

# Here and there

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## NOTES &amp; GLEANINGS.

The Alpine Motor Service run by the Swiss Federal Railways is described by *Motor Transport* (August 14th) in an illustrated article which emphasizes the great difference between traffic and road conditions there and those in England. The satisfactory financial result and the fact that there has not been a single accident demonstrate—the writer says—in no uncertain manner the reliability of the cars (Saurer) when working under strenuous conditions; it is only a chassis of the thoroughbred class that can stand the continuous gruelling imposed by negotiating the Alpine passes. The human factor is, of course, of tremendous importance, and in face of the many accidents on the—comparatively speaking—flat and uniform roads of this country the superior skill and sense of responsibility of the Swiss Government drivers stand out prominently.

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A humorous account of the Six Day Motor Cycle Race appears in *Motor Cycling* (Aug. 23rd) by an English competitor who intended to ride to Geneva, but, owing to lack of time, was forced to go on by train from Paris, where—

"For about 100 francs I bought a ticket for a second-class seat to Geneva. Of course, there wasn't one vacant. I paid, roughly, 50 francs extra for a first-class seat, and there wasn't one of those either. So a gorgeous individual popped me into a sleeper and touched me for a further 75 francs. Thought I to myself, 'This is very comfortable, but I shall shortly be writing, 'Dear Firm, please wire cash.'"

However, I reached Geneva; my mount didn't. I wired various people, and I worried various people—or rather, I paid an interpreter to wire and worry for me. Eventually I discovered that it was languishing in the Customs House of the frontier station 30 miles away. I trained off to the frontier station, presented my Carnet de Passage en Douane (or thereabouts), had the slip torn off and the counterfoil stamped, and was allowed to pass out of the Customs and thus out of France.

But the trouble was I wasn't out of France. My papers said I wasn't in France, but they didn't say where I was, and half a mile down the road, the actual frontier Customs official became suspicious. Moreover, he became excited and voluble and bristly, and he performed Swedish drill exercises with his arms and shoulders. So did I, with sundry allusions to "la gare sanguinaire"—which didn't seem to help him. "XYZ..." said he for twenty minutes.

Then he started making notes. He acquired my volumes of papers and made notes from all of them. Meanwhile, I sat on his table and jerked it. Also I smoked Gold Flakes, carefully dropping the ash into his inkpot—when he wasn't looking—which somewhat impaired the legibility of his notes. Then he let me go. I rode through the neutral zone, disbursed money at the Swiss frontier and obtained in exchange various bits of paper and a nice little book on how to ride a motor-cycle in Switzerland.

This was a most instructive little book, printed in both French and English, and from it I learned many things. One is that the Swiss motor-cyclist must be a harassed individual. He must never exceed 25 m.p.h. At night, or in foggy weather, or on meeting other vehicles, he must slow down to 15 m.p.h. On mountain roads the limit is 11 m.p.h., and on corners  $3\frac{3}{4}$  m.p.h. On his machine must be fitted a high-toned horn, and nothing but it. In about half the country it is not allowed to ride at all. In some parts Sunday riding is totally prohibited, and in others everyone must be off the roads by 8 p.m. In some he may ride in the morning, but not in the afternoon, and in others in the afternoon, but not in the morning. Oh, what a happy land!—is England!

They had, of course, no time to admire the magnificent scenery, but evidently made up for this in other ways:—

"We were all invited to 'Wine of Honour' before the trial, on the day of rest at Lugano, and at the finish. And at many of the checks—altogether there were 76—we were given tea, coffee, beer or wine, several of them even supplying champagne. (A.-C.U., please note.)

We won the cup on riding and lost it on technicalities. From this we have learned several things, which I will enume-

rate. First, we want accurate road cards. To get these an A.-C.U. representative should go completely round the course some days before the event, with two—or more—good speedometers, and check off each stage. Inaccuracies need not be altered, so long as the British riders know the snags. (Most of the men living in the country probably know them from experience.) Secondly, we want clearer rules. Bennett had a broken saddle spring, which lost England the cup. We could find nothing in the rules to say that a saddle must not be changed, but were afraid to do it, lest he became disqualified altogether. Thirdly, we want, on the 'Grand Jury,' an exactly equal number of representatives for each country competing. This year Swiss, Swedish and British teams competed. So far as I can ascertain the Grand Jury was composed of five Swiss, two Englishmen, and no Swedes at all.

I cannot finish with a sting in the tail. Switzerland put up a fine performance, and has now won the cup for the third year in succession. Hence, I believe it passes to them for good. But should another cup be put up for next year, I hope to see a British team competing—a team which, with adequate assistance for the technicalities as outlined above, will, I feel sure, be successful. Personally, I enjoyed the trip enormously, with all the early rises and the hard work. We were very kindly treated, and we all of us returned loaded with cups, gold watches and the like. With the other riders we got on splendidly, and most of us have a number of foreign names and addresses in our notebooks. And those who visited the 'Café des Sportsmen,' at Geneva, can testify further to the hospitality of the Swiss competitors."

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A refreshing breath of confidence runs through an article in the *Manchester Guardian Commercial* (Aug. 24th) which reviews the Swiss unemployment figures and the volume of trade with this country to End of June, 1922, as compared with previous periods:—

"The fact would seem to be that Switzerland has lived through its period of panic and is settling down to mend matters by enterprise and work. Nobody pretends now that Restriction of Imports will save the situation, and the import prohibitions will probably be abolished in a few months' time. Opinion is divided as to this kind of legislation. No doubt it had its uses in the case of outstanding instances of dumping, but many business men feel that any artificial interference with the economic life of a nation does more harm than good. The fear of German competition has largely passed away. At the present time Switzerland could, if necessary, compete in Germany's own home market with such things as light cotton piece goods and ladies' blouses and Swiss woollen clothes. This is because Germany's home prices tend to rise more quickly than the fall in currency."

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The French branch of the Oerlikon Company has received, in connection with the electrification of the Paris-Orleans line, an order for 80 electric locomotives of 1,720 h.p. each. The first five of these engines will be constructed at Oerlikon to serve as models for the bulk, which will be built at the factory of the French branch in Ornans.

## HERE AND THERE.

By J. H. Cortesey.

Sir Harry Lauder sometimes begins his "turn" by standing in the centre of the stage and laughing uproariously. The audience invariably joins him in his speechless merriment. This puts his hearers in the fit frame of mind to enjoy the humour which follows. They get "tuned-up."

The saying "laugh and grow fat" shows that laughter possesses tonic qualities and helps digestion. Really, a hearty laugh must have a robust good nature behind it, while the giggle and snigger can but proceed from an empty mind.

"How much lies in laughter!" exclaims Carlyle. There must be a true ring in it, for laughter is responsible

for the appearance of a new craze which is called "gelotscopy" or "geloscopy," which consists in defining man's character by the quality of his mirthful or hilarious expression. For this purpose we shall, no doubt, find that human laughter has been classified from silver ripples to fat chuckles, and from guffaws to thunderpeals.

A philosopher has said, "Our laughter is the most characteristic thing about us. Our faces change with the passing of time; our bodies are transformed out of recognition; but our laughter is unmistakable."

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We will try to laugh with, or like, Sir Harry Lauder at the present state of affairs. Perhaps it is the best thing to do, as we cannot help matters otherwise.

If all political conferences or meetings were started in Sir Harry Lauder's style or with a good story going round, the human note would prevail, and heart would go out to heart. But it must be admitted the thing is hardly possible in the present circumstances. All that can be expected is a smile, and a rather sad one, but let us hope the corners of the mouth will soon be raised with the augury of happier prospects. The world's politico-financial eyes have been watching with astonishment the *mark's* thermometer going down towards absolute zero or much below "frost," with a fear for the consequences. The clerk of the weather, too, has been upsetting things somewhat by "dabbling" in the exchange of seasons, forgetting that we are still in the "silly" one, and want plenty of sunshine for the holiday makers and harvesters and other joy and comfort gatherers. Even the sea-serpent has not yet had a fair opportunity to make a good exhibition of himself, notwithstanding the base rumours and calumnious newspaper statements relating to this important deep-sea personality to the effect that he had presented himself in an unpleasant manner to a boat's crew, close to the shores of Jersey, in the shape of an octopus, like the one described by Victor Hugo in "Les Travailleurs de la Mer." The octopus had got hold of one of the masts with one tentacle and a man's leg with another. The real, original and only genuine sea-serpent must have trembled with fury at the comparison of this abject creature to his proud self, with erect, majestic, horny head, fiery eyes and miles of undulating body and tail.

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Like all rare things, the sea-serpent is almost as seldom seen as the mythical dragon that used to inhabit caves and disposed of its troublesome enemies by means of its flame thrower or projector—a truly despicable manner of using its fiery tongue. The late Sir Hiram Maxim told us a good story about it when admiring one of its portraits in oils, forming part of the splendid collection of paintings belonging to the late Sir Francis Cook, at Doughty House, Richmond, where Lady Maxim and he often used to spend their Sunday afternoons. "Once upon a time," said Sir Hiram, "a rich baron offered the hand of his daughter with a big dowry to whoever would rid the cellar of his castle of the fiery dragon that tenanted the place. Several daring suitors had already perished in their attempt to put out the reptile, when a passing tramp asked if he might be allowed to compete. 'Of course, you can,' replied the baron, without any doubt as to the man's fate, 'but you know what to expect.' The tramp, undismayed, was led to the cellar door, which was suddenly opened, and instantly a huge flame spurted out from the utter darkness. But the tramp was a man of quick action, for he had, with equal promptitude, flung a fire extinguisher into the open

jaws of the monster. The latter, thus deprived of its main feature, perished miserably, and the tramp and his rich wife lived happily ever after."

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"He laughs best who laughs last," so long as his ingenuity, or his luck, will enable him to do so—or the law, as in the recent case of a man charged before Mr. Ratcliffe Cousins, the well-known magistrate, for staring at a pretty woman. Luckily for the culprit, the law permits one to *look* at a pretty woman. As in the museums, you must not touch, nor must you say anything to the person admired, as this would constitute an offence. It is true we have the statement from Alexandre Dumas, père, "qu'une femme ne demande pas à être respectée." He may have added, "surtout si elle se sait être jolie!" But that's in France. However, it is a very natural thing for pretty flowers to be objects of admiration, and, as says the *Sunday Pictorial*, it seems that very few reasonable young women object to being looked at. Otherwise, why should they dress so charmingly—thereby inviting attention to themselves? "The day when I am no longer stared at," said a famous French lady, "I shall know, alas, that I am old!" She possessed a feminine accessibility to the flattery, or homage, of the stare.

But, if I may amplify, admiration need not be confined to looks. A woman, young or old, will always be admired if she possess the traits that express sympathy and kindness of heart, which radiate even through the wrinkles of a time-worn face. Such a woman will never be old. Mind has no age!

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Nobody could ever accuse a Scot of not being good at bargaining, even with a certain amount of wit, as a make-weight, as witness the following from the *Sunday Express*:—

"A commercial traveller had taken a large order in a certain Scottish town, and endeavoured to press upon the canny Scottish manager who had given the order a box of Havana cigars. 'Naw!' the manager said. 'Don't try tae bribe a man. I cudna tak' them.' 'But will you not accept them as a present?' 'I cudna,' said the Scot. 'Well, then,' said the traveller. 'Suppose I sell you the cigars for a nominal sum—say, sixpence?' 'Weel, in that case,' replied the Scot, 'since you press me, and not liking tae refuse an offer weel meant, I think I'll be taking twa boxes!'"

Alexandre Dumas, père, was not backward either in similar cases. In fact, he must have anticipated the Scot's conclusion, for when on a visit to St. Petersburg—now Petrograd—the Emperor of all the Russias, hearing of the celebrated author's presence in the capital, sent for him. "Well, Monsieur Dumas," said the Czar, "I have read all your books, and I simply revel in them. By the way, you may not be aware that I, too, am an author somewhat appreciated. In this parcel which I present you you will find an example of my literary efforts. But you must not open it until you get home."

Of course, curiosity compelled Dumas to tear off the wrapper as soon as he thought he was out of sight, and to his surprise and satisfaction he found a pile of Russian banknotes—of immensely higher value than to-day!—bound up as a book.

The next day he called again upon the Czar. "I beg your Majesty not only to accept my most profuse thanks," he said, "but also my highest compliments of praise, for your book contains as interesting and valuable reading matter as ever was published, and I sincerely hope there will be a second edition of which I pray I may be favoured with a copy."