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The Great Vinegrowers Festival at Vevey (August 1-14, 1955)

A celebration on the scale of this Vinegrowers Festival, which is held only once every 25 years, in the lovely town of Vevey on the shores of the Lake of Geneva, between Lausanne and Montreux, obviously involves a considerable outlay. The figure quoted provisionally is put as high as 3,700,000 francs. The construction of the stands alone with all their installations will cost in the neighbourhood of 1,000,000 Swiss francs. The elliptical form of the stands will ensure excellent visibility for all seats, a big improvement in fact on 1927 when the stands were horse-shoe shaped. In 1955, all the spectators will be facing the main stage where the principal scenes will be performed.

The Telephone in the Mountains

A completely automatic telephone exchange, of the latest type, has just been inaugurated at Zermatt. It is ten years since the underground connection was completed between Zermatt-Visp-Brigue, thus ensuring that tourist resorts should not be cut off by avalanches from the rest of the world. A telephonic link has also existed for some time now by radio, between the village, the Theodule Pass and the Mont-Rose hut, as well as with the Belvedere Hotel at the foot of the Matterhorn.

Tickets for the Vinegrowers' Festival

In 1927, expenditure amounted to 1,200,000 francs and the price of tickets varied between Swiss franc 5.50 and Sw. francs 82.50 inclusive of taxes; all seats were sold out for the last performances, the public coming in even greater numbers, owing to the great success of the Festival.

In August, 1955, in spite of the expenses being three and a half times greater and in spite of the increase in prices in general, the seats have been fixed at from Sw. francs 10 to 70 for the day performances and Sw. francs 10 to 80 for the evening, inclusive of all taxes with the exception of a slight surtax for insurance against rain.

Looking for Oil on the Swiss Plateau

Borings which have been taking place, in the Canton of Lucerne, have shown the existence of

oil in the Swiss sub-soil. Thus, the affirmations made by geologists have once more been confirmed.

The boring undertaken at Altishofen attained a depth of 2090 metres at the beginning of October, 1954. At this depth, the residues of the boring emitted a strong smell of petroleum. A more thorough examination revealed that small drops of petroleum were oozing out of the tiny crevasses to be found in the limestone. This petroleum is now being examined, after which an attempt at extraction will be made, for the purpose of finding out as to whether or not the exploitation of this oil field would be economically viable. This attempt, which is the fourth of its kind in Switzerland, was rendered possible by Swiss initiative and Swiss capital.

THE GRAND TOUR OF TARANAKI

After having been elected secretary of the Swiss Benevolent Society in New Zealand I took the opportunity to visit as many members of the Society as I could in the short space of a week.

First of all I would like to thank all my compatriots who were so hospitable and kind during my trip from Auckland to Taranaki and back. It proved to be a very interesting tour, on my motor-cycle, for me, and now I know where the bacon, butter and cheese come from.

I left Auckland on the 8th of January. My first stop, Ngaruawahia, where I had the chance to observe the most modern and largest pig breeding farm in New Zealand, run by Mr. J. W. Risi. In spite of the unusual smell, to which one could get used, it was well worth visiting.

From there I went to New Plymouth, where I met Mr. and Mrs. Schonbachler and Mrs. Holder. Mr. Schonbachler enjoys life as a retired City Council gardener of New Plymouth.

In Okato I had a chance to see a prosperous, up-to-date New Zealand Swiss farm run by Mr. A. Schicker. It was a pleasure to see his herd of cows full of milk entering the shed to be milked in the morning and evening, but what a lot of work for one man. It was there where I had my first glimpse of a cheese factory in full swing. After an interesting tour by car to the new Rhododendron Park in Pukeiti Hill I had to say good-bye. My next stop was Opunake, where I enjoyed a few minutes on the beach. A beautiful beach. Late in the afternoon I arrived at the farm of Mr. Imhof in Whakamara, near Hawera. Mr. Imhof was in the milking shed surrounded by cows and music. We had quite a pleasant talk.

Next morning I started off for Mahoe to see Mr. John Steiner, but instead I saw the lady of the house, as Mr. Steiner was busy hay-making somewhere in the district. From Mahoe I went to Kaponga and what a Swiss town—this Kaponga is. If you would care to meet someone from Switzerland there, then you must go to the local hotel for a drink.

In Palm Road, Kaponga, I met the family of C. Schuler and was introduced to a jolly musician, Mr. Kaelin, who gave me a free of charge concert on his mouth organ and a home-made bass. Naturally, we had to play a card game in the evening, as it is customary among all the real Swiss.

The following day I began on my way homewards, but found enough time to say Hello and Good-bye to Mr. and Mrs. Nolly, in Stratford, who will depart for their holidays to Switzerland shortly.

I also met Miss Busser in Marire Hospital, Stratford.

My next stop homewards was in Te Awamutu, where I met Mr. and Mrs. Komminoth. Mr. Komminoth is the manager of the Regent Lounge Tea Room. A very nice place to have a cup of delicious coffee.

Holidays will come and go, but the memories of this grand tour of Taranaki will remain with me for a long time to come.

I would like to meet you all one of these days, but for this I will need more than one week. I think the only way to get to know and understand each other is to meet personally.

If anyone has any special and interesting news to be printed in our "Helvetia" please write and let me know. We are all interested in News from Switzerland, and news from our new home, New Zealand, can be interesting, too.

Yours sincerely,

E. GILGEN,
Hon. Secretary.

SWITZERLAND AND THE ENGLISH-SPEAKING NATIONS

There appears to be but little resemblance and no apparent connection between Switzerland, that little mountainous country hemmed in on all sides by the Continent of Europe, and the vast British Commonwealth, or the United States of America.

Nevertheless, comparisons can be drawn, and many connections do exist between Switzerland on the one hand, and Britain and the United States on the other. Firstly, like the English-speaking races, the Swiss have an intense love of liberty which for them implies both national and personal freedom, namely, the independence of their country and liberty of thought, and an imperative need of self-government. The history and institutions of Switzerland testify to this freedom-loving spirit.

As we have seen, Switzerland's regime is democratic, like that of the English-speaking nations, and it is based on the sovereignty of the people, representative government and universal suffrage. By its very essence, this regime excludes personal power or leadership, and the Government rules by consent of the nation. Switzer-

land constitutes, then, a Federation of republics, a miniature commonwealth, administered according to the principles of co-operation, mutual aid and the equality of all men before the law. This country might well be termed the "United Cantons" for the motto of the Confederation is: "One for all, all for one." Features such as these are also characteristic of the two great English-speaking nations and yet other affinities are to be found at the basis of the relations which have thriven for generations between the three countries.

There has always been much intercourse on religious matters between the Swiss Protestants, and the English. In Reformation times, the school of Calvin greatly influenced religious thought in England and Scotland. Many letters from eminent English Reformation thinkers to the Zwingli School in Zurich are still extant; especially interesting are those of Lady Jane Grey to Henry Bulliger, one of the leading preachers of Zurich, to whom the poor girl left a personal memento. John Knox and Cartwright lived for a time in Geneva, together with numerous other English refugees, and took back to their native land a new theology and new political ideas. From these sprang the Nonconformist Church of Scotland and the English Puritan school of thought, whose influence is felt, down the centuries, in the republican constitution of the United States and the movement which led to the War of Independence.

(To be continued.)

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