

What British contemporaries think about Switzerland

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WHAT BRITISH CONTEMPORARIES THINK ABOUT SWITZERLAND.

Liberty, Tolerance and Peace ...

There is a special significance and value about the Swiss National Exhibition which would not attach to an exhibition organised by any other nation. To call Switzerland "the playground of Europe" is to tell only a fraction of the truth. She is also, by her situation, the heart of Europe, and, by her history, the guide of Europe. When I think of Switzerland, three memories in particular come to my mind.

I remember Switzerland in the Great War, and the great change one felt in coming away from regions in which man was bent on doing the utmost evil to his fellow men to a country where, in the midst of considerable daily hardship, people seemed to be bent on relieving the human suffering that surrounded them and reminding us in the midst of our struggles and afflictions that ordinary kindness and the sense of brotherhood had not perished out of the world.

I remember coming year after year, when tired and often fretted by committee work on practical public affairs, up to the high Alps, to breathe the serene air, to walk over glaciers, to watch the great soaring birds, and the brilliant wild flowers, and feel at peace with the world and almost — for the time being — young again.

I remember the great historical achievement of Switzerland, in teaching men to live together in concord. Only here do French, German and Italian co-operate as free men, rejoicing in a common citizenship and service to society, finding their bond of union not in aggressive nationalism or dreams of military ambition, but in building by united effort "a good life for man." Members of three of the great nations of Europe permanently have their homes and their national patriotism in Switzerland; of the other, the Anglo-Saxon, it may be said that if its members have not that privilege, at least they come pouring into Switzerland every year for their holidays, as to a country more adapted to human happiness than any other region of Europe. It is adapted to human happiness not merely through its beauty, but because it is free from oppression and cruelty, free from intolerance, and permeated by a friendly spirit between man and man. Catholic and Protestant live together in mutual respect, nor have I ever heard of any persecutions of Jews or Freethinkers. Town and country, mountain and plain, industry and agriculture consider one another's needs.

Switzerland is a living witness to the practical value of some of the highest elements in human civilization, Liberty, Tolerance and Peace. One of the most famous poems in the English language speaks of two great voices, one from the mountains of Switzerland, one from the seas round England, as the "chosen music of Liberty" calling to the world her great message. Let us hope that in the Exhibition of 1939 Switzerland will be seen strong, confident and true to herself, and that the troubled nations of Europe as they look towards Zurich may learn of the wise and calm little country lying in the midst of them the lesson she has been holding before their eyes for so many hundred years.

Gilbert Murray.

A Creation of the Human Will ...

Switzerland, in the midst of Europe, stands before the world as the prototype of Western civilization. This is no mere phrase. It is a demonstrable truth.

To begin with, Switzerland is a bundle of paradoxes.

The most united and vigorously conscious nation of Europe, it has no natural frontiers, no unity of race, no unity of religion, no unity of language, no unity of literary culture, and, despite appearances to the contrary, no unity of tradition. Yet, Switzerland is one and the fact impresses the stranger upon arrival, no matter in which part of her soil, race, religion, language, culture or civilization he may land.

The most democratic nation in the world, Switzerland has no parliamentary system and, though its people retains in its hands those two powerful, and even dangerous, levers of policy control, the plebiscite and the right of initiative, it boasts ... but, no, Switzerland never boasts, it may claim to possess the stables executive in the world, not excepting, curiously enough, dictatorial and totalitarian States.

A people of peasants and cattlemen, on the whole rather poor in raw materials and lacking coal, it has developed one of the most advanced industrial civilizations in the world, so that men from all countries come to Switzerland in search of industrial experts, schools, technical advice and competence; and that Swiss machinery has secured and maintains an enviable reputation for quality, workmanship and finish.

This countryside people, moreover, have become masters in the difficult art of urban construction and management. Switzerland keeps its little towns in a high state of efficiency, cleanliness, character, and culture, far above that achieved by other nations more abundant in industrial resources and possessing huge towns.

This people of professional soldiers, who once were the cannon-fodder of all Europe, out of their own choice and for the fun — and the profit — of it, have become the nation of permanent and constitutional neutrality and are as determined never to fight other people's battles now as they were once ready to fight everybody's.

Finally, in the midst of a Europe in which the conflicting characters and ambitions of Germans, French and Italians are a constant source of irritation and war-mongery, Switzerland has become a haven of peace composed precisely of Germans, Frenchmen and Italians who have decided to build up a Commonwealth across their differences, as if to show the world that it can be done and how.

All these paradoxes have but one key. The Swiss have achieved all these apparent impossibilities because they have made up their minds to do so. *Switzerland is a creation of the human will.* Now, the human will differs from mere human impulses in that it is intelligent and purposeful. Knowing whither it goes, it studies the way. Knowing the way, it keeps to it.

And since it is evident that the specific feature of Western civilization is precisely that it seeks to achieve clear aims by the operation of the human will, it follows that Switzerland is the prototype of our Western civilization and the masterpiece thereof.

Salvador de Madariaga.

Zurich — A City that Raises the Spirits.

Zurich is a town of many attractions and blessed with many advantages. In the first place, unlike some more definitely interesting Cities, it is an extremely cheerful, even often gay looking town. There is nothing melancholy or morose about it. It is full of energy and life. A busy and bustling river, the Limmat, runs through it. On clear days it commands a magnificent view of the distant Alps. It is built on the edge of a far spreading lake, along which extend promenades shaded by masses of trees and bordered at intervals by sun and lake baths which are crowded with happy people during the golden months of the summer. On the heights round the City there are splendid forests offering to everyone the health and beauty of endless delightful walks and rides. All this is to the good. But Zurich has much more to offer than this.

I believe it to be a singularly healthy City. But this is a strictly personal view. I have not consulted doctors on the point. My belief comes to me from my own experience. Whenever I visit Zurich, I feel better in health there than I do in almost any other place, whether in town or country. It has been said that the greatest sufferer from insomnia can sleep in Rome. I incline to the belief, judging purely from my own personal experience, that the greatest sufferer from dyspepsia will feel at his best in Zurich.

I once asked a Zurichois why this was. He said: It's the water. Zurich has marvellous water. I was so influenced by the earnest sound of this voice that directly he left me I went to my bathroom, turned on the cold water tap, filled a tumbler and drank off the Elixer. And since then I swear devoutly by the water of Zurich.

Zurich of course contains first-rate hotels. This need hardly be dwelt upon since Switzerland is noted for its hotel keepers. There are, too, restaurants innumerable, two or three in the old part of the town possessing an almost irresistible lure for the gourmet. There are fine picture galleries, a splendid University, two golf courses, one amusing and swell at the Dolder, the other grandiose at Zumikon a little way out. There are many first-rate tennis courts at the Baur au Lac, behind the Dolder Grand Hotel in the Forest and elsewhere.

And there is music, much music of the best kind in Zurich. Vienna used to be called "The Singing City." And every waiter and chamber maid there in the old days, now gone, seemed to be an acute judge of music. One would not say quite so much as this of Zurich.

Nevertheless I believe Zurich to be one of the most musical Cities of Europe. During the

Season, before the bathing season has fully set in towards the end of June, when most people seem to spend the best part of the day in the sun and swimming baths, there is a concert, and usually a good one, almost every night of the week. And the Opera Season at the Stadt-Theater lasts, I believe, during nine months of the year. (At Covent Garden Opera House in London the Season of Opera lasts for barely two months.)

The people of Zurich care greatly for music, but better still, they seem to me to care most for really fine music.

A good while ago, on one of the first of my many visits to Zurich, I went to a concert with what might be called, though not by me, a programme of very "stiff" music. The only composer's name on the programme was Bach. The concert took place in the big concert room of the Tonhalle. Rather to my surprise this was crammed. Not a seat was empty. And the big audience was devout. The applause at the end was tremendous. One discerned warm gratitude in it, a "thank you" worth having.

Since then I have heard programmes entirely devoted to works by Mozart, Chopin, etc., which were equally well attended — even difficult ultra modern Chamber Music draws good audiences. The people of Zurich like to know what is being done as well as what has been done.

No wonder Wagner was so attracted to Zurich; no wonder Busoni passed so much of his time there; no wonder the great conductor, Furtwängler, brings his Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra there, and even conducts now and then at the Stadt-Theater.

Zurich is a genial City, a City that raises the Spirits. I venture to recommend it even to the pessimist.

Maiefeld, June 1938.

Robert Hichens.

SIX YEARS TO BUILD A TUNNEL.

By H. L. McNALLY.

Swiss railway engineers — the men who burrow, tunnel, and gnaw their way through the rock and ice of the Alps like mites wandering through a cheese — have been celebrating the 25th anniversary of the opening of the Loetschberg Tunnel, which, with the better-known Simplon, links the Channel ports with Milan.

I have just completed a tour of the Bernese Alpine Railway.

In four days I have sweltered in temperatures over 100 degrees, been hailed on at Gornergrat, where the highest open-air railway in Europe reaches a height of 10,290ft., and been snowed on at Jungfrauoch, which is 11,340ft. high — so high that an egg takes 10 minutes to boil, and boiling water is nearly cool enough to drink.

The Jungfrau herself provided me with a strip-tease act beneath her veil of clouds of tantalising but incomparable beauty.

I shall not forget meeting Bernard Shaw's Captain Bluntschli in the person of Dr. Seiler of Zermatt, who owns 2,400 beds in his chain of Alpine hotels, and is the only man I ever met who owns a glacier — the Rhone Glacier, one of the finest in Switzerland, in which there is an artificial cave 100 yards long and 10ft. high, cut in the ice.

Switzerland in the summer has a special charm — the charm of contrast. Electric rack railways wind and climb slowly, but steadily, up from the sun-baked valleys; up through the pines thousands of feet to where gentian, even bluer than the sky, and other many-coloured Alpine flowers grow; up to cool refreshing air where patches of last year's snow lie around defying the sunshine.

I have funny memories too. I think of Blausee, whose water is so blue that one imagines the lake must be closed annually for re-bluing. I recollect that this little lake — surrounded by 1,000ft.-high rock cliffs down which water cascades in streams that look like white smoke — is the home of thousands of blue trout, so tame that a notice says: "It is forbidden to take the fish out of the water."

The electric train carried me away from Blausee through tunnel after tunnel until I

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