

Visit to the Monastery of St. Bernard

Autor(en): **M.R.**

Objektyp: **Article**

Zeitschrift: **The Swiss observer : the journal of the Federation of Swiss Societies in the UK**

Band (Jahr): - **(1938)**

Heft 874

PDF erstellt am: **27.06.2024**

Persistenter Link: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-694232>

Nutzungsbedingungen

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Inhalten der Zeitschriften. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern. Die auf der Plattform e-periodica veröffentlichten Dokumente stehen für nicht-kommerzielle Zwecke in Lehre und Forschung sowie für die private Nutzung frei zur Verfügung. Einzelne Dateien oder Ausdrucke aus diesem Angebot können zusammen mit diesen Nutzungsbedingungen und den korrekten Herkunftsbezeichnungen weitergegeben werden. Das Veröffentlichen von Bildern in Print- und Online-Publikationen ist nur mit vorheriger Genehmigung der Rechteinhaber erlaubt. Die systematische Speicherung von Teilen des elektronischen Angebots auf anderen Servern bedarf ebenfalls des schriftlichen Einverständnisses der Rechteinhaber.

Haftungsausschluss

Alle Angaben erfolgen ohne Gewähr für Vollständigkeit oder Richtigkeit. Es wird keine Haftung übernommen für Schäden durch die Verwendung von Informationen aus diesem Online-Angebot oder durch das Fehlen von Informationen. Dies gilt auch für Inhalte Dritter, die über dieses Angebot zugänglich sind.

reached the Loetschberg Tunnel. A searchlight revealed, as we sped at 56 miles an hour, the vast rock-blasting that had been done. Seventy-four million francs — about £3,000,000 — were spent on the line, and £1,500,000 on the tunnel alone.

It was planned that the tunnel would take 4½ years to build, but an avalanche which killed 12 men and injured 15, and a roof collapse which buried 25 workmen, made it necessary to divert the tunnel to avoid a dangerous fault in the rock. The work took six years and nine months, and traffic began in July 1913.

M. Bittel, engineer of the line, told me of the opening of the tunnel. "All Switzerland took part," he said. "Cannonades of joy were fired, chamois hunters, guides, and people in local costumes attended from every part. Ministers representing foreign Governments were there when, at noon, mines were exploded and the new international link was open."

"The tunnel was an international enterprise. French money, Swiss and Italian technicians, designers, and workmen all co-operated in this work which Switzerland planned to aid international friendship and tourist traffic. It was so popular that the train services had to be doubled from the first day."

Out of the tunnel — whose nine miles the train covers in 15 minutes — we were running high over the Rhone Valley, looking down on the rule-straight poplar-lined road to Brigue which was first laid out by Napoleon as the route to Italy.

Kandersteg, best known in winter, was full of visitors who had gathered bunches of Alpine flowers, now in full bloom. For a moment I paused at the cemetery where the men who died in the building of the Loetschberg are buried — the men who made my trip possible.

I should have liked to stay at the Ritz in Niederwald, for it is the original Ritz, opened 300 years before César Ritz founded the hotels which have made the name world-renowned, but its four bedrooms were full.

Rain was falling at Zermatt, but a fine morning followed, and a rack railway brought me above the pines, past the blue gentians, up to the snowy Gornergrat, where the temperature was at freezing point.

On the summit I found myself surrounded by the most awe-inspiring peaks: Monte Rosa, the Breithorn, the Matterhorn, and the Little Matterhorn.

You Can't Hurry.

Ten thousand feet up clouds swirled and drifted about me in a battle with the sunshine, and ominous-looking black daws with bright yellow beaks flew around seeming like small eagles.

At this height, for anyone unaccustomed to it, it is necessary to move slowly, even for a few paces. A quick walk of ten yards makes the heart palpitate.

My highest climb was by the Jungfrauoch railway from Scheidegg at 6,770ft. to the Jungfrauoch station at 11,340ft. Almost the whole of this line is tunnelled through the rock under the glaciers, and the gradient is 1 in 4 most of the way.

The five and three-quarter miles journey to the magnificent hotel which has been built in a seemingly impossible position at the top takes just an hour.

There the Jungfrau (the Maiden) played her strip-tease act. Fine snow veiled her altogether as I went into the Ice Palace, a wonderful excavation in the glacier ice. There is a bar, complete with piano, and "stove" made of ice, also a skating rink, where one's breath settles as crystals of frost on the ice walls, and the exertion of a few rounds on skates is enough to make one out of breath.

Back in the open again, the Maiden gave me my first glimpse; a cloud rested on the summit and others drifted around, letting me see one part and then another, but never the whole mountain. Tantalisingly, the summit remained invisible. (Daily Mail.)

VISIT TO THE MONASTERY OF ST. BERNARD.

Lake Geneva glittered like a sapphire in the sunlight as we took a car at Montreux for a day's journey to the St. Bernard Hospice. Skirting the lakeside, we passed the medieval Castle of Chillon, and then, turning south at the old Roman station of Villeneuve, we drove through the Rhône valley to where the river joins the Drance by Martigny.

For several miles our way led through sun-drenched orchards of peaches, apricots and vineyards. Cow-bells tinkled in the pastures. Coloured chalets like toys perched among the hills, and peasants in bullock-carts made patches of lively colour on the green landscape. At Martigny, where the ascent to the Great St.

Bernard begins, there was a change in the scenery. Pine-clad hills, bleaker pastures and bare mountain bosses came into view. Towering crags reared distant white caps into the blue, and children, scrambling down rocky ways, ran after our car selling bunches of edelweiss. Soon we were driving past deep ravines, foaming cataracts and glassy green glaciers.

A halt to cool our engine was made at Bourg St. Pierre, a wild mountain village, eight miles below the hospice. Here were a Roman milestone with an inscription to Constantine, a bridge built by Charlemagne, and a tenth-century Romanesque church. At the tiny inn called "Déjeuner de Napoléon" we saw the room, the table, chair and plates used by the Emperor when he breakfasted on May 20th, 1800.

The last lap of the journey was a steady climb through a rock-hewn gorge into a wilderness of ice and snow, a land of rugged boulders, deep crevasses and lonely silent wastes sprinkled sparsely with clumps of hardy Alpine flora. In the heart of the mountains, touched by the flush of the sun, we came at last to that centuries-old guesthouse, the Monastery of St. Bernard, 8,111 feet above sea level.

The monks received us in the vestibule of their great stone fortress, and showed us round the ancient dwelling, a barracks-like building of a hundred rooms, capable of accommodating four hundred visitors a night. The present hospice stands on the site of the original eleventh-century monastery built by Bernard of Menthon, which was demolished in 1560 to make room for a larger. With the advent of the motor-car, and the replacement of the old mule-path by a new road in 1893 this, too, became inadequate, and another building known as the hotel has been added for the accommodation of tourists.

To-day the hospice has central heating, telephones, electricity and radio, but still the rooms with their six-feet-thick walls seemed damp and chilly. We sat in the dim chapel while the monks sang psalms, and put on our coats to keep out the cold. Some fifteen monks live in the monastery, but after a few years the rigorous climate (temperature zero for five months) compels them to retire to their mother-house at Martigny, and they are replaced by others. The fathers showed us their treasures — a painting in the refectory of St. Bernard and his dog, a piano given by Edward VII, guest of the monastery when Prince of Wales, and a portrait of Queen Victoria, presented by her Majesty when she stayed here one night. The library contains 2,000 volumes, books of all ages and nations, and there are natural history and mineralogical collections, and Roman coins and tablets, which the brothers excavated some years ago on the site of an ancient temple to Jove which stood close to the hospice.

A monk led us to the kennels of their famous dogs. Some five or six friendly beasts answered to their names, and climbed on the monk's shoulders. In centuries past, the dogs played a great part as guides and rescuers, but nowadays it is customary for travellers to telephone from the valley before crossing the pass, and, in the event of snowstorm, the monks set out on skis to find them. In 1883 the St. Bernard monks obtained two pairs of skis from Norway. They were the first to use skis in Switzerland.

The fathers told us that about twenty thousand visitors come to the hospice annually. Most of them are hurrying tourists or Italian peasants seeking work across the mountains. But the golden age of Alpine hospices is no more. The opening of the St. Gotthard and Simplon tunnels has banished the danger of Alpine transit. The photograph shows tourists on the Mount St. Bernard.

M. B.
(Birmingham Post.)

MISCELLANEOUS ADVERTISEMENTS

SWISS LADY in Torquay requires a cook-general, two in family. Write Box No. 4, c/o Swiss Observer, 23, Leonard Street, E.C.2.

CAN TAKE One or Two passengers in private motor-car to Switzerland from Manchester or London districts leaving 20th August (single journey only). Write Box No. 76, c/o, Swiss Observer, 23, Leonard Street, E.C.2.

SWISS BENEVOLENT SOCIETY.

Would a lady of our Colony be so good as to help the cause of our Poor, by spending three hours of one afternoon a week at our office at Swiss House, 34, Fitzroy Square, W.1. Applicants would be welcomed by the Secretary.

Theo. Ritter.

SWISS BANK CORPORATION,

(A Company limited by Shares incorporated in Switzerland)

99, GRESHAM STREET, E.C.2.
and 11c, REGENT STREET, S.W. 1.

Capital Paid up s.f. 160,000,000
Reserves - - s.f. 32,000,000
Deposits - - s.f. 1,280,000,000

All Descriptions of Banking and Foreign Exchange Business Transacted

: : Correspondents in all : :
: : parts of the World. : :

Telephone Numbers : MUSEUM 4302 (Visitors) MUSEUM 7035 (Office)
Telegrams : SOUFFLE WEDCO, LONDON
Established 1868
50 Years.

"Ben faranno i Paganis Purgatorio C. xiv. Dante
"Ventr se ne dee giu tra' miei Meschini."
Dante. Inferno. C. xxvii.

PAGAN'S RESTAURANT

GREAT PORTLAND STREET, LONDON, W. 1.

LINDA MESCHINI } Sole Proprietors. }
ARTHUR MESCHINI }

If you want a SUIT to WEAR

wear a

PRITCHETT Suit

Suits, Overcoats & Ladies Costumes from 3 Gns. to 7 Gns. and you get VALUE for every penny you pay.

Agent for BURBERRY
Weatherproofs.

W. PRITCHETT

183 & 184, TOTTENHAM COURT ROAD, W.1.
2 mins. from S.M.S. School. Phone: MUSEUM 0428

Divine Services.

EGLISE SUISSE (1762).

(Langue française).

79, Endell Street, Shaftesbury Avenue, W.C.2.

(Near New Oxford Street.)

Dimanche 14 août 1938 :

11h. — Culte. M. M. Pradervand.

Les cultes du soir sont supprimés pendant le mois d'août.

Pour l'instruction religieuse et les actes pastoraux, prière de s'adresser au pasteur, M. Marcel Pradervand, 65, Mount View Road, N.4 (Téléphone Mountview 5003).
Heure de réception à l'église le mercredi de 11 — 12h.30.

SCHWEIZERKIRCHE

(Deutschsprachige Gemeinde).

St. Anne's Church, 9, Gresham Street, E.C.2.
(near General Post Office.)

Sonntag, den 13. August 1938.

Predigt: Pfarrer Rud. Kägi aus Rothrist.
Während der Monate Juli und August finden keine Abendgottesdienste statt.

Anfragen wegen Amtshandlungen und Besuchen sind zu richten — an Herrn Pfarrer Rud. Kägi, c/o Foyer Suisse, 12, Upper Bedford Way, Russell Square, W.C.1. — Tel.: MUSEUM 2982.

Printed for the Proprietors by THE FREDERICK PRINTING CO., LTD., at 23, Leonard Street, London, E.C.2.