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HOME NEWS

The Swiss Federal Railways, in addition to the abolition of the surtaxes on the goods traffic over the Gotthard railway, propose, as from January 1st next, to issue "kilometer" books to the residents of the adjoining valleys in the cantons of Grisons, Ticino and Uri, i.e., the fares will be based on the distance alone, the existing mountain surtax being dropped.

An unusual accident befell Mr. Häfliger-Fournier from Santodoz (near Montreux) who was caught in a thunderstorm on the outskirts of a wood. He opened his umbrella, when he was immediately struck by lightning, the latter being evidently attracted by the steel rod of the umbrella as it passed into the earth via the victim's watch chain. His wife, who was on the point of giving him her arm, received severe burns, from which, however, she is expected to recover.

A German aeroplane with five passengers on board, in trying to make a forced landing last Wednesday night (July 22nd), was totally wrecked just outside Baden. The pilot, who, owing to engine trouble, left Stuttgart three hours late, was flying to Munich. He was caught by a gust of wind, lost his bearings in the darkness and was driven into Switzerland; when circling round Zurich he imagined he had reached Munich.

Temporarily blinded by the glaring lights of another automobile, M. Clovis Bertrand, the manager of a Lausanne garage, misjudged the width of the road, with the result that his car fell over the bank into a stone quarry, where it overturned. The unfortunate driver was subsequently extricated from his precarious position and transported to the infirmary at Morges, where he died the following day from his injuries.

The large Dough and Paste Factory Spanioli in Martigny (Valais) was completely destroyed by fire last week, together with large stores of corn. The fire is said to be due to a short-circuit.

Pour le 1er Août. Les insignes de 1925. — A l'instar de ce qui a été fait les deux années précédentes, on vendra le 1er août, dans toutes les parties de la Suisse, villes, villages et hameaux, des insignes de fête. Le produit de la vente et les recettes provenant des cartes postales du 1er août sont destinés aux sourds et aux sourds-muets.

En 1923 et 1924, les insignes de soie de la Suisse orientale, excellents produits des fabriques de broderies de Saint-Gall, ont trouvé un écholement facile comme symbole de notre fête nationale. Cette fois, le comité s'est adressé à l'industrie de la Suisse romande. La maison Huguenin frères et C°, au Locle, chargée de l'exécution de l'insigne, a livré une médaille attachée à un ruban rouge et blanc qui fera certainement la joie de tous les amis et partisans de notre fête nationale. Un vigoureux jeune homme parcourt le pays le bâton de voyageur à la main; dans le fond, des lignes délicates esquiscent les montagnes où des feux de joie illuminent la croix fédérale vers laquelle s'élève, dans le geste du serment, la main droite du pèlerin. L'image est un symbole touchant de l'amour de la patrie et de l'enthousiasme pour le jour de notre fête nationale, dont la date est inscrite en trois langues autour de la croix. Nous souhaitons à cet insigne en métal le même succès qu'à ses devanciers. (*Communiqué du comité de la fête nationale*)

NOTES AND GLEANINGS.

By "KYBURG."

Switzerland.

There is probably a number of Swiss-by-marriage in our Colony here, and they will be much obliged by getting some authentic information of their new home-land. The following from the *Daily News* (18th July) will therefore be of particular interest to them:—

This well-known country is in Switzerland. The natives are called Swiss, from their habit of swishing people and adding in the date.

Switzerland is largely populated by Alps, which is what they call their mountains, because they don't know how to spell mountains. There are also large numbers of condensed milk cows who nestle among the chocolate trees.

The principal inhabitants of Switzerland used to be the famous family Robinson, but some years ago they were wrecked on a desert island, since when they have used no other.

The mountains (or Alps) are very high, but you should see the hotel bills, some of which have snow on them all the year round.

Switzerland has no navy to speak of, and that's why I am not going to speak of it.

It is in the snow-covered Alps that the famous St. Bernard dogs are found. These curious creatures carry a barrel of brandy tied round their necks, which assists them to discover lost tourists. That, at least, is the popular superstition, but the real facts are that the lost tourist smells the brandy and thus tracks down the dog, who then leads him home.

The passes through the Alps are inhabited by large quantities of old men and young women. The former make a living by advising the tripper to beware the pine tree's withered branch and to keep his eyes skinned for the awful avalanche.

On the other hand, the young women are in the habit of entreating the traveller to stay and rest his weary head upon their chests. This healthy competition serves to keep the prices down; but the young women generally win.

The highest mountain in Switzerland is Blanmengen, or something like that. It is frighteningly high, and even the best disinfectant doesn't seem to do any good.

Matterhorn on the Move.

Evening Standard (27th July):—

The Matterhorn has begun to move and threatens to engulf a number of villages and hamlets situated on the Italian side in the Val Tournanche at an altitude of 6,000 feet.

Small avalanches of stones fell in this district about a month ago but no notice was taken of them by the villagers.

When, however, large crevasses appeared on the mountain side, and great boulders began to tumble down to the valley, snapping trees in their path like matches, the villagers appealed to the authorities at Turin for aid.

The inhabitants of Ussin, the largest village in the Alpine valley, and a dozen smaller villages and hamlets directly in the path of the landslide, have been sent down already to Breuil, as the authorities considered that their lives were in danger.

There were heartrending scenes when the villagers, mostly poor peasants, had to evacuate their homes. They refused to leave them, declaring to die there, and the soldiers were ordered to employ force to make them leave the danger zone with their cattle and chattels.

Engineers and a detachment of Alpine troops are now encamped near the threatened spot.

The melting of the winter snows and the recent heavy rains in the Alps are the causes of the landslide. It is the first time in history that the solid frowning Matterhorn, which is 14,775 feet high, has moved.

The above may give some people an unduly alarming picture, and some who may have seen—and who has not?—pictures of the "Cervin" may be appalled at the idea of that mighty giant falling or moving to destruction. The facts are, of course, that a very disastrous landslide may occur, many of them even, without making much of an impression on the mountain itself, without being noticeable even to the casual visitor afterwards. However, our sympathies will go out to those unfortunate people whose homes are being threatened, and all Swiss who know something of the tenacity with which mountain people cling to their homes will understand what terrible sorrow such calamities produce.

Funeral March of the Ice-fields.

The People (12th July):—

Locked in the crawling ice-river of the Glacier de Bossons, six human bodies have for over half a century been making their last journey down Mont Blanc. They are the corpses of the ill-fated members of the Corkindale-Bean expedition which perished in the Alps in 1870.

Scientists, measuring the slow progress of the glacier, declare that the ice may be expected

to deliver up its dead this summer. Last week the watchers saw the vague outline of an embedded ice-axe, and almost any day now the last grim discovery may be made. Here is the story of that remote and awful tragedy whose last chapter may at last become known.

All Switzerland is watching the lower end of the famous Glacier de Bossons for the remaining six members of the Corkindale-Bean expedition, who, for fifty-five years, have been travelling slowly with the vast ice-mass towards the valley below Mont Blanc.

It is hoped that upon these bodies, which will have, even after the lapse of over half a century, every appearance of life and perfect preservation, will be found the full story of the disaster which overtook the intrepid party on their way back after conquering the giant snow-clad peak.

Something is already known of that catastrophe. The body of Dr. Bean was recovered, and upon it was found a poignant diary describing the coming of death on the blizzard-swept heights above Chamonix.

One entry, addressed to the doctor's wife, ran:

September 7, Evening.

My Dear Bessie,—We have been two days upon Mont Blanc in the midst of a terrible tempest of snow. We have lost our way, and we are in a hole dug in the snow at a height of 15,000 feet. I have no hope of descending.

Perhaps this notebook will be found and sent to you. We have nothing to eat. My feet are already frozen, and I am exhausted. I have only the power to write a few words. I die in the faith of God and in thoughts of love for you.—Yours for ever,

This last communication from a man doomed to spend years frozen in the heart of a glacier is scrawled in a shaky hand—the hand of a slowly freezing man. Since then the funeral march on the ice fields, with its freight of dead men, has been moving towards the valley of Chamonix at the rate of 500 feet a year.

Whether the five guides and the remaining members of the party are now to be recovered, and whether upon these stiff bodies will be found the story of their end, may be known within a few days.

Forty years ago the relics of the Hamel Expedition were found in the lower end of this same great ice mass.

Dr. Hamel was a Russian naturalist. He set out in the face of every sort of warning from experienced Swiss guides who foresaw dirty weather. Eight guides unwillingly followed him.

At 600 feet above the Grand Crevasse the feet of the roped file of climbers started an avalanche of new snow. The whole party were engulfed under 200 feet of snow and swept into a crevasse of the glacier.

The bodies of these men and their notebooks were all given up by the glacier.

In 1864, two Austrian counts, accompanied by Swiss guides, set out to master the peak. They reached the summit, but on their way down, while crossing an ice bridge over the Grand Crevasse, the snow gave way, and they were precipitated into the yawning depths below.

For 20 years after this fatality there lived at Chamonix a widow in deepest mourning. She never spoke to any of her fellow-guests in her hotel. And every day she went to the edge of the village from where she could contemplate the majestic peak, which had snatched from her life's happiness.

The unhappy countess lived for one event—the recovery of her husband's body from the ice. She spent thousands on watchers, whose task it was to explore the vast glacier depths for signs of the dead man. But he was never found, and now his widow rests in the little cemetery of Chamonix.

No less tragic was the fate of the party which set out in the same year as the ill-fated Corkindale-Bean Expedition. It consisted of a Mr. and Mrs. Marks and a Miss Wilkinson, and a number of guides.

The party were nearing the summit when Miss Wilkinson became exhausted. Two guides were detailed to return with her. A few minutes after the party had separated, wild shrieks were heard. Mr. and Mrs. Marks and their guides hurried back. The other party had disappeared through a hole in the snow.

They were seen 50 feet below on a ledge of ice, battered, but alive. But when the ropes were lowered to them, they were found to be just a few feet too short.

Nothing remained to be done but to leave the prisoners and hurry back to Chamonix for a relief party. This was done. But when the relief party returned, there was no sign of the woman or her companions. The ice had engulfed them.

Reading the above, I was reminded of a novel called, I think, "La Mort Blanche," which I read when at college at Yverdon in my young days and which then made a very deep impression upon me, especially as soon afterwards our holiday trip took us across the Alps right into Italy, via Tosa-falls, and in traversing some glaciers, I then gained for the first time some faint idea of the dangers lurking there. Does any reader remember that novel and its author?

Now for some lighter reading: In *Answers* (July 11th) I find the following delightful description—

Ambling Among the Alps.

The drawback to Switzerland is that it's too up and down to suit me. I hate walking on the sides of my feet, because it causes corns and what not. That's why I think Switzerland and Holland ought to amalgamate and strike an average.

All the same, I didn't have half a bad time in Switzerland.

I loved to go out in the mornings and hear the mountaineers yodelling to one another, though it used to bring tears to my eyes when I thought of the Shoreditch Empire, where the yodelling was done so much better.

Yodelling is easy—when you know how. Here's the tip. Get four or five dried or parched peats. Swallow them, and just as they are getting past the gullet, halt, and unswallow them until they rest evenly on the tonsils. Then make a noise like a man gargling.

The result is so close to the genuine Swiss article that the Alpine cows will come hopping down to the valleys to be milked when they hear it, and then get frightfully cross at being deceived.

The glaciers, too, were fine. By the way, did you ever hear of the job of glacier watching? It's one of the favourite professions in Switzerland. Well, I suppose it's as good an excuse for doing nothing as any other.

I seriously thought of getting a job watching a glacier myself. It's not very difficult. A glacier moves so slowly that, even if you took a week and your eyes off, you'd soon catch up with it.

But I found that I was ineligible. The United Society of Glacier Watchers only admit a few apprentices each year, and then you have to be descended from glacier watchers for two generations on both sides.

I was barred out. The nearest I could come to this was a second cousin of my aunt, who was a clock-watcher. Still, it's a nice occupation, if rather apt to cause chilblains. It's the sort of job which would help you to grow old gracefully.

That reminds me of an interesting interview I had with a fascinating but frightfully aged lady, who said she'd occupied the same cottage, man and boy, for ninety years or so.

"You'll never guess who I am," said she.

"Too true," said I. "Who are you?"

"I'm the girl out of 'Excelsior'."

"What pub is that?"

"It's not a pub," said she, with a dash of hauteur. "You remember the poem 'Excelsior'?"

"A bit of it," said I.

"Well, you remember the maiden who spoke to the young man with the banner and asked him to stay and not to be such a silly ass as to do mountain climbing on a night like that. I'm the girl."

"Go on?"

"Yes, indeed. I was awfully sorry for the lad. A handsome fellow, too. Like you."

"Never."

"Yes, indeed. And I was a bit of a peache-rino myself at the time. But I couldn't get the young man to take good advice. I suppose he was doing it for a bet. I've kept one souvenir of the affair."

She went to an old oak chest and brought out a tiny box containing a little bit of cloth, with the letters "EXC" on it.

"That's the first bit of 'Excelsior' that was on his banner, poor misguided boy!" said she. And the tears flowed like anything.

I withdrew softly. Things were getting too damp for my liking.

Would you believe it? The next day I came across another old girl, who told me the same tale and produced another bit of cloth with "EXC" on it. She also was the maiden in "Excelsior." I thought to myself that, if her present-appearance was any guide to what she was like when the young man passed, I could understand his keeping on. I myself, in the circumstances, would have scaled Mont Blanc sooner than stop.

That was bad enough, but when three more old dames on different occasions claimed to be

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the self-same heroine, I lost interest and came to the conclusion that the youth was nothing more than a flirt.

Of course, I went on a mountain-climbing stunt. Fool that I was!

At three in the morning, just as I was getting into my stride with my beauty sleep, I was awakened by a battering on the door of my room, and some basso profundo shouted out that the party was starting.

I jumped out of bed, chucked my clothes on and wandered outside to where a bunch of sleepy, shivering people were being roped together like a daisy chain.

I was last but one, and after me came a battered-looking guide who claimed to have been present at more fatal accidents in the Alps than any other two men in Switzerland. Dismal-looking old bird he was, too.

Well, we started off climbing, and went on climbing. Then we continued climbing. After a couple of hours, just when I had got used to having all the skin off my knees and elbows, we stopped to see the sun rise.

It did, without anybody interfering, and we went on and on, and up and up, until we got to the top of the Uri Horn. Only on two occasions was the party in danger, and then I had my knife ready to cut the rope, so that one at least might be saved—I mean me.

The view from the summit would have been awe-inspiring only for the fact that you couldn't see anything owing to the clouds. So we came down again, and, after four hours, I arrived at the hotel, with my spinal column two inches out of true and every bone in my body aching.

Still, I was all right a week later, and, as I told the landlord, all they need to do is to install a moving staircase, and I'll tackle Mont Blanc itself with one hand tied behind my back.

Next I wanted to go chamois-hunting, because I hadn't a decent pair of yellow gloves; but another resident told me that there was only one genuine chamois in the country, and he was trained to leap from crag to crag whenever English visitors appeared. He was a sort of Civil Servant, in fact, and there'd be a fine of a thousand pounds or so for the chap that shot him.

So I thought I wouldn't, and soon was making tracks for Italy.

And, the reading becoming lighter still and more appropriate, perhaps, for the holiday season, just read the following from the *Manchester Guardian* (9th July):—

The authorities of an old church in Switzerland decided to make some repairs to its interior furnishings, and employed an artist to touch up a large painting. When the artist presented his bill, the committee refused to pay it unless the details were specified. The next day the bill was presented itemized as follows:

	Francs
For correcting the Ten Commandments, embellishing Pontius Pilate, and putting new ribbons in his hat	8
Putting tail on rooster of St. Peter and mending his comb	4
Repluming and gilding left wing of Guardian Angel	6
Washing High Priest's servant	5
Renewing heaven, adjusting the stars, and cleaning up the moon	7
Brightening up the flames of Hell, putting new tail on the Devil, mending his hoof, and doing several odd jobs for the damned	12
Touching up purgatory and restoring lost souls	7
Mending the shirt of the Prodigal Son	3
	52
Francs	52

A Peak Conquered.

Daily Mail (13th July):—

A Chamonix telegram says that the Doigt de Letala, which hitherto has resisted all efforts, has been scaled by a local guide, Couttet Champion. The Doigt de Letala is a peak nearly 10,000 feet high. The summit forms a perpendicular monolith of 150 feet, which overhangs in several places.

At eight o'clock on Saturday morning a party led by Couttet Champion and Couttet Mousoux

reached the foot of the couloir, where they left their equipment.

From a distance of 50 feet Champion landed a noose over the highest point. Assisted by his companions, Champion reached his goal at four in the afternoon, just in time to plant a small flag before a storm of hail and snow drove the intrepid party to shelter.

I daresay there are lots of peaks to be conquered still in Switzerland. Some are not very high, but extremely difficult. I have heard it said also that there are some such peaks in England, notably in Cumberland, peaks which have defied the climbers so far.

Meanwhile, our Geneva compatriots seem to have found a way out of the difficulty which arose when the Federal Law concerning gambling rooms came into force. The *Daily News* (20th July) says:—

A New Game.

A new game is being introduced into Swiss karsaals which may do something to make up for the loss occasioned by the suppression of gaming tables. As it is a game of skill, it does not fall under the new anti-gambling law.

It consists of a moving disc marked in sections. When a section marked with his number passes, a player presses an electric button, letting fall an arrow fixed above. The object is to strike exactly the line of the section. Any player succeeding in doing this receives seven times the amount—one franc—paid, but success is rare.

The rarer the success, the better for the purse! One soon gives it up if one has no luck, but when initial luck favours (3) the player, then he is apt to lose quite a lot. That, anyhow, is my own experience. Walking into the Interlaken Karsaal last year, on the occasion of the last ball of the season, I put a franc on the 40 chance of one of those funny gambling machines and got the 40 frs. by return. A bottle of fizz took half or more and more than half again was spent in trying to coax another winner out of that machine! On another occasion, Mrs. 'Kyburg' and self were very lucky one evening at roulette at Montreux, playing on a simple "system" we had discovered ourselves. Even the croupier began to know us! Next evening, during the half-hour's play, the winnings of the preceding night went and as much again of capital! A good lesson, and it would not have been so bad if the first evening's winnings had not meanwhile been invested in a costume for Mrs. 'Kyburg'! Therefore, ye readers and potential gamblers, take it from me: Initial luck is bad for the constitution of one's purse!

How they deal with the Speed-limit Question in Berne.

Motor (14th July):—

That it pays better at times to protest against injustice than to lie down to be kicked is strikingly shown in the case of the Canton of Berne, in Switzerland. Last year, as may be remembered, as a result of the constant persecution and prosecution of motorists, the Swiss Automobile Club called a boycott on the canton in question. This influenced the authorities to such an extent that they revised their methods, con-

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