

A prelude to wintersport

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A PRELUDE *to Wintersport*

One of life's wisest maxims is that which says: « Make for your goal, but miss nothing by the wayside. » And this applies not only in a moral or figurative sense, but also practically speaking. A train journey to any Swiss Alpine resort, for instance, leads one through many a lowland town where « wayside gifts » may be gathered in abundance. For those who know them, Basle, Berne, Zurich, and numerous others besides, are names to conjure with; there is a rare charm about these towns, their glorious setting, their mingling of busy modernity with venerable tradition, their devotion to art and culture brought into paradoxical harmony with their atmosphere of cheerful, comfortable homeliness.

These towns represent an aspect of Switzerland that is far too fine to be missed. Winter sports are well worth a journey half across the world, but what if that dreaded spoil-sport « Föhn », the warm wind from the South, turns one's favourite curling-rink into a shapeless, slushy mass, or a snowfall overnight buries the finest ski-tracks and bob-runs half a yard deep? Then it is that one recalls these lowland towns and treasures memories of them to replace what Alpine winter has, for once, withheld.

Basle

To the more worldly-minded, Basle is a by-word for two main attractions: « Basler Leckerli » — a delicious sweetmeat of which the city's confectioners make a speciality, and « Basler Fastnacht » — the liveliest, jolliest Carnival to be found anywhere. But there is another Basle besides that of the sweet-toothed reveller, a Basle that was sponsored by such men as Erasmus and Hans Holbein, a Basle crammed with rare gifts for the lover of art and beauty, a Basle beloved of the painter and collector, a Basle that has at last built a worthy home for its priceless treasures. This is the Basle whose Beethoven and Bach festivals have become almost as famous as the composers themselves, whose grand old Minster is the finest concert hall in the world.

Geneva

« Noblesse oblige! » Geneva has from time immemorial been a city where history was made — the city of Calvin and Rousseau, the birthplace of Protestantism, the pioneer of social liberty, the refuge of all those oppressed for their faith or opinions, the cradle of the Red Cross movement and, finally, the home of the League of Nations. And Geneva knows what is due to her exalted rank: her most famous landmarks, the Church of St. Pierre and the immense pile of the new Palais des Nations, are symbols of her majesty. Even the atmosphere of her boulevards and fine, open squares, of her museums and university buildings have something regal about them.

St. Gall

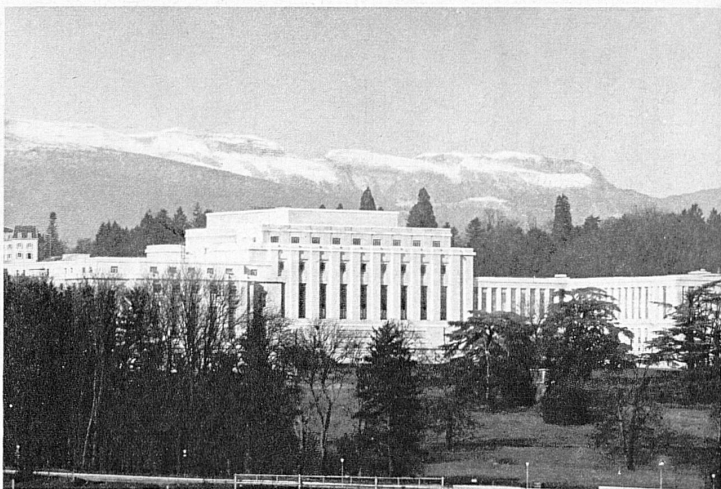
There is much of real interest and greatness to be found in this valley lying between the mountains and the Lake of Constance where St. Gallus built his hermitage over thirteen hundred years ago. The fine church that arose on the site of the hermit's cell is to-day an oasis of peace and tranquillity in the heart of a busy town. The monastery cathedral, built by Giovanni Caspares Bagnato, is a triumph of baroque architecture, the « Stiftsbibliothek » a rococo shrine for priceless books and manuscripts. St. Gall cherishes its treasures, has done so for a thousand years and more.

Lausanne

The first glimpse of Lausanne is best obtained from above — from the « Ville Episcopale », where there is the finest church in the whole of Switzerland. Here, too, one first senses the meaning of the term « esprit romand », for this is where it thrives and has its roots. And these roots extend as far as the eye can see: to the East, where the interminable vineyards of Lavaux stretch out towards the horizon; to the West, where the Côte glows warmly like the bloom on its own grapes; beyond the town, far into the brown soil of the Vaud peasant country. Such a town is in itself an altar to the Gods of Abundance which dwell in the earth about it.

Zurich

Zurich is a city, and an extremely interesting one at that. But a city is well able to take care of itself: one is drawn willy-nilly into the ceaseless surge of its daily life and the activities of its several hundred thousand inhabitants. Nor can, in this case, its glorious setting well be overlooked — the Lake and the mountains beyond need no « discovering ». They are, however, inclined to eclipse two institutions that no visitor should miss, one being the Opera House, the best of



Ligue of Nations' Palais at Geneva — Le Palais de la S. D. N. à Genève — Der Völkerbundpalast in Genf — Il Palazzo della Società delle Nazioni a Ginevra



Miniature from the Codex XXII, «Psalterium aureum» (Monastery library, St. Gall) — Miniature du Codex XXII, «Psalterium aureum» (Bibliothèque de l'Abbaye de St-Gall) — Miniatur aus Codex XXII «Psalterium aureum» (Klosterbibliothek, St. Gallen) — Miniatura dal Codex XXII «Psalterium aureum» (Biblioteca dell'Abbazia di San Gallo)

Bern: «Bogey-man»-Fountain
La fontaine de l'Ogre
Kindlifresserbrunnen
La fontana dell'Orco



Carnival at Basle
Le Carnaval à Bâle
Basler Fastnacht
Carnevale a Basilea



Phot.: Joeger, Ritter



its kind in Switzerland, where many a famous work has been cradled and the best voices of our generation are frequently to be heard. Then there is the Swiss National Museum, which is also well worth a visit.

Berne

Berne may be the Capital of the Swiss Confederation, but it is far from being the stately pile of conglomerate architecture one might be led to expect from a Seat of Government. For the typical features of Berne — apart from the famous Bear Pit — are her leafy bowers and her patrician houses, her decorative fountains and turrets, all of them very old, built by a people that once ruled the land from Mont Blanc to the Rhine. A stroll through the ancient city is a veritable voyage of exploration and discovery; it arouses a childish glee, a wonder that such things still exist. The Bear, Berne's symbol, is to be seen everywhere in one form or another; you will not be the first to buy one in hazel-nut sugar and then wonder whether to eat it at once or keep it as a souvenir. Hans von Berlepsch-Valendas.



The «Meistersinger» by Wagner, Zurich Opera (stage setting by Clemens) — Les «Maîtres chanteurs» de Wagner à l'Opéra de Zurich (mise en scène de Clemens) — Wagners «Meistersinger» in der Zürcher Oper (Bühnenbild von Clemens) — I «Maestri cantori» di Wagner all'Opera di Zurigo (Scenario di Clemens)