

Il giorno dell 'armistizio a Londra

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IL GIORNO DELL' 'ARMISTIZIO A LONDRA.

Da tredici anni i papaveri rossi nei campi di Fiandra nascono e si sfogliano al vento, ma la memoria santa dei caduti nella gran guerra si onora e verrà ricordata in eterno.

Quaranta milioni di papaveri e trenta mila ghirlande di questo fiore rosso sangue fatti dagli invalidi soldati, ed a beneficio della loro vasta istituzione, vennero venduti iernattina da 270.000 venditori prestanti.

L'undici novembre, giorno dell' 'Armistizio, in ogni parte del mondo, ove possono trovarsi, gli inglesi si uniscono spiritualmente ogni anno nei due minuti di silenzio, commemorando così i loro morti nella guerra Europea.

L'Albert Hall iersera sembrava un capolavoro in mosaico umano... 10.000 già combattenti occupavano il vasto ambiente per la grande commemorazione del giorno del ricordo; vi erano presenti il Rè e la Regina, il Principe di Galles ed altri membri della casa reale.

A Westminster alla mattina: come una musica armoniosa dal tono vibrato i bronzi del "Big Ben" suonano le undici... un tremolio nell'atmosfera elettrizzante... poi profondo silenzio! La memoria dello "Soldato Sconosciuto" e dei suoi compagni è onorata!

L'Inno Nazionale risuona nell'aria ancora una volta... la Croce d'oro di Westminster si alza in alto, benedice la folla... e la folla risorge, fila riverente e muta, passa e saluta l'eroe del giorno... sono migliaia di madri in gramaglie, coi capelli bianchi... come sono invecchiate quelle povere madri dal dì del primo Armistizio! Passano meste ma rassegnate, si folgono il papavero rosso dal loro abito nero e lo mettono attraverso il marmo nero, che ben presto acquista l'aspetto di un drappo rosso, emblema di un amore che mai morrà!

Ma la cerimonia principale è al Cenotaph (Tomba dello Sconosciuto) in Whitehall. Questa venne onsequata iernattina d'altre migliaia e migliaia di persone. Una folla calma, serena, in aspettativa; la folla che si ricorda!

Il cielo grigio, un sole tiepido autunnale che squarcia ogni tanto le nubi... là in alto Nelson, contempla questo ammasso umano dalla sua colonna.

Questa folla silenziosa, quasi tragica ha un non so chè di brillante nel suo aspetto, col papavero rosso spiccante su ogni petto, come gocce di sangue...

Battono le undici ore; i cannoni annunciano il gran silenzio! La vita febbrile di Londra si ferma come per incanto! La folla s'inchina... Oh! la forza, la vita intensa, palpitante di questi due minuti!... Il pensiero di tutto un popolo riverente che vola là nello spazio e nel tempo... che si ricorda... vola nei campi santi seminati di croci, vola al dì dei mari.

Gli uccelli soli svolazzano attoniti e si aggirano più in basso e più in basso attorno al Whitehall, cuore palpitante dell'Impero che santifica i suoi morti!

Per due minuti il commovente e supremo abbandono si rinnova, il pensiero corre al dì di là dei confini terrestri... dimentica i dubbi e le incertezze della vita, poi il cannone romba, le trombe squillano... La tensione è rotta!

Londra si scuote, ritorna alla vita normale e nei campi l'agricoltore torna al suo aratro.

Il sole è scomparso, piovvigina. La folla si muove, si forma in processione, sfilata adagio, adagio davanti al granito simbolico, s'inchina a deporre la corona di papaveri di Fiandra, emblema del ricordo, o crisantemi, o qualche piccolo mazzo tenuto prima sul cuore... passa lenta, guarda in alto, esita un momento e passa oltre... T.L.R.

NEWS FROM THE COLONY.

SWISS MERCANTILE SOCIETY LIMITED.

In connection with the scholastic programme the following lectures were given by the students during last week:—

Mr. E. Mueletaler, Wynigen, "Competition in the Swiss Food Supply Trade."

Mr. H. Deutsch, Winterthur, "Ways of alleviating the World Crisis."

Mr. W. Kerner, Reutigen, "The Free City of Hamburg."

Mr. C. Sailer, Baden, "Queens of Beauty."

Miss K. Rast, Luzern, "Strauss's Music."

Mr. A. Amman, Brettnau, "The Swiss Mercantile Exchange."

The debating classes dealt with the following subjects:—

"That is it possible to reduce unemployment."

Proposer: Mr. A. Bachmann.

Opposer: Mr. J. Cadalbert.

The Guildhall excursion on Saturday Nov. 14th, attracted a large number of students. The ancient hall itself in which the famous banquets are held was much admired and its antiquities thoroughly explained by the beadle. An experienced guide then conducted us to the wonderful Council Chamber and the Chamber of Aldermen

where the Lord Mayor himself is elected annually. Great interest was aroused by the guide's explanation of the time-honoured customs in the government of the City, and students were allowed to sit in the very seats usually occupied by the dignified "City Fathers." The Lord Mayor's Chair had naturally a great fascination for several students. We afterwards visited the fine old Crypt containing many Roman remains; and then passed on to the Museum and the Clock Room. A short time passed in the Library and Art Gallery brought the interesting excursion to a close.

A party of nearly 200 from the Swiss Mercantile College spent a most enjoyable and instructive day at Cambridge on Tuesday, November 17th.

After a pleasant run by motor coach via Epping and Bishop's Stortford the students reached Cambridge at 10.45 a.m., where they were entertained to coffee and cakes at the Dorothy Café through the courtesy of Mrs. Hartree, ex-mayor of Cambridge, who raised the necessary funds from the members of the All Peoples' Association and the League of Nations branch at Cambridge. Then we set out in parties of 20 with guides who showed half the students over Trinity College, St. John's and Caius, while the other half visited King's College and its famous Chapel, Corpus Christi, and Peterhouse. After an excellent four-course lunch served to over 160 at the Dorothy Café, the students were addressed and heartily welcomed by Mr. Franklin, ex-mayor of Cambridge, and president of the Cambridge Rotary Club, by Mr. Fitzgerald, ex-secretary of the League of Nations Branch at Cambridge, and secretary of the Cambridge Y. M. C. A., by Mrs. Hartree who had so generously and ably planned our arrangements and day in Cambridge and also by Miss Jelf, the chief of the guides who made a most interesting speech about the history and beauty of King's College Chapel that some ninety odd students were still to see in the afternoon. Mr. Levy, the Principal of the College, replied on behalf of the students and expressed our thanks to Mrs. Hartree and all her friends for their kindness and generous welcome. Anyone, whether Britisher or foreigner, who listened to these speeches, could have had no doubt as to the sincere friendliness, and generous welcome, that lay behind the words of these distinguished speakers. However dilatory governments may be in furthering the establishment of true world peace, no one could doubt that our friends of Cambridge, representing in many ways, what is best in British tradition, thought and feeling, are really ardent workers in the cause of real friendliness between individuals of all nations. The loud applause that greeted the conclusion of each speech expressed, we hope, a little of the thanks and appreciation of all our students for the splendid day they were enjoying, memories of which would long remain with many of them, when they are no longer in England.

After lunch, the Colleges and libraries were toured until 4 p.m. Unfortunately several of our guides had to leave before lunch for duties elsewhere, and our parties had to be much larger than before. After 4 p.m., about 25 students joined Miss Covill and Miss Winifred (two of Mrs. Hartree's "lieutenants") and visited "Finella" one of the most remarkable houses designed, lighted and decorated in ultra-modern style. The owner's and designer, Mr. Forbes, M.A., of Clare College gave the students a charming welcome and entertained them to a "gorgeous" tea, and then spent some forty-five minutes in showing us round Finella, and explaining the secrets of his system of hidden and diffused lighting and the marvellous effects of space and distance obtained by them. It was with very great regret that we were obliged to tear ourselves away from these beautiful house at 5.30 to join our fellow-students at "high" tea at the Dorothy Café. After tea, Mrs. Hartree made a short speech inviting any students interested to join the All Peoples' Association, and so help to carry the spirit of peace wherever they may go. But Mr. Levy, our Principal, then thanked Mrs. Hartree and her helpers once again for our delightful day, which we hope we shall repeat very soon, and the party returned by coach to London by about 9 p.m.

UNION HELVETIA.

We are informed that the committee of the Union Helvetia has decided to hold their Annual Banquet at the Union Helvetia Club, 1, Gerrard Place, W.1., on Thursday, 10th December, at 8.30 p.m. (Tickets 7/6).

Owing to the financial crisis the Society has decided not to issue tickets to official guests and in return the committee does not expect invitations from other Societies this year.

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CK'S CORNER.

"Un soir, l'âme du vin chantait dans les bouteilles." Baudelaire.

This week, I am going to discourse on the subject of wine, not of those "grands crus" whose names are known to all, vedettes of the wine lists, vintages which may only be spoken of with deference, ordered with care and drunk with respect, but of those more humble and ignored members which rarely are to be found beyond the boundaries of the place in which they have grown and had their being.

Sometimes I regret that I cannot share the enthusiasm of the good Kyburg, for, although the excellence of all things is truly to be found in this island, nevertheless owing to an unfortunate and unaccountable omission on the part of nature it is necessary to cross the waters before one may drink such wines as I have in mind.

Of such wines I would speak more particularly for who does not delight, on a hot summer day, after a strenuous climb or while waiting for the radiator to cool, to watch the fleecy clouds gently move up and down across the face of a glacier and slowly to quaff two, three, five or more decilitres of one of those simple wines which bear no label, but which bring gladness to the heart and pleasure to the palate, of Hallauer, Veltliner or Neuchâtel.

And who has not pleasant memories of a "petit gris" or "vin rosé" served in an earthenware jug at some roadside inn?

What greater joy is there in life than to wander up and down the country side until one comes to a hospitable tavern bearing the magic sign "Offener Wein; Bier vom Fass" and there to dally with a foaming demi or a pitcher of wine and some noble cheese. And when I speak of cheese, I am minded some day to tell you the legend of Gruyère cheese, as it came to me one day as I listened with Kyburgian lyricism to the tinkle of cow bells, a story more marvellous than any written by the great Baron Munchausen himself, which tells of the way in which the first maker of this cheese laboured in the days of good King Louis whom men call Saint Louis, and how his name was a corruption of the word "grouiller" though for what reason no man knows, some saying that it was on account of his haste to make a comely cheese while others think that it refers to the cheese itself, for does not the poet say:—

D'on sortaient des gris bataillons

De larves qui coulaient comme un épais liquide Le long de ces vivants haillons.

And how later his descendants came to the land where now the cheese is made. But this is a long story and as I have said more wonderful than any told even by the great Baron.

Sometimes, a wine will stir memories within us and remind us of incidents and places. Well do I remember, arriving late one winter night at Avallon and finding comfort in a white burgundian wine which made its appearance on the table in a little wooden jug bound round with bands of brass and afterwards a "marc de Bourgogne" which was worth more than many a so-called vintage cognac that I have been given in lordly restaurants decorated with ormolu and gold.

Even the names of wines are of interest. Thus, in the country around Avignon we meet with "Clos des Saints" and "Clos Clément V" to say nothing of the better known "Château neuf du Pape."

And further south, one finds such names as "Tavel," "Camp Romain" and "Cassis," names which make us think of Provence and Gallo-roman days, and in a little village on the littoral I have drunk "Cap Corse" a kind of vermouth which tastes of the "maquis" and conjures up for us romantic visions of the exploits of some bandit chief.

And so we may wander here and there, tasting in the rue Daunton in Paris "Crucifix" a vermouth with an aroma different from all others, at Pont de Cisse on the banks of the Loire a Vouvray which is incomparable, at Perouges a curious liqueur named "Hypocras" which, as the label tells us, is made from a recipe dating back to the 12th century, although there be some who are always sceptical of such stories, at Gaillac a wine which has some resemblance to both Vouvray and Champagne.

Easy would it be to prolong the list of wines which contain in their essence, as they sing at night in their bottles, the spirit or their "terroir," of the lakes and hills of Switzerland, of the banks of the Rhine, of Provence or of Burgundy.

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