

The historical relations of England and Switzerland [to be continued]

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LEMBO TICINESE.

Pigramente la luna si alzava, e veniva su, lemme lemme dal Boglia. Poi parve indugiare, fermarsi quasi, ammiccando la tranquilla Lugano che si specchiava nel lago, tutta scintillante. E parve alla luna che la sua presenza non era proprio necessaria quella sera, che fosse un'intrusa; approfittando d'una nuvola amica, leggera, che le era lì accanto, vi si velò dietro; così, soffusa da quel lieve bigio-azzurrognolo, accresceva il fascino della serata. Lugano era veramente splendida. Alla vigilia di Pasqua, in omaggio ai numerosi forastieri, che ospitava, si era addobbata a festa. E ogni suo edificio, gli alberghi, il Palazzo Municipale, ed altri, erano ornati artisticamente da mille e mille lampadine elettriche; tutto il quai, da Castagnola al Paradiso era un rincorrersi di luci sfavillanti, e il lago, calmissimo, rifletteva la civettuola città, e ripeteva sulle sue acque quella gamma di colori vivaci: rosso, arancio, bleu. I forastieri passeggiavano lungo il quai, tra il chiaro-oscuro delle piante, o stavano estatici, seduti sulle banchine, guardando il Ceresio, con Campione e Caprino sulla riva opposta. Ogni albergo era completo per Pasqua ed i treni supplementari portarono a frotte gente curiosa di visitare questo lembo ticinese pieno di fascino e dal clima così dolce. Così, almeno per quei giorni il commercio subì certamente un rialzo fortissimo; rialzo necessario che altrimenti i numerosissimi hotels chiusi durante l'inverno, avrebbero subito una non lieve scossa, ed i negozi, specialmente quelli d'oggetti fantasia, quasi sempre vuoti durante la morte stagione, avrebbero sofferto non poco.

Primavera è ovunque. L'aria odora dolcemente di terra smossa di fresco, di mimosa e di viole. Volano alte sul lago le coppie dei candidi cigni, snelle barche solcano le onde... ma se i forastieri mancano, per molti non sarà primavera! Lugano subirà la sorte d'ogni paese la cui risorsa principale è quella alberghiera.

Lembo ticinese, ho chiamato queste mie impressioni. Zolla di terra nostrana il cui profumo buono vorrei giungesse, varcando la Manica, ancor così olezzante e caro, come lo sentiamo noi qui — pugno di terra nostra che vorrebbe parlare almeno un po' della patria lontana ai ticinesi che la grande metropoli inglese ospita. E cerco le notizie che possano interessare loro. Ma la vita trascorre... calma, uguale, le innovazioni sono poche. Il Ticino è vero, s'è trasformato molto, ha migliorato, e cerca migliorarsi ogni dove, ma così, quietamente che quasi non ci si accorge. Lugano da un paio d'anni sta rinnovando la sua stazione — ora ad opera quasi terminata, la si

critica molto — la si ritiene poco pratica, troppo semplice. Una stazione di "grande città," vasta, con sottopassaggi e piattaforme; chioschi per giornali e buvette; fontane, banchine, chiari orologi-indicatori precisano le ore d'arrivo e partenza dei treni. Persino un negozio di barbieri. Che si vuole di più? Poco comoda, forse è vero, causa la sua vastità e la vicinanza della funicolare scendente in città che ostacola un po' il libero passaggio. La strada di Gandria, finita fra circa un anno, comoda, bella, interessante, che permetterà di portarsi in Italia, in Valtellina, e da qui rientrare in Svizzera, a S. Moritz, direttamente con automobile o... per gli "hikers" a piedi!

Il Ceneri, con la sua seconda galleria, ora terminata, e la bella, ampia strada carrozzabile in cubetti di porfido, al posto della vecchia mal comoda e poco sicura. La galleria al Monte Piottino; la seconda condotta d'acqua forzata alla Morobbia; la strada internazionale del Gambarogno, il cui progetto venne in questi giorni presentato dal Consiglio di Stato al Gran Consiglio.

Lentamente ma evoluzione anche qui, onde essere "all'altezza dei tempi", onde, il Ticino facendosi sempre ancor più bello, civettuolo, si rispecchi nei suoi limpidi laghi, nei suoi mugghianti fiumi, nelle sue candide nevi.

Elena Ghiringhelli LUNGHI.

LA REVISION DE LA CONSTITUTION FEDERALE.

On sait que plusieurs initiatives populaires ont été lancées — ou vont l'être incessamment — en vue de modifier sur certains points la Constitution fédérale. Le Front fédéral voudrait que l'on reprit une partie de la loi sur l'ordre public qui vient d'être rejetée le 11 mars, ce qui semble quelque peu prématuré. Les laitiers non fédérés réclament une juridiction chargée de décider de la constitution des lois, ordonnances et décrets de la Confédération, même quand ils sont pourvus de la clause d'urgence, ce qui reviendrait à paralyser l'action gouvernementale en cas de crise grave. Un franc-tireur de Bâle lance une espèce d'initiative "frontiste", révélatrice de l'état d'esprit qui règne dans ces milieux, et sur laquelle il y aura lieu de revenir en temps voulu.

Mais l'intérêt qu'offrent ces propositions fragmentaires pâlit devant la décision des "fronts" réunis de demander une révision totale de la Charte fédérale. Il est vraisemblable que cette proposition sera appuyée par les cinquante mille signatures requises, et qu'elle trouvera ensuite

l'assentiment du corps électoral. Il est à présumer que la plupart des citoyens suisses sont aujourd'hui acquis à l'idée d'une révision de ce genre, à vrai dire pour les raisons les plus contradictoires.

Le mécontentement causé par la crise se traduit actuellement par le désir de démolir la Constitution de 1874; mais on cesse d'être d'accord dès qu'il s'agit de savoir ce qu'on mettra à sa place. Il ne faudrait pas être surpris si le nouvel édifice qui sera préparé par les Chambres constituantes causait de vives déceptions chez la plupart des signataires de l'initiative. Cependant cette expérience ne serait peut-être pas inutile, à titre de soupape de sûreté du mécontentement.

Cette raison est assez sérieuse pour engager les milieux gouvernementaux actuels à se demander s'il ne conviendrait pas plutôt de prendre les devants, en hâtant cette révision totale. C'est au pied du mur qu'on juge le maçon, affirme un dicton populaire. On croit qu'un examen sérieux des propositions que feront les "frontistes" en démontrera le vide lamentable. Cette opinion peut s'étayer sur l'analyse des "idées" que l'on développe dans les assemblées et les journaux des "fronts" nationalistes.

Les défenseurs du régime actuel se disent aussi que les "fronts" ne sauraient guère envoyer aujourd'hui au Conseil national constituant plus d'une vingtaine de députés, tandis que nul ne saurait prévoir ce que nous réserve l'avenir à cet égard. La conversion de trois de nos voisins à un régime plus ou moins dictatorial est indiscutablement de nature à influencer les esprits en ce sens. Or, il suffirait de la présence au Conseil national d'une forte députation frontiste pour donner le coup de grâce au fédéralisme, avec le concours des centralisateurs à outrance que compte déjà le Parlement.

Ces arguments ne manquent pas de valeur. Aussi ne faudrait-il pas s'étonner si la révision totale de la Constitution devait être décidée au cours de l'été prochain, et si l'élection des Chambres constituantes devait avoir lieu — conformément à l'article 120 de la Constitution de 1874 — au mois d'octobre. La nouvelle Charte fédérale serait préparée au cours de l'hiver. Dans ces conditions, si l'on songe à la double tâche de Constituante et de Parlement ordinaire qui s'imposerait à l'Assemblée fédérale, on voit que celle-ci risquerait de siéger tout d'abord en permanence ou peu s'en faut. Les futurs députés auront du pain sur la planche.

R. BOVET-GRISEL.

THE HISTORICAL RELATIONS OF ENGLAND AND SWITZERLAND.

(Translation from a Pamphlet which appeared in the N.Z.Z. in March, 1919, and published in Oechsli's "History of Switzerland." — Cambridge University Press.)

(Continued from Previous Number.)

England for the moment could not prevent the fact that the Act of Mediation (1803) confirmed afresh the complete dependence of Switzerland on France. Switzerland, therefore, had naturally to take part in the Continental Blockade, which forbade (1806) the importation of English goods, and (1810) confiscated those English goods which were in the country. Further, in 1807, Switzerland had to put forth a strict prohibition against any recruiting which was not based on a military capitulation in harmony with the French alliance. This prohibition was exclusively directed against England, who then had in her service more Swiss mercenaries than ever before.

The system by which Swiss mercenaries were employed by the English differed from that adopted in the case of the French, Dutch, Spanish, and in that it was based on no official treaties, and was therefore merely a private undertaking. In this form England, despite the failure of Coxe's mission in 1691, had taken Swiss mercenaries into her pay for the first time. Between 1751 and 1755 five companies of Swiss soldiers fought in the East Indies in the service of the British East India Company. But the employment of Swiss mercenaries in the British army reached its greatest extent in the days of Napoleon. Then three whole Swiss regiments were in the British service. Meuron's regiment, originally raised for the Dutch East India Company, passed over, after that Company had come to an end in Ceylon (1795), into the British service, took part in Wellington's campaign in Hindustan, formed the garrison of Malta in 1806, and was in 1813 sent to Canada, where in 1816 it was disbanded. Von Roll's regiment was raised for England in 1795, despite official prohibition, served in Corsica,

Elba, Portugal, Egypt, Gibraltar, and Sicily took part in the conquest of the Ionian Islands (1810), was in part transferred to Spain in 1812, then reunited in Sicily (1814), and finally disbanded in Corfu in 1815. Von Wattenwyl's regiment was formed in 1801 out of the remnants of the four Swiss regiments known by the names of Bachmann, Roverea, Salis-Marschins, and Courten, which, paid by England, but under command of the Austrians, had been through the Second Coalition war. A detachment helped in the defence of Elba, while the remainder of the regiment was sent to Egypt. Both parts were reunited in Malta in 1803, formed a part of the Anglo-Russian army in Naples (1805), and fought in the battle of Maida in Calabria (July 4th, 1806) against brother Swiss who were in the service of France. Transferred to Cadiz in 1811, it helped in the defence of that town and of Carthage, was despatched in 1813 to Canada, and was there disbanded in 1816.

England entered into official relations with Switzerland only after the fall of Napoleon, and the abolition of his Act of Mediation. In the summer of 1814, Lord Castlereagh, the British Secretary for Foreign Affairs, resolved not to leave the field in Switzerland exclusively in the hands of the Continental Powers. Hence, he sent one of his ablest diplomats, Stratford Canning (then aged 28) to Zurich. Along with the witty Capo d'Istria (a native of Corfu), the representative of the Tsar, Stratford Canning took at once the first place among the diplomatists who in Zurich were trying to guide the Swiss Confederation, then in great disorder, into the right path once more. As the Tsar, influenced by his old teacher, Laharpe, had taken under his wing the new Cantons of Vaud and Aargau, the existence of which was threatened, and Capo d'Istria was instructed accordingly, Canning on his side was obliged to favour as much as possible (yet without detaching himself from the other envoys) the cause of Bern, these patricians of which could not get over the loss of Vaud and Aargau. Canning discharged his mission in a fashion which does him all honour. With the help of Capo d'Istria he sought to remove the bitter hatred of the Cantons, which were plaguing each other with territorial claims and other de-

mands, and to prepare the way for an agreement. When the enmity between the "old" Switzerland and the "modern" Switzerland had got to such a pitch that no course seemed to open save to dissolve the Diet in Zurich — a course which would involve a civil war or a forcible intervention of the Powers — Canning, as the special confidant of the Bernese, put before them the necessity of union and the drawbacks of intervention, and endeavoured to console them for their lost districts by the possibility of compensation in the bishopric of Basle. He thus helped to bring about a better state of things, so that finally, on September 9th, 1814, the reorganisation of Switzerland was completed, and on September 12th the number of the Cantons was raised to 22 by the admission of the former "allies," the Valais, Neuchâtel and Geneva.

The gentle pressure which the diplomatists had exerted to bring about the Federal Pact of 1815 became much stronger in the case of the revision of the Cantonal Constitutions, and here, too, Stratford Canning, with Capo d'Istria, played the chief rôle. These Cantonal Constitutions of 1814 were, for the most part, as much an act of external force as had been those of 1803, save that in 1814 the external force was not officially proclaimed, and did not extend to all the Cantons alike. Stratford Canning declared that the leading principles of this interference were: "Intervention only so far as was necessary, respect of old customs and existing privileges, but also preservation of Liberal institutions; in short, so far as the circumstances permit, the spreading of a colour harmony over the various portions of the Confederation." In the interest of this "colour harmony" the ministers sought so far as possible to cut down the democratic features of the constitutions as established by the Act of Mediation, and to assimilate the "representative" constitutions of the new Cantons to the aristocracies of the old urban Cantons, yet on the other hand to sprinkle with a drop of democratic oil the restored patriciates of Bern, Fribourg and Solothurn. But they did not dare to touch the antique rust which covered the constitutions of the mountain Cantons.

(To be continued.)