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NOTES AND GLEANINGS.

By "KYBURG."

The Climate.

The long, long, dreary, wet, cold winter, following upon last year's long, dreary, wet, cold summer, must have left a greater impression on our minds than I thought, because so far, after a week's blazing hot sunshine, I have not heard a single grumble, not a grouse, nothing but: "Isn't it lovely, isn't it wonderful!" Truly, if it were not for the vagaries of our climate, we would miss a tremendous lot of pure joy, of ever renewed wonder at the beautiful colour effects produced by the alternating periods of rain and sunshine. No wonder Britons are a colonising race. No wonder they can stand the inferno of Aden, as well as the frozen North, no wonder they can stand almost anything in the way of climate with perfect equanimity. The weather, the British weather has moulded British character, and if the British Empire ever goes to pieces, it will be, I should think, because those Britishers who emigrate to other climes in the Colonies will gradually lose the essentially British characteristics which can be produced in the essentially British climate only. Those tribes who worship the Sun are, after all, not so devoid of reasoning powers as we often think, and have at least a good idea of the mainspring of earthly existence, as we know it, whatever they can see no further than that.

Well, 82 in the shade! A good old-fashioned thunderstorm, doing no damage, but cooling the air and refreshing the earth would do good, especially if followed by another period of the same sunny, health-giving weather we are now enjoying. Amen!

What I should like to be: A Mountain Guide.

Daily Herald (29th May):—

I have often envied a well-built native of Switzerland who earns his living by taking parties of tourists to Alpine heights.

Through flowery meadows, where cow-bells toll as the sleek animals crop the snow-fed grass, through odorous pine woods where the wild strawberry makes an interlude of brilliant colour, he leads the way. When progress becomes more difficult, he gladly gives advice, and waits patiently while the less expert members of the party negotiate a "nasty bit" of the route. And when the summit of some "col" is reached, disclosing peak after peak of dazzling whiteness rising through a veil of mist into the vivid blue sky, he delights to introduce each of his dear friends, as he calls them, to the people he has guided so skillfully into their presence.

The grandeur and beauty of the scene is like a moral tonic for all who view it, so what I should like to be is by no means a socially useless occupation.

Myes! A paragraph like the one above makes one think of a number of delightful ascents and also of deliciously cool valleys, where a mountain brook dances from rock to rock, where trout lurk in the dark pools, and where it would be just too delightful for words to sit and sit and think of nothing in particular except how nice it is to be alive. Myes! 82 in the shade!

Ex-Swiss President's Hundredth Birthday.

Daily Express (26th May):—

Herr Hertenstein, a former Swiss President, celebrated his hundredth birthday on Sunday at Winterthur (Switzerland). He still retains all his faculties, and is in good health.

The above "cutting" was sent me from an esteemed Aylesbury reader, to whom my thanks! He also sends me a pamphlet, "La Petite Epargne," probably because he thinks that I ought to warn Swiss Observer readers against participating in this "Provident and Capitalization Society working under the control of the French State," as stated on the pamphlet. The whole scheme is a snowball affair, and, as far as a quick glance through its pages seems to indicate, not very tempting. Besides, readers of the S.O. can invest their money in Swiss securities and life, etc. policies to at least as great advantage to themselves and certainly to better advantage to their own country. My advice, as far as the "Petite Epargne" is concerned, is emphatically: "Hands off!"

Thousand Miles Journey for £4 12s.

The intrepid Mr. Cobham's recent flight from Croydon to Zurich and back to Croydon, in one day, in a "baby" aeroplane, is, as the Daily News (1st June) states, justly described as a notable achievement:—

The entire cost of the journey was £4 12s. Mr. Cobham says it would be possible to build the type of aeroplane he used at a cost of £150 apiece, if the demand justified large-scale production; and he is convinced that in a few years' time young men of the period will fly from one country to another, just as they now race from one county to another on motor-cycles, and that they will be safer in the air than they are on the road. One may be stimulated by Mr. Cobham's enthusiasm without sharing it to the full. Life then will be more racy than ever. The timid will have to fly in self-defence. Air control and the police air-trap will be a problem that we challenge Mr. Cobham to solve.

When everybody goes to a football match in a baby aeroplane and visits the Wembley of 1950 in an aerial taxicab, it is difficult to decide whether we hope or fear that we shall be there as well.

It is really wonderful. We think much of the quick time in which our motor-cars take us from one place to another. I "did" 190 miles last Thursday in my small car, but it took me nearly all day, and I feel sure I was more tired in the evening than Mr. Cobham when he got off his aeroplane at Croydon, after more than five times the distance. It seems to me also, from personal observation, that flying in an aeroplane is probably much safer than motoring during the week-ends nowadays, although the number of accidents on the roads is really not much higher, if higher at all, compared with previous years, if one takes into consideration the enormous increase in cars. Anyhow, in a couple of generations or so, motoring will seem a sport for the old and decrepit, the nerveless and rusty ones, and the young bloods will take to the air. And, besides, it will most likely be cheaper to maintain the airways than it costs to maintain the highways. And from aeroplanes with folding wings to wings pure and simple will be a step only. I can see flocks of human beings making for the South in the autumn, just as birds do now. How jolly!

Air Mails to Belgium and Switzerland.

Manchester Guardian (29th May):—

The Postmaster-General points out that the morning air mails from London to Belgium and Switzerland are showing good regularity, and offer a real advantage in the way of earlier delivery of letters in Brussels, most of Switzerland, and in Northern Italy.

The Belgian Air Mail, for instance, during the first sixteen working days of the present month, reached the Brussels Post Office on fifteen days in ample time to connect with the afternoon delivery, beginning at about 2.15 p.m. A letter posted in almost any part of the provinces, say, in Manchester, at about the close of business hours and in time for the ordinary night mail collection, would, therefore, by the help of this Air Mail, have been delivered in Brussels in business hours next afternoon on almost every occasion. If sent by ordinary mail all the way, it would not be delivered until the second morning after posting.

During ten days of service the morning Air Mail to Switzerland has reached Basle in ample time for delivery of express letters for that place the same evening on eight occasions. Night mail letters from the provinces forwarded by this Air Mail would have been delivered in Zurich, in most places in south-east Switzerland, or in Milan, by first post on the second morning on probably nine occasions out of the ten, as against delivery, if sent by ordinary service all the way, only by second or much later post. By connecting at Basle on days of regular flight with the night mail train thence to Italy, this Air Mail enables twelve hours to be saved in time of transmission of letters to any principal place in Italy.

For transmission by the Air Mails to Belgium and Switzerland a special charge is made of twopence per ounce and threepence per ounce respectively. Particulars of these mails are given in a leaflet and supplement thereto, which can be obtained on application at any head or branch office.

Life in a Swiss Pension.

The following picture has its charms, although the tone is a bit pretty, pretty. Sunday School Chronicle (28th May):—

One has often heard the English women who spend their lives and eke out their incomes in Continental pensions referred to with pity, not unmixed with contempt. But I have been living in a typical Swiss Pension lately, and have had to revise the ideas one gathers in England. The English ladies one has met in Switzerland are not the unhappy, useless people one has been led to expect. There is, for example, the retired mistress of a well-known high school in the West of England. She is over eighty, but with one of her former staff, also retired, is spending her remaining days happily and usefully in following the sun round the world. The winter she passed in Bordighera, and now she is living in an ideal spot on a Swiss lake among the mountains, and with narcissus and lily-of-the-valley, columbine and gentian growing in the fields in extravagant profusion. And if anyone is unwell, if a small child visitor is peevish and needs to be amused, it is this sweet old lady who is ready to help. It was very pretty to see a little boy of two-and-a-half take her his first bunch of narcissi.

The little boy's mother, who has an extravagant husband and consequently was always in difficulties, has come out to live cheaply in healthy surroundings and to find for herself, if she can, an opening in one of the many colleges for a teacher of music, where also her boy might be educated. In England, where married women are to a large extent ineligible for such appointments, especially under local authorities, she would have little chance of succeeding in her

plan to maintain herself and her little boy.

Then there is a University girl who has been working her way over the Continent. She has excellent qualifications, and obtains easily temporary posts as teacher of mathematics. She remains for a few months, then as soon as her funds allow passes on to the next place which attracts her. She finds the life much more pleasant than a regular appointment in an English school. She teaches for four hours daily, and has therefore plenty of time to explore the neighbourhood.

Another guest at this Pension is a woman with two children—a boy and a girl. She has not sufficient money to maintain a home in England and educate her children. So she has disposed of her home and gives her children a good education in a well-known college. And, freed from the burden of housework and cooking, which would otherwise devolve upon her, she is able to give help and daily companionship to her children, whose father is working in India.

Then there is another lady of eighty to whom I talked for several days, without discovering she was stone deaf! During the war, when a bomb fell upon the house next to her own and practically demolished it, she placidly inquired who had banged the door! She is an expert lip-reader, but she has one grievance—or rather I should say trouble. She finds it almost impossible to "hear" the sermon, although she goes to church twice each Sunday. "It is like trying to read a book that is held above one's head and that is constantly moving," she said. "The minister sways to and fro, he addresses one half of his congregation and then turns to the other, and all the time he is too far away for me to catch the 'movement' of his lips. She tells me that it took two periods of three months each before she could lip-read properly, but it has opened an entirely new world to her, and she is exceedingly grateful to her teacher. To one cut off from all social intercourse by her affliction it is an art worth an infinite amount of trouble to acquire.

An old French lady is another guest. She has a very tender spot in her heart for the distressed cats of the neighbourhood. She has tended for years one that had the sight of one eye destroyed by boys throwing stones at it. It has now lost the sight of the other eye, and is therefore quite blind, but she takes it for walks on a lead, guarding it carefully against knocks and bumps. People generally out here are very kindly disposed towards the animals and birds. Everywhere one sees "Pensez aux Oiseaux" on little shelters about ten inches square, to which are attached labels appealing to people to feed the birds, and the food shelters are never empty. And almost every little chalet in the mountains has close up to its most sheltered wall the branch of a tree for the birds to rest on when the surrounding country is under a blanket of snow.

Another indication of the kindly spirit, in this Pension at any rate, among the "distressed gentlefolk" is over the matter of afternoon tea! The use of cups, saucers, spirit-stove and methylated spirit, etc., is often shared. When one guest leaves, she bequeaths any small conveniences she may possess to the others, and they in their turn readily oblige the newcomers. No; life in a Pension is not the miserable, unhappy thing it has been depicted. After all, it is not the mode of life, or the locality, but the spirit which rejoices in God's many gifts of tree and bird and flower, and in fellowship with others, which makes for happiness.

With the concluding phrase "Kyburg" heartily agrees, and with a feeling of "sufficient unto the day, etc." makes his bow to his readers.

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