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SWISS EVENTS

The cold weather and the snow that have fallen on Switzerland have not slowed down the pace of Swiss news. The following main events, mentioned in chronological order, took place during the past month:

Agreement by the two Chambers on adding a 7th Paragraph to Article 34 of the Federal Constitution providing for Federal encouragement to housing; Explosion of a time bomb at the Jordanian Consulate in Geneva, with three seriously wounded persons; The federal authorities grants Timothy Leary, "Apostle of LSD", wanted by the U.S. Department of Justice, permission to remain in Switzerland; Revelation of a new case of military espionage at the outcome of a 6-month enquiry; A Swissair DC-9 airliner collides with a private plane while taking off at Vienne (one dead, and heavy damages); The Swiss franc is technically devalued by two per cent following the 19th December conference of the IMF. The new parity amounts to a 13.87 per cent revaluation of the Swiss franc with respect to the dollar, in terms of their respective parities before 9th May, 1971, revaluation of the Swiss franc.

The Federal Council announces proposals making the constitutional articles banning Jesuits from Switzerland invalid. They will be submitted to parliament and the people; Francois Perregaux, the Swiss professor jailed 18 months ago in Russia, is set free; A gun battle takes place in Zurich between two thieves and the police, with three wounded, one seriously; A gigantic fire guts the new central post office in Berne.

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SWISS CATHEDRALS



St. Nicholas Cathedral

We are beginning with this issue a series of articles on Swiss cathedrals sent to us by our faithful contributor, Mr. Pierre Savoie.

The beginning of Christian art, stiff in design and laboriously ornamental, was stimulated in many directions by the great outbursts of the Renaissance. Under Christianity the art of painting and sculpting began again from the beginning, without either technical or intellectual preparation. Its first awakening of sympathy is with the human side of Christianity, the love of mother and child, the sufferings of the crucified Christ, the sorrow and bereavement of the disciples.

As religious art advances, its mental progress is shown by the increasing importance given to the human side of its subjects, and the charm of the work lies in the beauty or nobility of the faces and the dignity of the attitudes. Renaissance is a comprehensive name for the great intellectual movement which marks the transition from the middle ages to the modern world. The movement originated in Italy towards the end of the 14th century, and attaining its full development in the earlier half of the 16th century. The Renaissance spread itself throughout the whole of Europe. In many of our Swiss cathedrals, one encounters religious sculptures and paintings remarkable for fertility of invention, warmth of feeling, purity, and devout faith.

FRIBOURG

ST. NICHOLAS CATHEDRAL

The churches and convents of Fribourg, bastion of Catholicism, are remarkable. Its ancient quarters, bristling with steeples, have retained their mediaeval aspect. The collegiate church of St. Nicholas is a beautiful Gothic edifice; yet it has a certain want of unity which comes as it was built and enlarged at different times.

The consecration of the first church took place in 1182. In 1283 was laid the first stone of an edifice destined to replace the church dedicated to Saint Nicholas, and consecrated a century earlier by the founder of the town, Berchtold of Zähringen.

In 1512, the church of St. Nicholas was raised into a collegiate church by Pope Julius II.

The chancel, closed with a wrought iron gate, and embellished with stalls of the 15th century representing the prophets and the apostles, has been entirely reconstructed in the 17th century. The great nave, begun in the 13th century, was completed in the 14th. To be remarked are the pulpit, baptismal font, the chancel stalls, the Passion group in the great ogival arch separating the chancel from the nave, the Saint Sepulchre, the treasure of the vestry, the 12 side chapels, particularly the chapels of Notre Dame, of Victories and of the Saint Sacrament, the high altar and the magnificent chancel windows coming from the ancient abbey of Hauterive, placed in the church of St. Nicholas in 1848.

The famous organ of Aloys Moser, with 90 registers and 7,800 pipes of which the biggest are more than 6m. high, one of Europe's marvels, is one of the splendours of Fribourg. This instrument, made in 1834, is, by itself, worth a visit to the cathedral. To be remarked also is the tower of 76m., constructed in the 15th century, and the octagon crowned in 1490 with bell turrets, and flight of 365 stairs to reach the summit. It has a magnificent ringing. The great bell weighs 9,912Kg. The aisles, also vaulted with pointed arches, are lighted by modern church windows of an astonishing decorative richness, executed at the beginning of the 20th century by the Polish painter Mehoffer.

The great porch with its bas-reliefs representing the Last Sacrament, and the side-porch so neat and so well ornamented. Here in St. Nicholas we find the beauty of an art closely and inseparably bound-up with truth, with morals, with religion, everything to attract the attention and thought of the observer.

(Pierre Savoie)