

Alpine Flower Tour

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Of the twenty-six return journeys between Zurich and Vienna only one was cancelled by the bad weather which persisted during a greater part of the month. Only two arrivals at Vienna and one at Zurich were delayed by more than half an hour.

The schedule for the 280 miles between Zurich and Vienna was laid down at 140 minutes but throughout the month the Lockheed Orions maintained an average of 135 minutes, which represents an average speed of 168.4 m.p.h. In the reverse or east-to-west direction, against the prevailing unfavourable wind, the schedule time was laid down at 165 minutes. In practice this was reduced to an average of 144 minutes, equivalent to an average speed of 157 m.p.h.

Eighty-five passengers were transported between Zurich and Vienna and seventy-nine in the opposite direction, which filled 82 per cent. of the total available accommodation.

In addition 1,982 lbs. of mail, 253 lbs. of freight, and 955 lbs. of baggage were carried, using 72.8 per cent. of the total available load space.

There is interest in noting that the best previous percentage of available space used on Swiss air lines was 39 per cent. — the figure obtained for the whole of 1931.

The speeded-up Zurich—Vienna service has been very popular with air travellers and one curious fact revealed is that air-sickness has been greatly reduced, a fact which is probably responsible for the popularity of the service.

The Lockheed Orions and their Wright Cyclone engines have given trouble-free service, and the undercarriage-retracting mechanism has functioned without any trouble.

The "Swissair" company is now examining the possibility of extending their express service to other lines.

Meanwhile, British air-mails travel at an average speed of about 30 m.p.h. to India and to the Cape.

to be followed by the actual time table for Air-journeys from here to Switzerland, vide "QUEEN" 3rd August:

Thrills, as everyone should know, abound in Switzerland. There is one modern thrill which I have never sampled yet, but which looks very interesting and alluring, and that is aquaplaning. The following article will show you what is meant by that expression.

By Air to Switzerland:

The services by the Air Union now run three times a day on weekdays. The fare on the London—Paris—Geneva service from London at 9 a.m. has been reduced to £8 14s., and extended to reach Lausanne at 4 p.m. and Bern at 4.45. The through service, leaving London at noon, reaches Lausanne at 6.15 p.m., the route following the Seine Valley, Burgundy and the Jura Mountains. The departure is also at noon from London for Basle (5.30 p.m.) and Zurich (6.20).

As a matter of fact, I have put the above two paragraphs in first in the slender hope that one or the other of the Papers in question might send me a couple of complimentary tickets! In repayment of the enormous advertisement we give them in our paper. (Transport papers please copy!)

Once we get to Switzerland, we naturally look down from our fast moving aeroplane and try to spy familiar sights. There are some sights, however, which may not be familiar anymore to some of us who have been exiled for long years and a regular

Swiss Cow Fight:

(Eastern Daily Press 28th July) may be of interest:

High up in the Swiss mountains above the Rhone Valley the sun rises pink on the snow-tops and the air is filled with the clanging and jangling of cow bells! Being only five o'clock what can this unusual stir mean? It is the morning of the annual Cow Fight, the fight to decide who shall be Queen of the Herd this summer. This sounds very bloodthirsty, but is, in fact, quite the contrary, no bulls being present, and could be more accurately described as a pushing competition. The grass on the higher slopes has grown long, and all the cows of the little village of Chermignon are to be driven up there to graze together until September, when cold will force them back again in separate herds to their homes in the valley. Each village has its grazing rights on a special mountain, and from time immemorial the cows have been sent upon some fixed date in early summer to ensure that none of the cattle shall get more than their share. But before they amalgamate one of them must fight to gain or regain the title of "Queen." Hence the bustle, excitement, and early rising. Through the dew-soaked grass herds of dark brown, surly-horned cows, each with a large copper bell under her chin attached to a broad leather belt, are hurried from the valley, across the plateau of

crans, and through mountain rivulets up into the grassy slopes above, until they reach the "battle field."

This is a large natural arena, a beautiful square field, ablaze with wild flowers, and surrounded by trees and rocks. There is a gap at one end through which the cows gradually push their way in, followed by whole families of peasants who have come up to see the fun. By eight o'clock the field is very full, two or three hundred animals in all, and what with the noise of bells and lowing of the cattle, it is almost deafening, but there is no excitement whatsoever and the peasants stand silently around awaiting future developments. The cows walk about, but they seem restless and ill at ease, as if expecting something, making no attempt at grazing. Every now and then for some unknown reason two come to loggerheads, they push against each other, head on, horns interlocked, feet firmly planted against the slope, and after a short, sharp struggle the weakest turns away defeated. Soon this is happening all over the field, the recognised leader of each herd meets another and a struggle ensues. But these are only minor fights.

Suddenly there is a stir in the crowd, last year's Queen is seen advancing! Head in the air, flanks heaving, this beautiful, shiny-coated creature proudly leads her herd into the arena. She is easily to be recognised, for her leather collar beautifully studded with copper nails and ornaments, as well as her bell are larger than any other and her physique is more magnificent. These collars might almost be described as heirlooms, having been in the owner's hands for generations. Last year she was the leader, perhaps this year some other younger cow will come forward to try and usurp her place. Slowly she moves about, apparently disdainful of her companions and oblivious of what is expected of her. But not for long. Suddenly an angry light shines in her eyes and she attacks another cow and pushes her downhill. Sometimes the tussle is but short. Should, however, the opponent be strong, they remain interlocked for a considerable time, each trying to win supremacy. This often ends in the weaker being sent spinning down the slope on her side, much to the satisfaction of the onlookers. It is impossible to judge whom she will attack next as she passes proudly through the throng of cows, who in their turn have private and less important fights on their own.

By about ten o'clock the question seemed settled, for some village wisecracker, who has been judging the proceedings armed with paper and pencil, noting how many victories the various leaders have gained, now proclaims that the old "Queen" "has retained her title. The herd, who have stopped fighting and lowing, settle down peacefully to graze. At the end of the field they parch their thirst in pure mountain water which runs into a large hollowed tree trunk. Peace descends and the peasants move off, leaving but a few men and boys behind to tend their cattle until the autumn.

Joyce Rozendaal.

Aquaplane Women:

The Star, 29th July.

For the holidaymaker in search of thrills I know nothing finer than aquaplaning. The excitements of skimming behind a motor-boat at any speeds up to 50 miles an hour surpasses, in my opinion, any of the thrills I have obtained from winter sports in Switzerland or elsewhere.

Not Everybody's Sport.

It must be admitted, however, that aquaplaning is not everybody's sport. To begin with, you must have a sense of balance, a strong physique, plenty of grit, and be able to swim respectively in case of mishaps.

Of these qualities balance or poise of body is the most vital. Lacking it, your enjoyment of aquaplaning is limited to a sequence of spills, well calculated to rattle every bone in your body.

The only way I know to learn aquaplaning, which differs from surf-riding both in the construction of the board and riding attitude adopted, is by actual practice. Before setting out, however, take good care that the driver of the motor-boat knows the difficulties of learning to aquaplane, for you are entirely in his hands.

15 Miles An Hour.

It is essential that he should start off at a steady pace, keep the boat in a straight line and corner in wide circles. As a novice one is liable to think that the slower one goes at first, the easier it is to learn. But going slowly redoubles the difficulty of balancing on the board, and I advise the beginner to start at about 15 miles an hour.

When preparing to move off, kneel on the aquaplane, holding on to the rope attached to the board, and remain kneeling until the slack of the tow-rope, which should be about 180 feet

in length, is taken up. But directly the aquaplane commences to flit over the water, rise to your feet, holding on to the rope the whole time.

Balance yourself, with your feet fairly wide apart, in such a position on the board that when moving the tow rope just skims the water right from the head of the aquaplane to the stern of the boat. This position you will find about 18 inches to 2 feet from the back of the board. Hold the rope in both hands so that when standing comfortably your arms are practically at full length and you are almost in an upright position.

No Going To Sleep.

Although hands play an important part, you really ride the aquaplane with your legs, taking the bumps by varying the pressure on your knees. Sticking on is no easy matter, especially in choppy water. Look steadily at the V-shaped patch of water in front and try to anticipate the waves with their corresponding bumps before they reach the board. Experience will teach you how to deal with them.

There is no going to sleep while aquaplaning. Any sudden upheaval may well hurl you into the water before you realise what's happened. But remember when falling to avoid toppling over backwards. The moment you feel yourself losing your balance, let go of the rope, and throw yourself off sideways.

Thrilling Upheavals.

On a long trip, like the double crossing of the Channel accomplished by Miss L. Copplestone, the famous New Zealand swimmer, and myself, thrills follow one another fast.

Four miles off Cape Gris Nez, Miss Copplestone ran into the wash of a trawler. At one moment she was lifted completely off the board. Only by magnificent riding was she able to regain her position and finish the trip in the record time of 1 hour 3 min.

On the return journey I had the thrill of speeding up to cross the bows of two boats coming up the Channel, running into the wash from a Channel boat leaving Dover, and innumerable breath-taking upheavals as the board see-sawed over the tons of powerful waves.

In the placid waters off the famous coasts of Florida, Australia and New Zealand, where aquaplaning and its sister sport surf-riding are much in vogue, expert riders give acrobatic exhibitions of their powers, performing all manner of tricks on the board.

For the beginner, however, there are more than enough thrills to be gained by simple straightforward aquaplaning, and the joy of mastering the art of riding the board is one of the most satisfactory any sport has to offer.

Emil Ludwig:

Most of my readers have read some of his books, I presume. If not, it is high time they did, because they are stimulating and well-informed. The "Manchester Guardian" on August 4th tells "Why he became a Swiss Citizen."

In an interview with "Paris-Soir," Emil Ludwig, the German author, explained why he had recently become a Swiss citizen.

"It is not true," he said, "that I took this decision as a result of the Nazi campaign against pacifists and Jews. I have lived in Switzerland since 1907, and Switzerland has virtually been my home country for twenty-five years."

In answer to a question what he thought of the situation in Germany, Herr Ludwig said:

"Germany to-day is a sick man with a temperature of 104. It is useless to ask a man in such condition about his plans. Germany has no longer the mentality which she had before the war. With the economic upheavals which followed the war she completely lost her head and threw herself into the arms of the man who knew how to exploit the situation best. I am all in favour of trying out the Hitler experiment, for only then will Germany realise the futility of Hitlerism and lose her insane illusions on the subject."

I like the concluding paragraph of the above. So like OTTAWA!

ALPINE FLOWER TOUR.

Owing to the success of the Alpine flower tour to the Bernese Oberland last June, a similar tour to the Rhaetian Alps district has been planned, again under the leadership of Dr. Hugh Roger-Smith, hon. secretary of the Alpine Garden Society.

The party, which still has vacancies, leaves London for St. Moritz on Wednesday, and returns on August 24th. Information can be obtained from Cook's Head Office in Berkeley Street.