

# Notes and gleanings

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## ANNIVERSARIES OF SWISS EVENTS.

HOME NEWS									
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In den Lüften schwellendes Gedröhne,  
Leicht wie Halme beugt der Wind die Töne :  
Leis verhallen, die zum ersten riefen,  
Neu Gelaute hebt sich aus den Tiefen.  
Grosse Heere, nicht ein einzler Rufer!  
Wohllaut flutet ohne Strand und Ufer.

A pressure-pipe, 5,250 metres long, set entirely in the right-hand face of the granite rocks of the mountain, conveys the water from the Grinsel lake, and a high-pressure gallery 375 metres long, carries the water from the Gelmer lake to a reinforced iron-clad penstock, which vertically for 300 metres, and then obliquely, supplies the water to the turbines at a rate of 18 cu. metres per second. The power house is situated on the right bank of the Aar, above the zigzags of the Handeck; its foundations are hewn out of the granite rock, and it is protected from avalanches by a protruding

Sometimes there is so much snow above tree level that the chamois are driven down into the forests, where they may be seen scraping the snow away under the trees in their search for dry grass or bilberry shoots, or stretching up to pull the beard-like lichen off the branches above their heads. The roe-deer may even wander along the railway line, unable to jump over the high banks of snow on either side, and are easily caught by the men working on the line as a train drives the deer from behind. They are then taken carefully down to the village and are housed in a stable until the snow conditions make it safe for them to be let loose again, able to provide for their own living. Hares are also remembered by the kindly Swiss peasant, who will hang a bunch of hay to a telephone pole

outside his chalet. These alpine hares are lovely white creatures in wintertime, when the black tips of their ears are the only thing which show against the snow as the ski-runner surprises one behind a boulder or among the trees.

Among the most amusing of the alpine inhabitants are the black squirrels, which replace their red brothers at some 5,000ft. above the sea. They play among the branches, as many as five having been seen at once in a larch tree, where their bushy tails seem almost to over-balance their tiny bodies. They pay but little attention to the ski-runner below, though they sometimes throw a cone down to chase him away.

Many of the animals and birds seem to work together in their search for food. A black squirrel, a greater spotted woodpecker and a nutcracker were watched one day as they hunted for cembra cones beneath the snow. The nutcracker was the most active in scraping away the snow where he seemed to scent a cone 18ins. below the surface. His companions looked on, but insisted on sharing the spoils when they were "unsnowed." The cembra cone is almost round and contains the most delicious turpentine flavoured nuts, about as large as those of the stone pine, which are sold in London shops. Each bird and animal leaves the core in a different condition when he has finished with it. The squirrel is an untidy worker and leaves it ragged where he has torn out the nuts with his feet, while the nutcracker cuts them open as though slicing off their heads with a knife, and leaves the empty shell in the core.

The woodpeckers not only hunt for cones, but also dig deep into the snow when they seem to know of the existence of an ant heap. Their work is shown up by the mess of scattered pine needles which they have thrown out behind them on the snow, and one can imagine the way in which they have burrowed deep into the ant heap to its centre where the ants are hibernating or working in the dark through the winter.

There are several different woodpeckers, and a mysterious track was noticed once in the snow. It was that of a bird with two leading claws and one behind, and it can only have been that of the three-toed woodpecker, which is a rare bird and seldom seen.

Weasel, marten and polecat leave their tracks in all directions, and the weasel in his white coat may often be seen himself near a stable or peeping out from under a log in the forest.

The stories told by tracks are often tragic. A fox's track was followed to where there was a mess in the snow, proving that a struggle had taken place. Then the footmarks of a ptarmigan were noticed approaching the place from one direction only, and when the fox's track was followed farther, the impression of wing feathers was seen on the powdery snow on either side until a round dent in the snow showed that the fox deposited his burden for a moment while he got a better hold of it and carried it away in his mouth to some hidden meal-place. After a heavy snowfall the lunching place of some skiing party is often betrayed by the innumerable tracks centring round it. These may be of foxes or choughs or even ravens, which have walked round and round and which have scratched and scraped until they have succeeded in reaching some tit-bit left behind. These circles of tracks show up for miles away as a blot upon the snow, and will tempt the inquisitive ski-runner to go out of his way to see what has happened. Meanwhile, the ravens and choughs are, probably, calling from cliffs nearby, begging him to get busy on his own lunch in order that they may have a share.

The lives of all the animals and birds must be very hard in winter among their haunts above tree level, but the advent of the ski-runner has solved the problem for many of them. The huge lunches provided by most hotels usually offer a good contribution of tit-bits, while the ski tracks, frozen hard, afford good walking across the snowfields.

Ski enthusiasts will find in the December issue of *Pearson's Magazine* an amusing and instructive pen-picture entitled "The Fun of the Skis," also written by Dame Furse. But those who cannot take their mounts to the Alps will be relieved to hear that the gentle slope of the Haymarket offers a welcome "Ersatz," according to the *Dundee Courier* (Dec. 18th) which had the following on **Ski-ing in London.**

I have frequently had to walk up Haymarket lately—the buses only take you down that street nowadays—but not until this afternoon did I know that each time I have been walking over a little Alp, complete with "snow" and winter sports.

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The little Alp is in the commodious basement of a wireless showroom, and actually is the practice ground of the London Ski School, which was recently opened by Miss June Boland, the authoress, who is a cousin of the Earl of Perth. Buses rattle overhead, but down below people don the boots and skis and even socks of the regular Swiss sport Platz, and are introduced by expert instructors to the most thrilling of winter sports.

I went down narrow wooden stairs, savouring of the Swiss chalets, in search of Miss Boland—and shivered automatically at the sight of all this sparkling "snow."

It is, I found on enquiry, a compound of soda and other ingredients of German manufacture, and is really nice warm snow that no thaw can melt. It is banked up at one end to make a natural slope that is perhaps too short and gentle to be like the real thing but, as some of the pupils frequently demonstrated, is still sufficient of a slope to cause spills and tumbles.

Miss Boland was busy supervising the instruction, but found time to discuss her school with me. She is herself an enthusiastic skier, and has visited most of the winter sports centres of Switzerland, Austria and Germany.

"The idea of starting a school of skiing occurred to me while I was in Austria," Miss Boland told me. "It so frequently happens that people go to Switzerland or elsewhere for the winter sports knowing nothing about skiing, and spend most of their holiday tumbling in the snow while taking lessons."

"Although limited space prevents us turning out the complete skier, we can teach enough to enable anyone to go abroad and enjoy skiing from the day of his arrival."

"I gave a month's exhibition in Harrod's—where our demonstrations were closely watched by the Queen—then opened this school. I engaged M. Miggi Meyer, a Swiss ski teacher of long experience, who was formerly first instructor to the Swiss Army, as my instructor, and he will be joined next week by M. Due, a famous Norwegian skier and ski-jumper."

"From the first we have had a steady flow of pupils, and our present bookings are so heavy that I must keep the school open to-morrow afternoon, and open even on Boxing Day. We start giving lessons at ten in the morning, and it is often eight o'clock in the evening before we finish."

While we stood talking six pupils were being instructed by M. Meyer—an exquisite figure in sky-blue tunic coat and scarlet "Beret." A girl of ten or eleven followed a mild looking gentleman with grey hair and grey whiskers up and down the slippery slope, while a matronly lady in businesslike knickerbockers and Fair Isle jumper showed herself no mean exponent on the ungainly and unwieldy skis.

The grey-haired gent with the pince-nez fascinated me. He seemed to have strayed from the placid atmosphere of the British Museum reading-room, and yet, with beads of perspiration standing out on his forehead, he strove hard to obey the one, two, three, four and five commands of the Swiss teacher.

I asked Miss Boland what was the average age of her pupils. "We get them at all ages," she told me. "A little child of five was brought to me (that is the age at which they begin abroad), and I have had several like that grey-haired gentleman over there. There is really no age limit."

"Likewise, it is impossible to say how many lessons are reasonably sufficient. It all depends on the individual, but after six lessons of an hour's duration each, most people should have sufficient skill and confidence to enjoy themselves thoroughly abroad."

"At the school we supply skis and boots of the correct pattern to beginners, and take charge of the skis, etc., of advanced skiers who merely come to practise. We teach the various turns, but until I get the larger premises I am looking for our instruction is naturally a little circumscribed."

"I usually recommend pupils to have a few further lessons from local teachers when they reach Switzerland, although this is not absolutely essential."

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Though our Scotch contemporary has curiously ignored the £s.d. factor, I fancy a fortnight's ski sport in Switzerland would prove the cheaper proposition; I am, however, open to conversion.

#### "Curling."

With the invasion of the Scots and their sports into Switzerland, we may before long hear the bagpipes compete with the alphorn in community blowing. Here is what Sir John Foster Fraser says in the *Evening Standard* (Dec. 17th) about curling:—

Once I got into trouble with a bishop. I suggested, as Switzerland had no seaboard, I should paraphrase a familiar hymn so that at the Sunday morning service in the dining room of our Alpine hotel we could plead "For Those in Peril on the Ski." He was a conservative-minded prelate and addicted to curling and thought I was flippant.

The great trek to Switzerland is beginning. The illustrated journals are already creating discontent in the hearts of stagnant folk by publishing photographs of more or less celebrated people enjoying winter sports in lofty altitudes.

At St. Moritz it is not unusual for nice young women to have their pictures taken—"Miss Cutie Golithy about to start on an expedition"—without getting more than a dozen yards from the hotel. This is a pleasure which should not be overlooked.

No picture postcard is now allowed to leave Switzerland that does not reveal plenty of snow. But before you go romping off to St. Moritz, Murren, Wengen, Adelboden, Grindelwald or other famous places it would be well to find out if there is snow. Generally there is, but sometimes there is not.

It is twenty-five years since I began visiting Switzerland in winter. Like all oldtimers I might exclaim, "Ah! those were the days." Then there were only a couple of villages where folk went holidaying. Now there are dozens. There will be congestion on the railways and the luxurious and expensive special trains will run in duplicate and triplicate.

You meet square-jawed, determined folk who go to Switzerland meaning real business, folk who are away all day laboriously climbing steep places and exhilarating in long glides—with thrilling stories to tell on their return—people who skate four and five hours each day and at tea are flushed when boasting about their "outside edges," sturdy and vociferous curlers, daft with excitement when their sides aches, to say nothing of the tobogganers, dear ladies sliding cautiously down the village street and reckless fellows throwing themselves on steel runners, and, head foremost, plunging down prepared icebanked slopes at fifty miles an hour—to say little of the scamper of hockey on the ice, the most furious of all winter sports.

But, bless our hearts, the folk who get the best fun out of Switzerland are those who are not experts in anything except the art of enjoying themselves. There is escape from the bondage of dun towns and leaden skies. A mile up is: the air you are invigorated; the sky is postcard blue and the sun often so hot that you puff. Amid the gleaming glories of the Engadine I have met voluble Americans sighing for "a little lurch of hot dog!"

One of the real delights of winter sporting is dressing up for the part. A young woman has to be careful about a picturesque garb. We are far from the days when "any old petticoat will do for knocking about in." Brecks have been invented which seem to taper off the exuberance of the female figure; cerise trousers and vermillion jacket and a cap that can be as cockatooish as fancy allows. There are heavy boots and variegated socks. There never was a woman who, when she clatters round the tiled hotel lounge, is not improved by what has come to be correct for Swiss wear. It is not necessary to ski or to skate, but you must be rightly dressed.

These who are really IT do not adopt gaiety in garb—which makes a group of happy Anglo-Swiss girls like pantomime performers after a dress rehearsal—but keep to sedate blue, even black, for cap, jacket and nether things—an idea which comes from Scandinavia.

I protest against the contemptuous neglect of the illustrated articles of curling except occasionally to give a photograph of a retired bishop with a besom in his ex-ecclesiastical fist, sweeping imaginary snowflakes from the path of an advancing stone.

Some ruffians long ago started the story that curling is a game played only by elderly Scotsmen, slightly intoxicated. Sardonic men say they intend to take to curling when they are elderly. Tut tut; that was the remark which used to be made about golf. Some of the best curlers I have come across these last few years have been young fellows and just as keen as young golfers.

The supercilious new arrival, attracted by the shunting, wanders to the curlers' rink. Oh no, he does not play; he may take it up when

he is eighty! Yet he gets "intrigued." When he hears the yell that "married men" have defeated "the world" he sees what it is like to "put down a stone." He gets pleased with himself; he seeks instruction about chapping and lying, inhandling and outhandling, the authority of the skipper and the efficiency of the broom.

The next day he would like to be taken into a team. The next week you cannot keep the pushing, eager fellow off the rink. He misses his lunch so he cannot miss a match. We must see to it this season that "the roaring game" is not only respected but sufficiently honoured.

To many these "winter sports" are an excuse, but a legitimate one. They go to Switzerland to have a good time, to idle in the sunshine, to forget the income tax man, who invariably selects Christmas Eve to remind us of our duty to the State, to make up jolly sleighing parties to lunch at a loftier hotel, to scramble for tea at Hanselmans, to have riotous dancing evenings—and probably the exalted altitude is chiefly responsible for the tempestuous exuberance.

#### Touring in Switzerland.

The following appropriate reply to a grouser in a previous issue is published in the *Motor* (Dec. 21st):—

I have read with surprise the acrid letter in your columns of November 30th, headed "An Absurd Innovation." The strictures on the alleged rapacity of the Swiss are undeserved, and the other comments arise out of insufficient knowledge.

Prices are always higher in any recognised resort, whether in France, Switzerland or England. A comparison between Savoy and Switzerland is unfair, unless the abnormal low rate of the French franc is taken into consideration. The prices of last summer are very different now in terms of English pounds, with the French franc at 120. The Swiss franc is at par, and the cost of living is higher than in England. The writer omits to mention, also, that roads are good in Switzerland, although that cannot be said of the roads in Savoy, and the scenery is quite different.

But his comments on the power of a "dirty little boy" to fine motorists on the spot for exceeding the speed limit are unworthy of an Englishman. The Swiss police are exceedingly clean and smart, and are hardly more officious than in England, especially as regards speed limits. At the entrance to most towns there is posted a notice giving the speed limit and the amount of the fine for exceeding it. If the motorist disregards this he has the option of paying up on the spot or going to trial. The case of a tourist presents obvious difficulties which are, in my opinion, well met by this provision, which is much more convenient than making all cases stand trial after first exacting a substantial deposit, or confiscating the car, as is sometimes done.

His last complaint against a railway porter for refusing a policeman when a traveller called to pay him adequately arises out of his ignorance of the fact that a porter is entitled to charge a reasonable fee as portage for each package. This sum is so small that I can hardly think it would be refused.

#### Swiss Suicides.

I often wonder how the papers obtain their news, and the origin of the following from the *Evening Standard* (Dec. 17th) is certainly a mystery to me:—

The Anti-Suicide Association of Zurich claims to have saved 590 lives during the five years of its existence.

It is curious that in Switzerland, the very name of which suggests health, beauty and high spirits to people who live in places like Wigan and Oldham and Swansea, should have so depressing an effect on its inhabitants. Napoleon ordered an enquiry into the suicidal habits of the people of Geneva, and some of the polyglot members of the League of Nations' secretariat now established there find that they have to struggle a good deal against gloom.

That is perhaps why Lord Cecil gave some of his American Peace Prize money for the establishment of golf and tennis clubs for these exiles.

I have heard of societies existing in Germany during her critical time which encouraged self-destruction to the aged and infirm, but I did not know that people on the other side of the Rhine had been affected by this mania.

#### New Mountaineering.

From the *Nottingham Guardian* (Dec. 23rd), to be taken *cum grano salis*:—

The inveterate moraliser will see in the construction of a kind of lift to a point near the summit of Mont Blanc new evidence of the modern desire to reap without the labour of sowing. The Alpinist regards it as a vulgar desecration of the sublime, and argues that nobody who will not climb to the Aiguille du Midi deserves to enjoy the views that are obtainable thence. The new aerial cable railway may be considered to register the beginning of the end of the conception of the Alps as a challenge to the serious mountaineer. True, he can still make formidable ascents under his own power, but the glow of achievement of one who has scaled Europe's highest peak may be expected to freeze in the presence of a horde of trippers, who were still in bed eight hours after the *bona fide* mountaineer began his arduous climb. Hydraulic lifts up the precipices of the Matterhorn may be expected as the next step in the conversion of Switzerland into a European Coney Island.

#### QUOTATIONS from the SWISS STOCK EXCHANGES.

BONDS.		Dec. 21	Dec. 28	
Confederation 3% 1903	...	79.75	79.00	
" 5% 1917, VIII Mob. Ln	...	100.87	97.82	
Federal Railways 3½% A-K	...	83.40	83.00	
" " 1924 IV Elect. Ln.	...	100.77	101.12	
SHARES.		Nom.	Dec. 21	Dec. 28
Swiss Bank Corporation	...	Fr.s.	Fr.s.	Fr.s.
Credit Suisse	...	500	807	810
Union de Banques Suisses.	...	500	674	675
Société pour l'Industrie Chimique	...	1000	2550	2552
Fabrique Chimique ci-dev. Sandoz	...	1000	3975	3982
Soc. Ind. pour la Schappe	...	1000	2755	2690
S.A. Brown Boveri	...	350	504	519
C. F. Bally	...	1000	1222	1225
Nestlé & Anglo-Swiss Cond. Mk. Co.	...	200	568	578
Entreprises Suizer S.A.	...	1000	1001	990
Comp. de Nav'g'n sur le Lac Léman	...	500	545	550
Linoleum A.G. Giubiasco	...	100	87	94
Maschinenfabrik Oerlikon	...	500	688	668

#### CONTE DU BEL HIVER.

Il y avait une fois, dans un petit pays que recouvrait la neige, un Seigneur riche et puissant. Il était fort redouté de tous ses sujets et malgré les lois qui assuraient au bon peuple un semblant de contrôle, et une souveraineté de papier, le prince agissait selon sa guise. Cependant la sagesse de cette nation avait attiré sur elle les yeux du monde, et les autres peuples, au lieu de lui décerner un diplôme d'honneur et de vertu, décidèrent simplement de tenir leurs grandes séances internationales en ces lieux où la sagesse semblait éclore comme les fleurs par une belle matinée d'été. De tous cotés le ciel fut imploré; les noirs, les blancs, les jaunes, les métis et même les autres, invoquèrent les puissances supérieures et appelèrent sur leurs manifestations oratoires et gastronomiques les bénédictions, d'en haut et d'en bas. Un franc succès combla leurs vœux et le spectacle qu'ils donneront fut si apprécié, qu'il fut répété et qu'il est encore, à l'heure qu'il est quelque fois demandé. Le puissant Prince, malgré tout l'orgueil qu'il ressentait devant de semblables réunions tenues en ses murs n'avait pas, de prime abord prêté ses villes et ses palais, avec plaisir. Il entretenait les relations fort suivies avec certains démons à la tête carrée qui longtempes ne virent pas ces meetings d'un très bon oeil. Avec le temps sa rancune disparut, et comme il était habilement choyé et entouré, il finit même par se joindre au concert. Dans ces cénacles se discutaient les plus sérieuses questions. On y parlait autant des femmes, des enfants et des catastrophes passées ou futures que des questions politiques et économiques. On tentait d'atteindre un parfait équilibre qui permettrait aux puissants de continuer et même de renforcer leurs jeux, tandis que d'habiles sorciers de tous genres et de toutes nuances s'évertuaient de persuader le peuple que toutes ces cérémonies se déroulaient pour son bien et pour la Paix de leur planète. Le puissant Seigneur, qui n'était pas, il faut bien le reconnaître, d'une intelligence très vive, crût tout d'abord que—noblesse et hospitalité obligeant—il lui faudrait mettre en pratique dans les peuplades à lui soumises, les beaux principes à l'élaboration desquels il collaborait. Mais bien vite il se rendit compte que même ses craintes étaient inutiles, et reprenant la suite de ses exploits, il vécut comme par le passé.

Pour le surveiller le bon peuple trop confiant avait créé un corps de Conseillers, au nombre aussi imposant qu'inutile. Ils étaient là mandatés par la masse; le puissant seigneur sut en faire des courtisans. Il obligea le premier, prêta au deuxième et plaça en son palais le troisième. En peu de mois le tour fut joué, il avait remplacé ses gardiens par des adulateurs.

Or il y avait dans les cartons du prince un plan qui lui était particulièrement cher. Il voulait assurer à une certaine clique de ses partisans l'achat et la vente de l'essentielle nourriture populaire. Il lui semblait qu'en gouvernant de haute main le ventre de ses sujets il était plus sûr de leur absolue soumission. Mais contre toute attente ce

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