

Old fountains

Autor(en): **Dachselt, E.**

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AN APOLOGY.

C'est ma plainsanterie qui m'a tué.

Camille Desmoulins.

My last week's article entitled "A Retrospect" evoked several comments, and I have appreciated the trouble some of my correspondents have taken in letting me know either their approval or disapproval. I intend to come back to this controversial matter in a subsequent number of the S.O. but for the present, I am anxious to acquaint our faithful readers of one most distressing fact.

I have been accused of "low taste, bordering on vulgarity," could ever a more disastrous accusation be levelled at a man's head, who, until recently had bright visions of entering into the precincts of Fleet Street.—Gone are the happy dreams of a life's ambition, shattered is the hope of ending my earthly pilgrimage in or near an Editor's chair. Nothing is left but despair and with eyes blinded by tears I am gazing heavenwards at those dark heavy clouds on which the silverlining will not appear. O cursed day! O damnable hour! when a misguided providence put the pen into my hand. Back to my mind comes Polonius prophetic words addressed to Laertes in Hamlet:

"Give thy thoughts no tongue, nor any unproportioned thought his act.

Be thou familiar, but by no means vulgar."

Here is the cause of my distress, my correspondent writes:

"... Whilst I fully agree with you that speeches are too long and often insignificant both as to matter and delivery, I would rather listen to the most boring speech than to the silly tittle-tattle which you propose could take its place. Sir, are you aware that the Swiss in general are an intellectual race, are we not proud, and rightly so, that our schools have a world-wide reputation. I too have attended a good many functions in the Colony, but never did I have to listen to such piffle as you suggest, to me, the conversation seemed to move in a different sphere. With regard to the speeches which you suggest, the least said the better, if such things should be uttered the attendance at Banquets, etc., would shrivel to a deplorably small number, and rightly so. Your taste, let me inform you is low, bordering almost on vulgarity.

I am, etc., etc.

Such straightforward words, so full of good taste, coming from the realm of a different "sphere" have caused me deep apprehensions, with a trembling hand I laid this letter under my pillow, when laying an aching heart to rest, and in those sleepless hours of a neverending night I was puzzling as to how and when exactly this low strain got into my inner self poisoning my hitherto pure soul. I passed in review, present and past members of my family, and I remembered having heard that for the last 250 years they were all honest, simple, hardworking and godfearing people. At dawn, when the sun sent her first glittering rays over my garden wall, when the birds began to sing, and a tired world was awakening to new vigour and to new hope I stole to my desk and destroyed the M.S.S. of that "vulgar" article, and I resolved to make amends. I remember now distinctly, how, many years ago I was asked at a dance by a charming dancing partner what my opinion was about Ruskin, and not having been acquainted, then with this Gentleman, I glanced round the Hall until I fixed my eye on a Gentleman whom I thought it would serve right to have such a name. I answered that I found him "awfully quaint," I received a look full of horror and disgust, and I know now, thanks to my correspondent what the lady must have thought of me. This incident plainly shows how mistaken I was in assuming that a ballroom conversation could sink to such low levels, as suggested by me.

I am convinced now that Mrs. A. seeing Mrs. B. at leisure would forthwith recite to her the first 20 lines of Milton's "Paradise lost," whilst Mrs. C. would enlighten Mrs. D. on which grounds Beethoven Sixth appeals more to her than his Ninth Symphony.

Mrs. E. would then compare Cicero with the last heard speaker, using one of Pope's Aphorisms:

A little learning is a dangerous thing,

Drink deep, or taste not the Pierian Spring.

Mrs. G. would then stop Mrs. H. and whisper into her dainty ears, Molières misanthropical outburst:

"Je hais tous les hommes: Les un parcequ'ils sont méchants et malfaisants, et les autres pour être aux méchants complaints...."

Mr. K. would then show Mr. L. the latest reproductions of Veronese's "Adoration of the Maghi," or Boticelli's "Magnificat." Mr. M. taking Mr. N. to the refreshment bar, would tell him in confidence that George Elliott once said, that

"Half the sorrows of women would be averted if they could repress the speech they know to be useless—nay the speech they have resolved

not to utter."

Mr. Q. would then ask Mr. R. if he was at all interested in Edgar Wallace, and the latter answering in the negative would be taken to a quiet corner where Mr. Q. would start to recite:

"To be or not to be—that is the question—Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer... and coming to the sentence:

"To sleep! perchance to dream..."

Mr. R. would start to fall into a heavy slumber, when Mr. S., who had a learned conversation with Mr. T. about the Newton—Einstein theory, would pull the chair from underneath Mr. R. thus proving that Newton was right and Einstein only an imposter. Whilst the rest of the company would dance the minuet, Quadrille, Gavotte, etc.

The speeches, of course, would be appropriate to the "sphere."

The President would justify his very brief address by addressing the intellectual gathering with the following words, out of Longfellow's "Hiawatha."

"Big words do not smite like war clubs, boastful breath is not a bow-string, taunts are not so sharp as arrows, deeds are better things than words are, actions mightier than boasting."

Turning towards the ladies he would cry with emotion:

"Hark, hark, the lark at heaven's gate sings,
And Phoebus 'gins arise,
His steeds to water at those springs
On chaliced flowers that lies;
And winking many buds begin
To ope their golden eyes:
With everything that pretty is
My Lady sweet, arise,
Arise, arise."

Shakespeare, Cymbeline.

After this outburst full of enthusiasm, "My Lady Sweet" would rise and in her melodious voice she would say:

"What a piece of work a man! How noble in reason! How infinite in faculty! In form and moving, how express and admirable! In action, how like an angel! In apprehension how like a god! the beauty of the world! the paragon of animals."

Shakespeare, Hamlet.

And to end the orational part, and to keep it within the "sphere" the speech on behalf of the guests would bear the same Shakespearean touch; and would be something like this:

"Great honours are great burdens, but on whom they are cast with envy, he doth bear two loads. His cares must still be double to his joys, in any indignity; where, if he err, he finds no pardon; and for doing well a most small praise, and that wrong out by force."

This seems to me to be nearer the "sphere" of which my correspondent speaks and I truly hope that I will be forgiven for my deplorable lapse into vulgarity. There is, however, one thing which causes me an uneasy apprehension I am d... (stands for dreadfully) curious to know what the attendance of a function, such as the one described would be. ST.

Un exposé du Dr. Laur sur la politique agraire internationale.

Au cours d'une réunion publique organisée par la commission d'éducation du parti des bourgeois, des artisans et des paysans, le Dr. Laur, de Brougg, a conclu un exposé sur la politique agraire internationale, en déclarant que trois problèmes sont au premier plan: celui de la main d'œuvre, celui des crédits et enfin celui du marché international et des prix.

Dans les questions se rapportant à la main d'œuvre, l'agriculture dépend du B. I. T., sans avoir une place convenable dans cette organisation.

L'orateur s'est appuyé à une application de la journée de huit heures dans l'agriculture. En ce qui concerne les crédits, il a approuvé la création d'une banque agraire internationale en faveur des Etats de l'Est.

Au point de vue de l'agriculture, l'idée de constituer une Union européenne pour résoudre le problème des marchés et des prix doit être rejetée.

L'orateur conteste que les tarifs douaniers soient cause de la crise économique. Le meilleur moyen de résoudre la question agraire est d'organiser le marché. La partie la plus importante de ce problème est celle qui a trait aux céréales.

Les organisations coopératives ou les mesures prises par les Etats, comme c'est le cas au Canada, ont permis de mettre en valeur les produits des récoltes.

La politique suivie par les paysans suisses a fait ses preuves et doit être maintenue. L'organisation a remporté un succès brillant en ce qui concerne les céréales, la Suisse ayant les prix les plus bas élevés d'acquisition des blés indigènes, les prix les plus bas d'importation et le pain le meilleur marché. Il serait possible d'obtenir des succès semblables dans le domaine de la production du lait.

OLD FOUNTAINS.

Tourists visiting Berne are always delighted to find so many old interesting fountains there, which are a very picturesque sight and make the streets look cheerful and homely.

These fountains can be traced back to the beginning of the 16th century and are the works of a Swiss sculptor from Fribourg. Every year, thanks to a legacy, they are restored to their former beauty, repainted in bright colours after designs found in old chronicles. One of the finest is undoubtedly the fountain of Justice. In former times is used to stand in front of the court of justice. On a pedestal above the wordly and clerical potentates stands the lovely deesse Themis, called justice, her eyes are bandaged, in her right hand she holds a sword in her left one the balance. It is a masterpiece of the Renaissance.

Near the cathedral is the Moses fountain erected during the time of the Reformation. Moses carries two boards of stone on which the first and second commandment in Hebrew are engraved.

In the old part of the city we come across the Zähringue fountain in remembrance of Berchtold, the 5th Duke of Zähringue the founder of Berne. On a column ironclad in the armours of the family of Zähringue is the bear, keeping watch over the town.

One of the most interesting historical fountains is the Ogre. It represents a Jew swallowing a baby and out of his pockets peep other ones awaiting the same doom. Round the pedestal a number of comical bears are marching to war. It was taken from a false legend circulating centuries ago, of a supposed murder of a child by a Jew. On the other hand it was meant to be a memorial to warn children not to venture too near the bear pit, for it had happened that a child had fallen in and was saved by the courage of a brave citizen.

In front of the townhall is the fountain of Anna Seiler, erected in commemoration of a very popular woman who had spent her life in helping the poor and had founded various big charity institutions. She represents Hebe the dees of youth, pouring water into a pitcher.

Another of the many fountains so very characteristic, is the Bag-Pipe Player. On a round pillar a shepherd is leaning on a tree-trunk playing the bagpipe, next to him is a child who plays the flute. Below children are dancing and amusing themselves with geese, a picture showing the easy going of olden times amongst the trampers.

Berne. Miss E. Dachsel.

SWISS ATTRACTIONS.

Switzerland knows no close season. No sooner does it say *au revoir* to the last of its sun-tanned army of winter sports folk than it welcomes the first arrivals for the spring season. But perhaps this is hardly to state the case correctly. There is at least one part of Switzerland—in the region of the Jungfrau—where skiing continues to be enjoyed long after Easter. For the skiing grounds of that district lie so high that, despite the direct rays of the sun, the snow does not melt until May.

Spring flowers come late to Switzerland, but when they come they provide a picture worth travelling a long way to see. The annual Narcissus Fête will take place in Montreux about the end of next month, and will include open-air ballet performances, battles of flowers and confetti, a Venetian Gala night, etc.

A new attraction of a different kind is the journey through the heart of the Alps by the "Glacier Express." This is the official name for a train which runs from St. Moritz to Zermatt, a distance of 163 miles, in about ten hours. That will sound a long time to the uninitiated for such a distance—but then the railway is for the most part a veritable switchback line, the train traversing sublime incredible gradients *en route*.

Another attraction of a similar character will be added with the inauguration of the "Golden Mountain" Pullman Express during the summer. This new luxury service will traverse one of the loveliest regions of Switzerland—that from Interlaken to Montreux—and will have to negotiate gradients of 72 in a thousand, which will be a record for a full-size Pullman car.

In a previous issue it was announced that the "Golden Mountain" Pullman train would commence running for the season on June 15th. We are now informed that it will run only from July 1st to September 10th.

April, 1931, Traveller's Gazette.

CONCERT NEWS.

We wish to direct the attention of our readers to a Symphony Concert by the London Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Dr. Felix Weimartner from Basle at the Royal Albert Hall, on Sunday next (April 12) at 3 p.m.