# Notes and gleaning

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## NOTES AND GLEANINGS.

*By* Kiburg.

**Swiss Ban on Dancing.** (*Morning Post,* 10th April):

A revolutionary movement is on foot among the lads and lasses of the Canton of Schwytz, openly encouraged for political reasons by the Radical Party.

In 1926 public dancing once a week—on Saturday—was prohibited by Cantonal decree. The powerful Conservative-Catholic Party has, in fact, conducted a strong campaign against dancing ever since 1910.

The opponents of this severe regulation maintain that public morality has gained nothing by the prohibition of the weekly recreation, which has been regarded as innocent and inoffensive for nearly fifty years in this corner of Switzerland.

The Radical Party is not slow to take advantage of the popular wave of feeling against the strong Conservative-Catholic Party and is making arrangements to launch a referendum on the subject in the hope of being able to bring about the repeal of the decree.

There are, to my mind, two possibilities which may account for the ban—either the young lads and lasses of Schwyz are worse than those of other cantons, or their cantonal rulers are imbued with an over-strong dose of prudery and delight in "kill-joy" practices. I refuse to believe the first alternative.

An altogether different form of ban is being advocated by the organised abstainers in Switzerland, namely a

**Ban on Spirits.** (*Morning Post,* 10th April):—

Undaunted by the recent adverse decision of the Swiss Federal Council at Berne not to introduce a system of local option with respect to the sale of spirits in Switzerland, the organised abstainers in this country have succeeded in forcing a plebiscite upon the population in connection with this problem.

A referendum has now been fixed for May 12th next on the question whether the Cantons and Communes shall be authorised to prohibit in their respective territories the manufacture and sale of distilled beverages.

I have always been and am still of opinion that a ban on spirits (i.e., alcoholic spirits) would have suited the U.S.A. far better than total prohibition, and I have a very open mind on the subject. I also feel very strongly that if the movement towards moderation could be taken away from the total abstainers and put before the people from a neutral platform on the grounds of public health and happiness, it would make much more progress. The coercion which is implied by total abstinence is a tremendous obstacle to any form of moderation.

Let us turn away from the above more or less lugubrious subjects and enjoy a hearty laugh at the expense of some of our compatriots at home. Says the *Morning Post* (April 8th) :—

**Alleged Hoax on Swiss Officials.**

The Swiss police are searcing for a man who, according to their reports, successfully played, in a small way, the rôle of the German impostor, Captain Koepenick.

Giving the name of Charles Henberger, and said to be an engineer, this man posed during the last fortnight of March, it is alleged, as a delegate of the Swiss Federal Military Department and conducted negotiations with the authorities of the commune of Bulle in connection with a new arsenal for mountain troops to be established at Bulle.

The supposed delegate also held conferences with representatives of the Federal Railways with respect to important questions of transport. During the fortnight he lived extremely well and was entertained by officials to numerous dinners.

He left on Good Friday for an Easter week-end "holiday," but has since been missing. The "delegate," it is alleged, had forgotten to settle his hotel bill.

We may be permitted to laugh, because I do not think for a moment that those representatives of our Railways and Authorities are out of pocket and if they have a sense of humour they can probably see the funny side of the story by now. As Carlyle pointed out, it is funny to reflect how easily we can be taken in.

**Oldest Swiss Playhouse Pulled Down.**

Very sad news comes from Baden (Aargau) where, according to the *Morning Post* (April 5th)—the *Morning Post* seems to have had all the tit-bits of news lately—

The historic Schauspielhaus at Baden, the oldest theatre in Switzerland, has been razed to the ground by the housebreakers. The last play performed on its stage was "Wilhelm Tell." The ancient tiles of the theatre's roof, dull-brown with age, but otherwise scarcely affected, have been acquired by an enthusiast to cover his new villa.

As far back as the seventeenth century French players on tour used to perform in the Schauspielhaus, and in 1714 an Ambassador, the Comte du Lac, presented here a series of French comedies during a Peace Congress.

And so the old world passes. The famous Bademer Goldwaendler has long been practically a souvenir only, although it probably helped many a patron of the old Playhouse to forget the tears which had been brought about by some terribly sentimental drama. But Baden will still be a favourite Spa for rheumatic elderly Swiss people who go there, year after year, to "wash away their sins."

**Motorists as Police.** (*Daily Telegraph,* 8th April):—

The Swiss Automobile Club has just requested the Government to take more severe measures in respect to imprudent, foolhardy, or drunken drivers of motor cars. The object is to prevent fatal accidents, which have been so frequent of late.

It is suggested that drivers of cars who, during a period of five years, have never been summoned or had accidents, should be sworn in as constables of the road, with authority to stop any car on the road which is infringing the regulations and, if need be, to report the fact to the authorities.

It is also suggested that a person driving a car while in a state of intoxication should not only be prosecuted, but should also be definitely deprived of his driving licence.

I do hope that some action along the lines sketched above will be taken. How often one meets with really dangerous driving which impels one to feel that one ought to take the other fellow's number and report him. If one belonged to some officially recognised League, one would feel in duty bound to pause and take the number, whereas now, by the time one has made up one's mind, the other fellow has disappeared round the next bend in the road. As regards the last paragraph of the above cutting, I have always maintained that, while there is no sense at all in speed-limits, penalties for dangerous driving and for driving while drunk ought to be so heavy as to frighten such criminals off the roads altogether. There is no need whatever, under any circumstances, to drive to the public danger—and in writing this I know that great speeds can be attained without driving to the public danger—and there ought to be no possiblity of anyone being allowed to drive when drunk, or under the influence of drink. As I have found out years ago by genuine and quite serious tests, it requires extremely little to feel the influence of alcohol while driving.

Well, a great many things will be managed much better, let us hope, when the so-called weaker sex has finally got the upper hand in human affairs. After all, I do not think that mere man can honestly be proud of what the male sex has done or achieved as regards civilisation. Wars, then more wars and then wars to end wars, with technical improvements in between, mostly arising out of the endeavour to find new death-dealing machinery, seems to be a short but fairly accurate summary of the males' success at civilisation. On the other hand, it is also true, I think, as some writer pointed out some time ago, that the weaker sex, far from detesting wars, really loves them because they pander to the female instincts of mothering, nursing and hero-worshipping. So where are we?

Once again, I think, the middle path would be the best, and I rejoice to see that in some countries they are getting nearer to that comradeship between the sexes than was thought possible quite a short while ago. The first thing such an emancipation of women ought to achieve is banish the futile and mal-inspired idea that the biological differences of the sexes must naturally produce a different standard of morality or outlook on life in men and women. Biological differences there are, but then, have we not been given a will of our own?

However, the cry of "Votes for Women!" will soon be heard again in Switzerland if the petitions mentioned in the cutting below are signed by a sufficient number of our compatriots, as they ought to be.

**New Drive for Votes for Women in Switzerland.**

The women of Switzerland have commenced a campaign to obtain political equality with men.

Efforts have been made in various cantons since the war to obtain votes for women, and in four cantons—Geneva, Neuchâtel, Basel and Zürich—a referendum has been obtained, but in each case the male voters have rejected the women's demands.

Now it has been decided to organise a direct attack on the national government, and a petition has been launched for which signatures are being sought throughout Switzerland. The petition will go first to the National Council, and if approved will be passed on by it to the Federal Assembly, which is composed of the National Council and the Council of the States. If the Federal Assembly decides to propose the required change, the matter will be referred to the National Council again and to the Council of the States as separate bodies, and eventually be voted upon by general referendum.

All this is a somewhat slow process and may take from four to five years to complete, but if slower than the attack on the cantons, it is regarded as surer.

## A DAY IN LONDON.

*As seen by a Swiss Girl.*

One can hear more than one opinion about London! Some people call it a dirty, some a dull city, and they are glad to get out of its "sticky, smoky" air, as they call it—to escape from its noises and its never-ending traffic. I have not seen many other big towns, so I cannot judge which is the most beautiful of all. But London is to me the personification of life, the centre of an inexhaustible activity and restless movement. That is why I love it. To spend a day in London is one of my greatest joys. I never can get tired of it!

When I am staying with my friends and we are planning to visit the town on one of the following days I feel my pulse already going quicker at the mere thought of it!

We generally take the 11 o'clock train up to Charing Cross. Having left the station the excitement begins already! Walking towards Trafalgar Square we meet an endless stream of people all hurrying along, trying to catch 'buses, carrying ing parcels or looking at shop windows. We rush to a 'bus which takes us to Piccadilly or Oxford Circus. I like to sit on the top of the 'bus, so as to overlook the whole traffic. Oh, what a joy it is to ride right through it! On your right are other 'buses, on the left trams, cars behind, cars in front!

And in the worst muddle, at the crossing of about five or more roads, there stands a policeman six feet tall, straight as a pillar, directing this chaos of traffic with perfect calmness and self-possession! And not only that; he is also ready at any time to answer your every question concerning roads and buildings, with the friendliest voice and a pleasant smile. How does it—with both his arms stretched out and with his eyes watching the streets in different directions—I do not know; it is a marvel to me!

Passing the beautiful shops, I see glimpses of nice dresses, shoes or stockings and I already start making up my mind about what I am going to buy. For if I do go up to town there is generally something necessary I ought to have—at least, I think it is necessary!—because I always wait until I am in London to do my shopping. Everything is so much nicer there, and also it will, later in life, remind me of my gorgeous "London days of long ago" when I look at it again as an old grandmother!

But the sudden stopping of our 'bus wakes me up from my dreamings. We all jump out and find ourselves in some gorgeous shopping centre, such as Oxford Street or Regent Street.

Now the real joy is starting. What a fine feeling to walk through one of the very big shops and look at all the things! Everything can be had; from the smallest handkerchief to the most beautiful evening gowns they give you an enormous variety—in prices as well as kinds! Everything is laid out in the most attractive manner, and you have to grasp your purse very tightly indeed, so as not to buy too much.

But looking at all these magnificent things we have all grown very hungry and feel ready for a good luncheon. We generally go into one of the big Lyons' houses. There nice clean tables are laid, inviting you to sit down. An orchestra is playing "more or less" classical music.

Another joy of the day is to choose and order a nice lunch from the menu card, and then, eating it, to talk about "the show" one is going to see afterwards. The only thing I feel sorry for is that you nearly always have to race through your meal to be in time for the theatre. But London is so enormous you can never spend many hours on one single occupation if you intend to see many things in a day. We therefore leave the Lyons' restaurant as soon as possible and hurry to the next 'bus, which takes us to some theatre.

It is advisable to go to a "theatre centre," to be able to make for another theatre at the last minute if the first one is "full up." On our arrival people are already forming into long queus outside the 'Pit' entrance. We choose the theatre with the shortest queue, join it at the very end and—hope for the best!

Now these queus in London impressed me very much, and I wish I could show them as an example to my "dear countrymen" at home. To see these people sitting or standing there, hours before the opening of the door, is really a treat! No newcomer dreams of getting in front of the others; they all join on calmly at the very end. It seemed an extraordinary thing to me, for I am used to elbow thrusts, "aimiable" treadings on your corns, and furious looks on these occasions. Coming home from the booking office is like leaving a battle in our country, with hats knocked flat on one side and the owners shouting desperately for fresh air!

After having captured a nice seat, we all await, with great excitement, the moment at which the lights are turned out and the curtain moved aside. As we do not know the play at all, it is all the more thrilling to follow the action, which entangles itself more every minute, and to argue and guess about it during the *entr'acte,* until at last everything explains itself, leading to some happy end.