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SWITZERLAND TODAY. (Continued)

By: E. Merz.

We found our abode in Oberhofen not quite suitable and soon moved across the lake to Spiez, where we had secured a comfortable and very typical Bernese chalet, right on the border of a small forest. Our daughter was very happy there with many children of her own age, and within a matter of months she spoke the Swiss dialect quite nicely. Many of you know Spiez, a very charming resort at the foot of the Niesen, and nestled prettily along the lake.

It is an important railway junction, and suited us very well for our numerous excursions. It was now May, and we could plan the many sightseeing trips in the famous Oberland. The facilities are unlimited, and we just could choose what we thought best.

One of the first excursions was to Montreux, as Spring is the best month to visit the Lake of Geneva. We boarded the famous Lotschberg express for Brig and thence up the long Rhone Valley, and the return journey took us back via the Montreux-Oberland line.

Montreux, at the eastern end of Lake Leman, is celebrated for its exquisite beauty, and the genial climate. The soft blue of the water, the fine outline of the mountains with the great crest of Dents du Midi, combines to make the picture a splendid setting. Montreux itself has fine shops and many great hotels, with beautifully kept gardens and promenade along the shore. For once we wanted to stay at a really luxurious hotel, and chose the "Montreux Palace," a truly magnificent hostelry, with a breath-taking view from the 5th floor. A front double room with bath and all meals included cost us Fr.100.- a day; however, it was worth the experience. From our window we had an unobstructed view of the whole lake, of the chain of mountains, and twice we witnessed a truly marvellous sunset.

The district offers many excursions, the first of course, to the old castle of Chillon, perfectly preserved on its solid foundation of rock on the water's edge. One day we went up 7,000 feet, by the very comfortable blue electric mountain railway to the Rochers de Naye. The rail winds in long zigzags, up to the steep slopes behind Montreux, and the glimpses we had in all the different directions are an inspiring sight. There was still snow when we reached the top and corresponding change in atmosphere, which was rather too noticeable after the warm days down at the lake.

Other very attractive excursions were to Glion and Caux, both literally speaking, on top of each other and straight above Montreux. A trip round the lake is also worthwhile, and we had perfect weather during the whole sojourn in this charming corner of Switzerland, called rightly the "Swiss Riviera."

Our return trip by the Bernese-Oberland rail was an inspiration. We were fortunate to secure two seats at the very front of the electric coach, alongside the engine-driver. These two seats are usually rushed, but if ever you should have the opportunity to travel there, do not miss it. One has a splendid view directly ahead, as well as both sides of the line, and the $3\frac{1}{2}$ hour journey was really one of our thrilling experiences during the year.

The modern railway, connecting Montreux with Spiez, climbs up from the lake through vines and little villages, and after about 30 minutes continuous climbing, the view over the lake of Geneva and the Alps was truly incomparable. We saw large fields of narcissus, growing in profusion, and passing through Les Avant, a cable rail car can be seen at the left, climbing very steeply to the Pass of Sanloup, a well-known mountaineering resort. It was quite exciting to watch from our seat the entry of the many short and longer tunnels of which the Jaman, passing under the peak of the same name, is about 4 miles long. Small lights are placed on the roof of the tunnel the whole length, disappearing into a tiny speck - and when the exit approaches, you observe a point of daylight not larger than the eye of a needle. It was quite a new aspect of rail travel, and we were very glad of the unique opportunity.

The weather was not too good during the Summer months, but excellent forecasts are always published and we could fairly well rely on planning our excursions from day to day. If no paper was available we simply rang up Berne No. 163 and the weather report was automatically repeated by record. And speaking of telephones, Switzerland has now the only automatic system of any country, connecting the entire network DIRECT; that is to say, you may dial any number from say Spiez to Zurich or Geneva, without the resource of the toll call office, and you get instant connection at the other end. To be more explicit; when you use an automatic street telephone, you find a printed schedule of about 25 different districts, each district having a key-number such as 051 Zurich, 063 Berne, etc.; each district has a different tariff and a 'pay-box' is provided with three different sized slots; one slot for ten cent pieces, one for twenty and one for fifty cents. Whatever tariff is indicated you insert say 70 cents to Zurich, and dial No. 051-442267 and you are immediately connected with your party. What great convenience and saving of time this system provides, you only realise when being used to waiting two hours to ring from say Auckland to Hamilton.

Early one sunny morning, we made a short trip to Kandersteg and from there intended to walk down to the famous Blausee, about thirty minutes distance. Kandersteg is situated on a high level plateau, and is nestled in-between the imposing massives of the Blumlisalp and the Wildstrubel. It has an unspoiled charm with many well-kept footpaths through pastures or shady woods. Whilst walking away from the village we soon observed a new "Sesselbahn" or 'chair-lift' running steeply up the mountainside towards the Oeschinensee. These chair lifts are a new invention and the first of approximately, fifteen, in Switzerland, was built only four or five years ago. Originally the idea was to pull the skier up the mountain, but now this has been changed into a double-seated chair, suspended on a cable thirty to fortyfive feet above the ground. The chairs are of strong steel structure, suspended on moving cables and carried high above trees, ravines or streams and afford an absolutely free and unobstructed view all round. The double chairs are not rigidly fixed, but swing slightly while moving and you are sure to get a real thrill.

We promptly decided to cancel the walk down to Blausee and go up this "lift" instead. In about twenty minutes we were lifted over 3,500 feet and had a perfect view of the imposing mountains all around us. From the ground-station the chairs, each at from 50 to 150 yards apart (according to the frequency of customers) are catapulted out of the building and soon rise very steeply at an average height of 40 feet above the ground. The first sensation is very thrilling, one feels a sharp tingling running through the whole body; some people get rather frightened, but it is certainly a grand way of transport.

Arriving on top, we had to walk a short distance to the Oeschinen-lake and on the way picked some alpine roses and other mountain flowers. We were now

directly at the foot of the great Blumlisalp massive with the small lake in dark green presenting a very impressive scene. No less thrilling is the descent on the chair-lift, something like falling down a precipice. The Swiss are certainly an inventive people and offer the tourists great pleasures and thrills. We were so delighted with this new mode of transport, that later we visited the following places, where chair-lifts are running:

Beatenberg to the top of the Niederhorn;

Grindelwald up to the "First" just opposite the Wetterhorn;

Gstaad up the Wasserkopf;

Trubsee above Engelberg.

With many short "outings" such as Meiringen, Interlaken, Brienz, Lauterbrunnen, Trummelbach, Aareschlucht, up the extremely steep Niesen-Railway (over 8000 feet high), etc., we prepared the visit to the famous Jungfrau. We had to follow the weather forecast, as it was imperative to have clear skies, otherwise one sees nothing else but thick clouds. To make quite certain, we first went to Wengen and stayed there overnight. Wengen has, excepting perhaps Murren, the finest view of the Jungfrau massive and we were overjoyed to see the mountain next morning bathed in bright sunshine.

The ascent started at 8 o'clock by this world-famous railway, climbing to 11,350 feet. From Wengen to the Eiger-Glacier station we had the imposing chain of the three principal snow-covered giants of the Oberland constantly in front of us. The train, consisting of four full length coaches, was full but did not slacken in speed, which was about 20 k.m. per hour on a very steep gradient. From Eiger station, the rail enters a tunnel for the rest of the climb, a total length of perhaps five miles. This tunnel traverses through solid rocks of the Eiger as well as the Monch right to the end of the terminal. Two stops are made, one in the centre of the formidable Eiger-Wall, the other above Eismer Glacier of the Monch. At these stops large windows affording commanding views are provided for visitors. The end station is hewn out of solid rock, reminding one of the London tubes.

Walking through underground galleries in various directions, we paid a visit to the famous ice-rink, where the walls and ceiling are completely covered with ice, where you can sit on chairs with tables all modeled of ice, and of course, never melt, as the temperature is always below zero at that altitude. Another gallery leads for half a kilometre through rock to a lift ascending 350 feet up to the famous Sphinx. The view from this building, perched on a precipitous rock like a bird's nest, is majestic. The height is equal to Mt. Cook in New Zealand, and the great peaks all around appear only a few hundred yards higher. The air is very thin and to un-used mountaineers difficult to breathe; we saw an elderly lady unconscious for quite a while and people without strong hearts should not risk the ascent. Down at the edge of the Aletsch-Glacier, a team of Polar dogs is engaged pulling visitors around on sledges across the deep snow. Right up at this height is a finely equipped hotel, where you can rest and indulge in a fine meal. It was a never-to-be forgotten experience and we had brilliant sunshine the whole day.

(To be continued).

SWISS FEDERALISM.

(Continued)

THE NATURE OF THE SWISS STATE.

While the form of the Confederation has changed, its fundamental principle has persisted. The system of multiple alliances based on treaties has been replaced by the Confederation as the federal union of twenty-two states. Where formerly the Diet merely existed as the organ "ad referendum et ad ratificandum" of the member states, the present Federal Assembly is the legislative power and the Federal Council the common executive power. Instead