

News of the colony

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Entering the Castle gate we saw a notice in French: "Please ring the bell." The caretaker charged us the usual fee of one franc and showed us around. On the left of the entrance was an old chapel dedicated to St. John the Baptist. We were told that Count Louis, the second ruler of the town and Castle, was anxious that this oratory should be worthy of the Saint to whom it was dedicated. It was only 20ft. by 16ft. and had a fine domed room adorned with beautiful paintings. Count Louis collected famous relics and obtained from the Pope special Indulgences for those who worshipped there. This parchment manuscript, dated 1485, was displayed in another room. There is also a curious tradition concerning the chapel bell. In 1573, a fierce storm rent off the roofs of houses and the clapper of the oratory bell was carried right into the forest of Bouleyeres; it was found some months afterwards and the citizens promised to maintain the bell rope, on condition that the bell should always be rung in time of storm, and henceforward the sound of the bell of St. John had the marvellous power of staying the storm as if by magic.

From the esplanade by the chapel we had a marvellous view of the surrounding country. In the distance Bulle, the market town, still famous for its cattle sales, and Broc, the site of Cailler's and Nestle's chocolate factories. The snow-covered Dent de Broc and Chamois hovering as sentinels of the district, and fine pasture land stretching almost to Gublou.

On entering the Castle itself we were shown the guard's room and kitchen, then up the stone stairs, worn hollow by thousands of feet, to the first floor, where we saw the apartments of the lords of the Castle. In the main room was a fine oak chair carved with the arms of Gruyere and Meuthon, and bearing the date 1501; a huge fireplace where an ox could be roasted whole, and the various equipment for doing so was also displayed there, including spits, and turning wheels. From the ceiling were suspended two huge bells, similar in shape to cow bells of Switzerland; attached was the notice, "Ne pas toucher." But the guide sounded them for us, to reveal their musical value and order. We then entered the banqueting hall, with ancient furniture and beautiful tapestries. On the second floor the largest room was decorated with beautiful frescoes painted by the artist brother of the owner, Mr. Bovy. These depicted actual and legendary episodes of Gruyere history. One of them showing the count and 100 followers departing for the Second Crusade. The torture chamber still conveys to the onlooker some of the gruesome punishments meted out to enemies in the Dark Ages, and a great display of armour and medieval weapons.

Another room has been furnished as a French salon of Louis 15th period, with beautiful china and furniture, the walls being hung with valuable paintings by Corot. From the windows of the apartment we looked down upon a wonderful French garden.

On leaving the Castle we made our way down the hill, picking a bunch of beautiful wild flowers by the wayside, returning to Montreux by way of Bulle and St. Legier. At this latter place we crossed a great viaduct, which reminded us of that of Mohaka, near Gisborne, then via Hauteville to Vevey, where, by the lakeside we met a number of girls in Bernese costume singing national songs very sweetly, before returning by coach to their homes.

From Vevey we took the tram, skirting the Lake to Montreux, tired but well pleased with our day's experiences.

We wish to sincerely thank Mrs. Gould for her very interesting article written so vividly that most of us who have had the pleasure of visiting this historic part of our homeland have no difficulty in recapturing its beauty. We hope that Mrs. Gould's admirable contribution to our paper will be an inspiration to many of our other readers.

NEWS OF THE COLONY

We have learned that some compatriots in the region of New Plymouth have made a nice gesture; they have collected £35 for the benefit of their old church at home in the Canton of Schwyz.

LETTER FROM SWITZERLAND

SWITZERLAND AND THE EVOLUTION OF PRICES

Swiss economy is at the moment enjoying a period of real prosperity. The various branches of industry, the metallurgical industry, machinery, precision instruments, watchmaking, textiles and chemical products all have orders on their books for many months to come. Delivery dates in many cases have had to be extended. Unemployment is non-existent, firms are working to full capacity and a call has had to be made on foreign labour to make up for the shortage in the number of workers and employees, which was taking on serious proportions in certain trades.

The causes of this great activity are not unknown. The intensive re-armament programme that has been going on in other countries for a year now and the considerable stockpiling are among the principal causes. But it would be wrong to consider only these factors. The liberalisation of trade that has taken place under the aegis of the European Payments Union, of which Switzerland is a member, has favoured Switzerland's commercial relations with certain European countries. The textile industry in particular has profited by this state of affairs, as has watchmaking, which has been enabled to increase its sale of finished watches. Mention should also be made of the heavy demands of the home market, the wages paid in Switzerland nowadays being such as to grant a high purchasing power. It is only fair, however, to mention that the retail trade is complaining of a certain falling off in business, the continued bad weather of the last few months having put a brake on the sale of clothing, travel articles, etc.

In spite of the favourable situation, industrialists and those at the head of Swiss industry, are showing signs of a distinct anxiety with regard to the future. They point out, and rightly so, that the present state of prosperity is in part an artificial one since it is dominated by political factors, and that a deterioration or an easing of the international situation could produce serious repercussions on foreign markets as regards prices.

Moreover it is this question of prices that is commanding the most attention in economic circles at the present moment. In Switzerland it is particularly serious, for the poor soil of the country and a sub-soil barren of raw materials oblige her to seek beyond her frontiers the products in which she is lacking, and consequently to suffer the fluctuations of prices on international markets.

Up till the first quarter of this year, the cost of living index was only 4.6 points higher than the year before. In no other country had the cost of living risen so little. It should be emphasised here that it is not official measures—such as price controls, but on the contrary the free decisions of private enterprise. In point of fact, the economic groups of the country as a whole agreed that recourse to a system of official price controls was in no way justified, that the law of supply and demand worked as a sufficiently strong regulator and that it was advisable, in the present circumstances, to obey the appeal issued by the Federal Council in January of this year. This appeal pointed out clearly enough that the maintenance of industrial and agricultural exports is a vital necessity to Switzerland, and that a rise in the prices of products for export would have grave consequences for the export industries. It is