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Autor: [s.n.]
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Ugo Koblet, 26-year-old Swiss cyclist, won Europe's greatest bicycle race, the 2900-mile Tour de France, with an aggregate time of 142 hours 20 minutes 14 seconds.

A young man, under the influence of alcohol, jumped into the swimming pool of a polar bear at the Zurich Zoo. A few minutes later the female polar bear "Gretel" dived into the basin, and tried to get hold of him. Owing to the efforts of some of the visitors and one of the keepers the young man was rescued from his perilous situation without suffering any injuries.

In Switzerland, sixteen power stations are under construction or being rebuilt at the present time, the Swiss Electricity User's Association was told at its recent meeting. These will provide an additional 2,000 million kWh. annually by 1956. Last year, four large power stations and several smaller units were put into operation.

This year, the number of tourists entering Switzerland via Basle was 520,000 in July and 510,000 in August. This shows a very considerable increase compared with last year's statistics, which indicate an average of 300,000 visitors. From the beginning of the holiday season, that is, from June to the end of August, a total of 1.3 million tourists have entered Switzerland at Basle, that is about twice as many as last year.

TELEVISION IN ALL AMERICAN CINEMAS THROUGH A SWISS INVENTION.

After long negotiations the 20th Century-Fox Film Corporation has succeeded in getting a permit from the Columbia Broadcasting System to transmit television programmes in colour. The transmission to the big cinemas is done through the famous Swiss Eidophor-Projection system. The 20th Century-Fox Film Corporation has bought, some time ago, the right to use the idophor system from the Physical Research Institute of the Polytechnical School in Zurich. The agreement with the Columbia Broadcasting System now makes it possible to transmit shows of all kinds from the big cities to the smallest suburban cinemas of the United States. In American television circles it is stressed that the Swiss Eidophor System is the most perfect procedure for the transmission of big pictures and, therefore, best suited for television.

THE LION OF LUCERNE GETS A NEW SKIN.

The Lion of Lucerne, which was sculptured in the year 1820-21 by the sculptor, Ahorn, from Constance, after a model of the great Danish master, Thorwaldsen, has greatly suffered from the influence of the weather. After several works of amelioration and all sorts of experiments, it has now been decided to make a complete restoration, which will cost about Sfr.10,000. Already a sculptor and a stone mason have been working for a month to replace the missing parts, especially the left paw of the lion.

THEIR SWISS TOUR WAS A "DARING ADVENTURE — 59 YEARS AGO

From the "SWISS OBSERVER."

Exactly 59 years ago the first large party ever to leave Manchester on an organised tour to Switzerland steamed away from the city with a rush of excited cheers and whistles echoing in their ears.

There were 74 of them in the party, including 39 women wearing the flowing, voluminous skirts and wide-brimmed hats of the day. It was organised by the Manchester Touring Club, forerunner of the dozens of travel agencies that now send thousands of Mancunians on Swiss holidays every year.

Dawn was breaking as they set forth for the Continent. On the boat they were given the choice of either beef steak or mutton chop and coffee for breakfast. They all considered it "a fairly good meal" as well they ought for it only cost them two shillings each.

If beef steaks were nothing unusual for the travellers they soon found more worldly surprises in store for them. The splendour that greeted them in their first continental hotel, for instance, brought gasps of amazement from the incredulous Mancunians.

"The dining room was an agreeable surprise," they recorded, "and the electric light shone around in a pleasant manner."

Lucerne, today's No. 1 Swiss attraction to British visitors, was their eventual destination. It was the time when Lucerne was first being opened up as a holiday centre. The ring of steep walls and turrets, built to keep out undesired neighbours in the fourteenth century, were now turning on all their medieval charm to welcome the visitors who were beginning to flock from all parts of Europe to see this fairy-tale city tucked away amid the Alps.

The party from Manchester was suitably impressed. In these days the English tourist goes to Switzerland for food first and scenery second, but in 1892 scenery came first every time.

They had their share of all the beauty-spots within reach. One day they climbed the 5,900-foot Rigi, which dominates Lucerne, by Switzerland's first mountain railway, built 20 years previously. It was this railway, incidentally, that was taken as a pattern when the Snowdon railway was built, and the first rolling stock to be used on the Welsh mountains was bought second-hand from the Swiss authorities.

They did plenty of sight-seeing. But when the day's excursions were over, what then? Lucerne was only beginning to develop into the gay holiday centre it is today. All the luxurious hotels, the elegant Casino and numerous entertainments that vary according to the season were mostly still a dream.

The Mancunians' chronicler gives the answer in one long sentence:

"When you are tired out with the pleasures of the day, it is a great treat to hire a boat at eventide and gently push out into the bright clear lake, then lean back, light your cigar and meditate."

These early English tourists, like the millions more who were to follow them later, revelled in showing the foreigners they were English and proud of it. The Swiss, they observed, used to watch their proceedings, as they dallied around, with an air of calm serenity.

And they touched on a prophetic note that was soon to become only too true when they remarked: "We were probably looked upon as the advance guard of a troop of English tourists who would, by and bye, swarm down upon them from Europe and America."

Yet, although the Swiss tourist industry, destined to become the most highly-powerful in the world, was at that stage only in its infancy, they found that the Swiss were far from insular.

On their way down from the excursion to the Rigi they saw something that "well tickled the fancy of those who noticed it." It was an immense sign outside a picturesque and otherwise unspoilt mountain chalet proclaiming in English to all and sundry that "GRUB IS BALM."

The tour was a huge success and was a topic of conversation for years. So successful was it, in fact, that people began to call the Manchester Touring Club the "Matrimonial Bureau."

The writer of the tour's log observed: "The title was fully justified. Can it be denied that opportunities for arriving at a closer intimacy with others of the party did not occur daily? And were not many of the "unattached" ones on the look-out for whatever contingencies might occur? And as a result was not the Tour a success in many other ways? Oh yes."

SWISS FARMING

Forms of Settlements.—The settlements of rural population in Switzerland consists of individual farmsteads, hamlets and villages. There are no rural townships such as may be found in southern Italy, for instance. In other terms, there are no towns inhabited by farmers. On the other hand, there are no large-size holdings. The influence of the traditional ways of life and the principals held by the first settlers have been responsible in a greater measure than nature was for the distribution of individual homesteads and villages. In this connection, a pronounced tendency towards continuity has been noticeable. The peasant settler is conservative; sons remain on the site where their fathers had established their settlements. The lay-out in the distribution of land and buildings is often a clue to the history of a people's past. The Celts and the Romans gave preference to the individual homestead; the Alemanni to village settlements. Once established, a village seldom vanished. Individual homesteads and hamlets were given preference where plots of forest had been converted into arable land in the neighbourhood of ancient settlements. As a rule, compact sections of peoples advancing in common gave origin of villages. Both in the Swiss Midlands and the Alpine regions the massed villages prevail. Ribbon villages developed along connecting roads as an outcome of expanding traffic. Individual homesteads located round about villages were generally established at a later epoch. Endeavours are being made in connection with the present-day consolidation of farms to rationalise the distribution of land by establishing a certain number of individual farmsteads.

Size of Farms.—Only 2,675 out of the 238,481 farms recorded in 1939 comprised more than 74 acres (30 hectares) of agricultural land. The small number of large-size farms are principally owned by public corporations or by the State; some of these holders own grazings or forests in high altitudes.

The majority of farms of less than 7.4 acres (3 hectares) are in need of income from sidelines if a family is to afford its living on the farm. This category accounts for not less than 10 per cent. of all agricultural holdings. It points to the close connection existing between a large part of the peasant population on the one hand, and industry and crafts on the other, many peasants being industrial workers, in part also industrial owners. Rural home workers or industrial workers living on farms constitute a welcome reserve for a number of our industries in times of economic fluctuations. Farms measuring 7.4 to 12.35 acres (3 to 5 hectares) may be termed smallholdings proper. The best and most progressive farms are to be found in the group of the intermediate-size holdings measuring approximately 12½ to 74 acres.

Land Improvements.—The oldest of the more important joint works of land improvement in Switzerland are the "Bisses" in the Canton of Valais, and the irrigated meadows. While the latter decreased since the introduction of the ley farming and improved meadow

manuring the "Bisses" have been preserved and in many cases improved. These open aqueducts convey water from the glaciers high up in the mountains down into the valleys, sometimes bridging crevices or leading along rocky faces. The water is used in the valleys to irrigate cultivations suffering from drought in summer time.

Drainage installations were at first built by the farmers themselves using fascines and building low embankments in stonework. Such installations are in use in the alps to this day. In the valleys use is made almost exclusively of pipe-system drainage installations, generally jointly owned plants of more consequence.

The consolidation of farms has enjoyed increasing importance, particularly in the three field rotation regions, as also in the alpine valleys of the south, especially in the Ticino and the Valais, where intense parcelling of the land still obtains in many places. In the mountains the building of ways, ropeways, stables, manure depots and aqueducts for drinking water has been of great importance.

As a result of the Federal decree of 1884, concerning the furtherance of agriculture land improvement has recorded a powerful development. The Confederation, the Cantons, and in many instances also municipalities and corporations contribute funds. Many cantons employ official reclamation engineers, and the Confederation set up a special section for land improvements attached to the Federal Institute of Technology at Zurich.

Reclamation made a very remarkable advance during the last war, and large areas of woodland were turned into cultivable land.

Buildings.—The conservative trend of the agricultural population finds its expression also in their buildings. Traditional architecture has been preserved through the centuries both in the plains and also in the mountain regions. Craftsmen kept the old-time installations and forms giving vent, generally, also to a pronounced liking for style and beauty. When, at the end of the nineteenth century, architects and contractors in the towns began to concern themselves with buildings on the land agricultural building experienced a serious danger. Many ugly new-fashioned structures may be found to this day in various parts spoiling the countryside.

A special agricultural building office was set up by the Swiss Farmers' Union in 1917. It controls the building of convenient new structures, and enhanced endeavours are made with a view to combining aesthetic improvements with traditional architectural forms. Buildings erected by that office have had a strong influence, and have a stimulating effect on the work of other architects and builders.

The income of the Swiss people in 1950 was 17.4 billion francs, or almost as much as in the peak prosperity year of 1948. This sum is 400 million frs. above the one in 1949. Swiss economists are calculating that the value of income in 1950 was the biggest in history because all prices were below those of 1948. The wages in October, 1950, show an average value including all type of workers, helpers and journeymen alike, the following figures: Graphic arts 3.36 frs. an hour (in 1939: 1.85); metal and machine industries 2.53 frs. (1.36); watch industry 3.01 frs. (1.47). It is obvious that experienced men receive more than this average and the increases are much higher among the women employees. Swiss wage earners were never as well off as they are now.

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The Swiss Federal Council has asked Parliament for a credit to install a trial television transmitter which would reach about 1,000,000 subscribers from Zurich.