repairs.

Also Bunches of leading firms to view. 56

HERE AND THERE.

By J. H. Corthesy.

"I don't want any rubbish—no fine sentiments—if you please," said the widow who was asked what kind of epitaph she desired for her late husband's tombstone. "Let it be short and simple, something like this: 'William Johnstone, aged twenty-five years.—The good die young.'"

In the "olden" times of a decade ago, when "too old at forty" was the catchword, the widow's meaning would have been interpreted as a sarcasm, but it may be otherwise regarded at the present time, when we have such testimony as that of Bishop G. Forrest Browne, an eminent historian, who says: "I have not quite reached the beginning of my ninetieth year, and in these days that is scarcely old age." Again, now that "rejuvenation" is becoming popular and that processes are at hand for an extension of man's lease of life up to 150 years or more—even in London, where Dr. Spahlinger and Dr. Steinach will in future be ably represented—the man who dies before that age does so only through neglect or carelessness, say, by letting himself be crushed in a crowd, or under a car. If he leaves this world early in life, at the age of 75 or so, it may mean a waste of the treatment received or of monkey or other glands, and in this case "the good die young" of the widow would mean a simple expression of regret.

* * *

But after all, what does it matter how long we live, since we have "no souls" to take care of, and "we are only machines!" as stated by Prof. Sir Charles Scott Sherrington in his presidential address at the Annual Meeting of the British Association at Hull.

Thus "science" comes with elephantine tread and squashes our ideals and our faith; and those who believed they possessed something of a value above that of common earthly things may suffer disillusionment by this scientific dictum.

When Professor Sherrington says we are but machines he tells only a part of the truth. A machine, any machine, to be of value must "work" and work efficiently, and it is *that* that makes it work which counts; for without *that* it is useless and is not a machine. All machines are invented and constructed for a definite purpose. In steam engines it is the steam which counts and has to be studied in all its conditions in order to produce the machine to *suit* any such steam conditions. Steam, therefore, is the main thing, for without steam the engine has no value at all. So with man without soul and with everything that exists.

Nature is always in a state of evolution, inventing, attempting to find a higher material expression for the soul force that dominates the universe. On taking the patent on man—a thinking and judging device—a certain stage of development has been reached. Man, the human machine, however, wants still more perfecting and much oiling to enable him better to understand himself first and his neighbour next.

* * *

King Tino is also a scientist who missed his aim. He wanted to go East so far—so far that he got West. His results correspond to the law of extremes or to the effect of reactions, and his dream of a few weeks ago to *walk* into Constantinople has received such a terrible shock somewhere else that he will have to sleep quietly for a considerable time in future, or he will have to do as Mr. Newman did two or three weeks ago, viz., kick the wicket down in an ungovernable fit of fury; in regard to