

Across the continent by car

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FAREWELL TO MONSIEUR DE BOURG, Councillor of Legation.

Writing a farewell article is about as unpleasant as writing a necrology: it means saying "Good-bye" to somebody one is going to miss very much. If, therefore, the following lines should not be quite free of a certain melancholy, I hope I will be pardoned, for I am writing not merely as one of the many members of the Swiss Colony, but also as a personal friend of Monsieur de Bourg's.

Monsieur Walter A. de Bourg is leaving London at the end of this month after nearly 13 years of service to the Swiss in London, in his capacity of First Secretary of Legation and later as Councillor of Legation. London has become a second home-town to him, which he does not like to leave, for there are many bonds that tie him to this country: the family of his late wife, his great circle of friends, and the Swiss Colony, which he always had very much at heart.

Monsieur de Bourg is going to Munich, where he has been appointed Consul-General. I feel certain that all those who ever asked his advice in some matter or other, in fact all those who ever came into touch with him, will join me in congratulating him most heartily to this promotion and in wishing him the very best of luck in his new position. No doubt, Monsieur de Bourg will feel at home very quickly in Germany, for he masters the art of making friends wherever he goes through his obliging, courteous, and yet so natural manners. Munich will, no doubt, prove herself as of much interest to him, for the town is not only the "Capital of the National-socialist movement" (Hauptstadt der Bewegung), but also a cultural centre, and, incidentally, the home of a Swiss Colony numbering about 5,000.

Monsieur de Bourg has, I dare say, been most popular in the Swiss Colony. Who would not have known the good-looking diplomat with his friendly smile and his red carnation in the button-hole? To whom has he not been of some service or other during his long stay, either as friend or as member of the Legation or as Chargé d'Affaires, in which capacity he acted during a certain period? His great knowledge of the British mentality, and conditions in this country, on the one hand, and his deep understanding of the Swiss character on the other hand, have made him a very helpful adviser to very many Swiss in London. Many are the young Swiss, who, through Monsieur de Bourg's efforts received their permit to work in this country, many also are the girls who through him found some position or other. He has been a most amiable link between Colony and Legation and his going away will be a loss to both.

Rarely, I am told, has any diplomat ever taken such a keen interest in the activities of the Colony and its different societies. Monsieur de Bourg, former Vice-President of the former "Swiss Rifle Association" has for the last few years been President of the "Swiss Rifle Team," he has been a "membre de passage" of the "City Swiss Club," he also was a very active member of the "Swiss Mercantile Society" with its different departments, a member of the "Nouvelle Société Helvétique," Hon. Vice-President of the "Swiss Choral Society," subscriber to the "Swiss Orchestral Society," Hon. member of the "Union Helvétique," Hon. Vice-President of the "Swiss Gymnastic Society" and last, but not least, a member of the Committee of the "Association of British members of the Swiss Alpine Club," himself a member of the "section Weissenstein SAAC."

The above list is a long one and certainly goes to prove that Monsieur de Bourg gave a helping hand everywhere. As a personal friend Walter has been most true and faithful, always trying to help, ever polite, always in good spirits, ever obliging, and always of that special charm he has. Whether joking or in earnest conversation, whether he agreed with one or not, one always felt utterly composed.

If I finish these few lines by thanking Monsieur de Bourg most heartily for all and everything he has done for the Swiss in London, I feel sure that I am speaking in the name of thousands who join me in wishing him luck and "God speed."

Gottfried J. Keller.

ACROSS THE CONTINENT BY CAR. London to Locarno Over the St. Gothard Pass.

By CAPTAIN SIR MALCOLM CAMPBELL
(Holder of the World's Land Speed Record)
Motoring Editor of the "Field."

It is some years since I last toured on the Continent, but my recent experiences make me wonder why more British motorists do not follow the example of those who make a practice of spending their vacation motoring abroad. I decided on the occasion of my visit to Switzerland that it would be cheaper and far more pleasant if we motored all the way there, instead of travelling by train.

My party consisted of two old friends besides myself, and four mechanics. The cars I used for the journey were a new 12-cylinder Lincoln Zephyr coupé and a 30 h.p. Ford V.8 Utility. The Lincoln could seat three quite easily on the front seat, and all our personal luggage was accommodated in the rear boot, which is extremely commodious. My four mechanics travelled in the Ford, and besides their luggage, it carried a certain amount of gear belonging to the Blue Bird speedboat, which we had not been able to send on in advance.

We crossed the Channel by the Newhaven-Dieppe route, arriving at the latter port at about 3.30 p.m. on Friday, August 6th. The R.A.C. representative was most helpful, and we were not long delayed in passing through the French Customs; in fact, both cars got away at 4.30, only losing about an hour, which was most satisfactory.

The distance from Dieppe to Locarno, according to the route we had chosen, was 622 miles, although our speedometer only registered 614 by the time we arrived at our destination, and that of the Ford, which followed closely on our track the whole way, showed 615 miles. We were in no hurry, since the speedboat was not due to arrive at Locarno until Saturday evening at the earliest, so I decided to drive slowly, more especially as my Lincoln was a new car.

We intended stopping the night at Rheims, where we arrived three hours later, our route being via Forges, Gournay, Beauvais, Compiègne and Soissons. Rheims is approximately 130 miles distant from Dieppe, and although I never exceeded a speed of 60 m.p.h., for the most part keeping steadily at between 45 and 50, yet our average worked out at just over 43 m.p.h. for the whole distance. When motoring in France quite a high average speed can be maintained with a comparative low maximum, and this is due to the long straight roads and to the small amount of traffic usually encountered during week-days, a marked contrast to motoring in this country.

The following morning we left Rheims at 8.30 a.m., and, passing through Chalons, St. Dizier and Chaumont, we arrived at Langres at mid-day, where we stopped for lunch. The distance covered was approximately 112 miles, and our low average of 30 m.p.h. was due to repeated stops by the way-side. For example outside Rheims we lost over half-an-hour examining the old battlefields. Langres is a quaint old garrison town, standing on a plateau which dominates the surrounding country. The American troops used this town as headquarters during the late War.

After looking round the town, we pushed on to the frontier, which is situated just outside Basle, and the 100 odd miles we covered in just over two hours. We experienced no difficulty in passing through the Customs, and the Swiss authorities were most courteous and did not even wish to examine our baggage. Motorists visiting Switzerland are now granted a rebate of sixpence-halfpenny on every gallon of petrol they buy, and as we passed through the Customs we were handed a form upon which was entered up the quantity purchased at filling stations. When returning, I handed this document back to the Swiss Customs, and received the equivalent of 50/-.

The only difficulty we encountered during the entire trip in finding our way was when passing through Basle, as this city is badly signposted, though as a general rule throughout France and Switzerland directions are marked up most clearly even in towns, and this is particularly true of France.

At 7.30 p.m. we arrived at Olten, 20 miles from the frontier, and as it was pouring with rain we decided to stay the night there. The following morning we started off on the most difficult part of our journey, albeit the most beautiful, as our route lay via Luzern, Atdorf and the St. Gothard Pass. Then on to Biasca, Bellinzona and Locarno. Although the actual distance is only about 180 miles, it is difficult to average more than 20 m.p.h. up the mountain passes, as great care is necessary and much traffic is usually encountered during the daytime. The Lincoln negotiated the stiff climb on second gear, although on one or two of the most acute bends bottom was occasionally necessary. We stopped many times to admire the scenery and to take photographs, consequently our average speed was very low.

The summit of the St. Gothard Pass is approximately 6,800ft. above sea level, and even in the month of August much snow is still to be seen on the mountain tops. The road is a marvellous engineering feat and the surface extremely good. The "S" bends for the most part are paved with stone blocks and are considerably super-elevated. It is advisable when descending the pass to use second gear, as by doing so, the brakes are spared. This pass is usually only open to traffic for about four months in the year; in fact, I have recently heard from a friend who left for Locarno a week after we got back that he has been obliged to put his car on the train, as the road near the summit is now covered with snow. We eventually arrived at Locarno on Saturday afternoon at 4.30, having taken exactly two days for the journey.

Motoring in Switzerland is most delightful, as long as you are content to take things easily. The roads are good for the most part, and the scenery is wonderful. What must appeal to the Britisher, however, is the lack of irksome restrictions. You seem to be able to park your car where you like, with or without lights after dark, and you are not for ever wondering whether a police car is trailing you. During my entire stay I never once saw an accident, and this in a country where restrictions and speed limits were conspicuous by their absence.

I saw a large number of British cars, both in France and in Switzerland, and I can quite understand why touring on the Continent is becoming so popular. Tourists are made welcome and everything is done to make their visit happy and comfortable.

Locarno is a truly beautiful town, the people are charming, and the weather, although hot with brilliant sunshine, it not by any means oppressive. There is some very fine trout fishing to be had in the near-by rivers, and a licence, which costs 20 francs, entitles the holder to fish wherever he likes in the district. Big fish are also caught in the lake, but local knowledge is necessary. I was told that two years ago a species of trout was taken out of the lake, which turned the scale at 22lb.; apparently trout weighing 10lb. are quite common.

I will not inflict upon my readers an account of my return journey, but suffice it to say that it took exactly one-and-a-half days, or in other words nineteen hours at the wheel, which included all stops for meals.

I do most thoroughly recommend anyone who has never made the trip to Locarno to do so, as a most enjoyable holiday can be spent there. The hotels are excellent, and the scenery is magnificent.

The Field.

EDITOR'S POST-BAG.

October 6th, 1937.

To the Editor of the
Swiss Observer,
23, Leonard Street,
London, E.C.2.

Dear Sir,

In your issue of September 25th you quote an extract from the "Nottingham Journal and Express" concerning the Château de Prangins.

The correspondent of this Nottingham paper must have let his imagination run away with him since he visited the Château, as hardly any of his statements are correct.

I was born there and my family left it in April 1920 when it was sold to the Comte de Pourtales (of the Swiss branch of this family). The Château had been occupied till then and from 1872 by a boys boarding school which was managed by my father. The majority of the boys visiting our school were English.

It is situated 23 kilometers from Geneva, 37 from Lausanne and at a distance of about 600m. from the Lake-side. It was built in 1728 by Charles Guiger, a banker of Saint Gall. It is of the pure "Renaissance style" and the four towers are all square (and not round).

The room occupied once by Voltaire is on the first floor of the eastern tower and is still called to-day "La Chambre de Voltaire." It was the school's museum before 1920.

Joseph Napoleon, King of Spain, owned it for an approximate period of 15 years and it is from there that he fled to South America when he was expelled from the Canton de Vaud. There is still a saying that he buried a treasure in the Castle and during our time we got many an offer from treasure hunters to make excavations! In fact, Napoleon's valet fetched the treasure two years after his master's flight.

With regard to the residence in Prangins of the ex-Emperor, Charles of Austria, there has always been some confusion, even in the Swiss papers, between the Château and the Villa Prangins.

He stayed at the Villa which is situated at the lake-side about two miles east of the Château. It is a modern residence of Italian style and can easily be seen at a short distance, by any passenger on the lake paddle steamers. It was built about 50 years ago for the French ex-sugar king, Mr. Say, and in Prangins we used to call it "Le Château de Sucre." At the time, the confusion was so great about the exact site of the ex-emperor's residence that, at the Château we were besieged by visitors.

The Piracy Conference of Nyon had nothing to do with the Château de Prangins either and if I am not mistaken took place at "la Grande Salle" de Nyon, on the Place Perdetemps, which is a recently built Conference hall.

Reverting again to the Château de Prangins, it is owned to-day by Mrs. MacCormick of Chicago (Rockefeller's daughter) as she bought it from the Comte de Pourtales five or six years ago after having resided in it since 1924 at the Comte's tenant.

Yours faithfully,

WALTER MENZEL.