

Letter from Switzerland

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LETTER FROM SWITZERLAND

EUGENE V. EPSTEIN

A collection of twenty-four pieces by Eugene V. Epstein—many of which originally appeared in this magazine—has just been published in book form ("Once upon an Alp", Atlantis Publishing Company Ltd, Zurich, 172 pages, illustrated by Hans Kuchler, with a preface by George Mikes).

Dass sie einem Bedürfnis entspricht, hat die Gemeindeabstimmung deutlich gezeigt – kein Wunder, denn immer lebhafter äussert sich der Trend nach ganzjährigen Badegelegenheiten als obligater Ausrüstung von Kur- und Ferienorten.

NEUERUNGEN BEI EINER TESSINISCHEN PRIVATBAHN

Die Lugano-Ponte-Tresa-Bahn, die seit dem Jahre 1912 das touristisch überaus reizvolle Malcantone erschliesst, hat eine grundlegende Erneuerung ihres Rollmaterialparks erfahren. Bestand dieser ausser den wenigen bei der Betriebseröffnung vorhandenen Fahrzeugen vorwiegend aus alten Wagen der Rhätischen Bahn und der Montreux-Oberland-Bahnen, so sind nun kürzlich von der Schindler Waggon AG Pratteln und der BBC Mailand drei Gelenktriebwagen und drei dazu passende vierachsige Personenwagen geliefert worden. Die 25 Meter langen Triebwagen, ausgerüstet mit zwei Kopfdrehgestellen zu je zwei Motoren von total 480 PS Leistung, bieten bei einem Leergewicht von 45 Tonnen 10 Plätze erster und 72 Plätze zweiter Klasse. Ihre Höchstgeschwindigkeit beträgt 60 Kilometer in der Stunde. Die Anhängewagen enthalten je 80 Sitzplätze zweiter Klasse, so dass eine neue Komposition mit drei Anhängewagen 322 Sitzplätze zur Verfügung stellen kann. Die Fahrzeit für die 13 Kilometer lange Strecke Lugano-Ponte Tresa verkürzt sich von 27 auf 22 Minuten. Nachdem die Bahn mit dem letzten Fahrplanwechsel am 29. September den starren Fahrplan mit regelmässigen Abfahrten jede halbe Stunde eingeführt und damit die Zahl der Züge von 47 auf 70 erhöht hat, erscheint deren Leistungsfähigkeit erheblich gesteigert und die Zeit zwischen Ankunft und Abfahrt der Züge in Lugano und Ponte Tresa mit einheitlich acht Minuten wesentlich gekürzt.

mainly new, large plastics which will enhance the international prestige of the sixty-year-old artist.

MUSICAL LIFE IN FULL SWING

In the cities and towns of German and French speaking Switzerland there is a continuous round of symphony concerts given by the local orchestras. In addition comes an almost endless series of soloists' recitals, and of concerts by the various choral and orchestral societies, chamber music ensembles, and of organists in large churches.

A particularly friendly reception will undoubtedly be accorded to the Czech Chamber Orchestra, Prague, in Zurich (November 29), in Geneva (November 30), in Lausanne (December 1), and in La Chaux-de-Fonds (December 2). This distinguished ensemble will be conducted by Josef Vlach. In Wettingen, near Baden, the well-known "Trio di Trieste" will give a concert on November 5, and another in Zurich on November 7. In Winterthur the Parrenin Quartet from Paris, also a popular visitor, plays on November 9.

"ZIBelemärit" IN BERNE

A delightful encounter between town and country falls due every year on the last Monday in November (this year it will be the 25th day of the month) in Berne where the last autumn market is held with great jollity on the Bundesplatz, the Waisenhausplatz and the Bärenplatz. It is an ancient tradition for the townspeople to buy their winter stocks of fruit and vegetables on this day, hence the great piles of farm produce brought to town from all points of the compass for sale on the occasion. In our own times it is the red and golden onions that are most prominent, and they are displayed on the stalls in the most intriguing ways: as plaits, wreaths, skeins, bundles and even made up in the shape of a heart. The visitor to the market who thinks less of his household and kitchen than of his sweet tooth will find at other stalls marzipan onions and hot chestnuts as well. The market has seen every kind of weather, from Indian summer to wintery snowstorms. But even bad weather or cold has no dampening effect on the general atmosphere of jollity or the huge turnover in onions. Brisk business is also done at the stalls selling wickerwork, antiques, clothes and other commodities, and in the late afternoon the crowded scene unexpectedly assumes the character of a confetti battle: the busy market turns into a popular fête open to all comers.

It is no longer customary for a man of my age and social standing to drink milk, but occasionally I get the urge. As a matter of fact, I've always liked milk, and perhaps the years I've lived in Switzerland have influenced me as well. Some of my fondest childhood memories have something or other to do with milkmen, who, in those days in the United States, delivered their various dairy products at four in the morning from a horse-drawn wagon. My younger readers will no doubt wonder what sort of antiquated, dated old kind of writer I am, but this happened not so many years ago.

Anyway, the milkman used to come at four in the morning, and the clop-clopping of his horse occasionally woke me up. But it was a pleasant sound—one of security and orderliness—and there weren't, in that era, very many other sounds to wake one up. In the morning, there would be the milk bottles in a special wooden box with a hinged top (which was always warped) provided by the dairy of one's choice. As I recall it now, the milk itself was of good quality, which could easily be recognized by the collar of yellow cream at the top.

Though it is difficult to believe, there was a time when cream floated at the top of the milk—and one could see it and knew that it must be good. Sometimes the collar of cream was thicker than at other times. When it got too thin, we used to complain and threaten to change dairies unless they put the cream back in their milk.

When we drank that good old milk, we would have to shake the bottle as if mixing a cocktail, for otherwise one person might get all the creamy cream at the top, while somebody else—usually me—would get stuck with the milky milk. I probably didn't realize it then, but this served as a fine lesson for life itself. I've never forgotten that there are those who get the cream and those who get the milk, no matter how you shake things up.

Then they started changing things in the milk business. I neglected to say that milk *was* pasteurized in those days, but that was all they did to it (I guess). At this point in history, science and technology took over and started adding various things like homogenizing and vitamins A and D. Science also took away a few things, too, like the horse whose clop-clopping used to wake me up. And then, in most areas, they took away the milkman, too. But the milk was now homogenized, and it was supposed to be much better because the cream was *in* it rather than on top of it. And this ended forever the shaking of milk bottles which once belonged to our mornings as much as bacon and eggs.

My story isn't over yet, even though I have probably conjured up the smell of frying bacon and eggs in the minds of thousands of readers the world over. I liked bacon and eggs. Soon we were faced with another disaster of more than minor proportions: milk was being sold in cartons, in *paper* cartons! The glass bottle was rapidly disappearing and, with it, more of my boring childhood memories.

These cartons were considered very, very good things—much better than their glass predecessors. They were thought to be more hygienic and they were certainly lighter to carry. Except in the old days we didn't have to carry milk anywhere except from the icebox to the table. So now we had to buy it in a store and carry it home, and for this most plausible reason science made everything easier for us—and we mustn't forget the pasteurizing, homogenizing and vitaminizing. But the point of all this discussion is a simple one:

even with the cartons—which I didn't particularly like—it was a simple thing to pour a glass of milk. One merely had to open a neatly hinged top and pour. When the glass was full, one had to stop pouring and close the top—which closed completely and evenly—and put the wretched carton back in the icebox.

Chapter two of this milky story begins and ends in Switzerland, where I now find myself a number of years, and a great many incidents, later. The first thing I noticed when we moved into the country was that the milk was delivered to our door every day, including Sundays. There were no horses—for Switzerland is a modern country in every way—but there were bottles again! Twenty, thirty, I don't know how many years had passed unnoticed and we were pouring milk out of bottles again!

Our Swiss bottles were brown, which, I understand, helped protect the contents (pasteurized and homogenized) from the evil effects of normal daylight. So the milk looked brown but poured white and was delicious. But even those were prophetic days. For as good as the Swiss milk was, the tops of those brown milk bottles were rather silly contrivances. They were made of some kind of metal foil, and once they were torn open, they really didn't fit on the bottle anymore. But this was just a minor complaint. I must admit, though, that I would have expected Swiss science to come up with something that would close the top of a milk bottle once it had been opened. I mean, if they think of coloring the bottles brown and everything.

Then, one day, catastrophe struck. The local dairy announced that all milk would henceforth be delivered in cartons. I was confused, for I had been through this business before somewhere else—at least I thought I had—or was it a normal case of *déjà vu*? When the cartons—which were made in Germany—first arrived, I couldn't believe my eyes. They were fat and had a roof on them, and there was no visible way of opening them. I examined one more carefully.

There was a clever drawing of two rather ladylike hands showing me how to open the blasted thing. The drawing was accompanied by the words: "Please tear open like this." Meanwhile, the lady was holding the roof of the carton with one hand, the carton itself with the other, and was apparently pulling in opposite directions. Obviously something had to give—so I tried the same maneuver myself.

I pulled and pulled and pulled, and the carton began to tear. It tore at the top and it tore on the side. A huge opening appeared out of nowhere. I felt like Ali Baba after he uttered the words: "Open, sesame!" Anyway, my milk carton was now open, paraffin was peeling from the sides, while much of the milk was all over the kitchen table and dripping rhythmically onto the floor.

I thought seriously of complaining that I had ordered a bottle—I mean, a carton—of milk, and that when I wanted paraffin I would go out and buy a candle. But this was progress and should not be fought against. The paraffin content of our milk was eventually reduced and I think I've learned to open the cartons now—and it usually works. But my problems were not yet over. There was still the cream to worry about.

Milk and cream, in many parts of Switzerland, come in the form of a tetrahedron—or four-faced, yet triangular pack. And the only way of opening such packages is with a pair of scissors. Since there is no known way of closing them again, we needn't dwell on the subject.

There's even another kind of milk in another kind of carton which looks fairly innocent but is as devilish an invention as anyone ever came up with. Its directions read: "Reach into the fold and pull apart." Try it, I dare you!

18 Anyway, that's the story of milk. What I forgot to mention is that when you pick up one of the new soft cartons—which now seem to be replacing the hard ones—the slightest squeeze forces milk or

cream or whatever to squirt out the top, which is never closed once it has been opened. I love Swiss milk, I really and honestly do. But I often think of that old milkman and his horse at four in the morning and wonder whatever happened to them.

Seit der Eroberung des Luftmeeres durch den Flugverkehr hat auch die Schweiz Fesseln eines Binnenlandes abgeschüttelt, und die nationale Fluggesellschaft Swissair leistet ihren Beitrag an das Transportwesen von Kontinent zu Kontinent. Die schweizerischen Flughäfen sind in stetem Ausbau begriffen. Eben verjüngte Genf-Cointrin sein Gesicht, der Flughafen einer Stadt internationaler Begegnungen und der Uhren- und Goldschmiedekunst. Als solche verrät sie sich bereits in der grossen Transithalle von Cointrin mit der von Joseph Heeb aus Carouge bei Genf gestalteten hydraulischen Uhr, welche die genaue Zeit nicht nur für die Rhonestadt, sondern auch für New York, Moskau, Sydney oder Kalkutta anzeigt.

Depuis que les avions de ligne sillonnent les espaces aériens, la Suisse, isolée des océans, est reliée d'un coup d'aile aux continents les plus lointains. Swissair, notre compagnie nationale d'aviation, a conquis une place enviable dans le trafic aérien mondial. Les aéroports suisses, qui accueillent des appareils de toutes les nations, sont constamment développés. Genève-Cointrin change de visage. Aux voyageurs de tous les horizons qui transitent à ce carrefour des communications mondiales, l'horloge hydraulique de Joseph Heeb (Carouge) rappelle que la cité internationale de Genève est aussi une métropole de l'horlogerie et de la bijouterie. Cette merveille de la technique horlogère mesure non seulement le temps de Genève, mais aussi celui de New York, de Moscou, de Sydney, de Calcutta et d'ailleurs... Le monde entier est présent. Photo Giegel ONST

Da quando la navigazione aerea ha preso a solcare immensi spazi, la Svizzera più non soggiace alla condizione di paese interno. La compagnia nazionale Swissair esegue regolari trasporti da un continente all'altro, e gli aeroporti elvetici di continuo mutano volto. Quello di Cointrin, nel suo recente ammodernamento, ha voluto con un simbolo evidente porre in risalto il carattere particolare della vicina città rodanica, centro eminente dell'oreficeria e della nostra industria orologiera, nonché sede d'istituzioni e d'incontri internazionali: a tal fine ha collocato nell'atrio un orologio idraulico che segna l'ora esatta non solo locale, ma pure di New York, Mosca, Sydney, Calcutta... Autore di codesto lavoro d'alta precisione è Joseph Heeb, di Carouge, bella borgata savoiarda al confine di Ginevra.

Since man's conquest of the air and the advent of air traffic, Switzerland is no longer the land-locked country it used to be, and the national airline, Swissair, is making its contribution to the development of intercontinental air transport. The Swiss air terminals are continuously being expanded. Just recently the airport of Geneva-Cointrin was renovated and extended, this being the air terminal of a city which is an international crossroads and a centre of the watchmaker's and goldsmith's art. This fact becomes immediately apparent to the arriving visitor in the big transit concourse of Cointrin with its hydraulic clock by Joseph Heeb from Carouge near Geneva; this clock indicates the exact time not only for Geneva but also for New York, Sydney or Calcutta.

EINE KÜRZUNG DER SBB-STRECKE ZÜRICH-BERN

Der Verwaltungsrat der Schweizerischen Bundesbahnen hat jüngst den Bau des ersten Teilstückes eines Projektes gutgeheissen, das eine direkte Verbindungslinie von Killwangen-Spreitenbach an der Linie Zürich-Baden durch den Heitersberg nach Mägenwil mit direkter Fortsetzung nach Lenzburg-Rupperswil-Olten, Wohlen-Gotthard und Birrfeld-Basel vorsieht. Diese zweite Doppelspur soll vor allem der Entlastung der Stammelinie Killwangen-Brugg dienen. Sie verkürzt die Distanz zwischen Killwangen und Rupperswil auf 19,5 Kilometer (gegenüber 27,4 Kilometern über Baden) und reduziert damit die Fahrzeit im direkten Städteverkehr Zürich-Bern entsprechend. Zunächst also hat der Bau des ersten Teilstückes dieser Linie, der rund 7 Kilometer langen doppelspurigen Strecke von Killwangen-Spreitenbach bis zur Reussbrücke bei Mellingen, mit Einschluss des 4,9 Kilometer langen Tunnels durch den Heitersberg, das Plazet der SBB-Verwaltung gefunden.