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National Zeitung.

NOTES AND GLEANINGS.

Arnold Böcklin.

It is remarkable how superficially the majority of English writers will deal with established data when touching on matters of general interest on the Continent. Recently the centenary occurred of Böcklin's birth and the event was fitly but quietly celebrated in art circles at home. The matter was hardly of sufficient topical interest for the English Press to refer to it, but the *Evening Standard* (Oct. 21st) contains a choice morsel on the subject which we reproduce herewith:—

"This week Germany has been celebrating the hundredth anniversary of the birth of Arnold Böcklin, the German landscape painter, whose Toteninsel is to be found in reproductions in nearly every home in Central Europe.

This "Island of the Dead," by the way, is not a mere fantasy, but is a picture of the beautiful island near Corfu. Böcklin had as hard a struggle to overcome the ring of art critics in Germany as Wagner had in music. His success came late in life, but, when it came, it was in the fullest measure.

Like Leonardo da Vinci, Böcklin was intensely interested in flying, and built several flying machines, the first as far back as 1856. None of these machines had any success, but one model, constructed in 1883, was very similar in construction to the first biplanes.

Wherever the writer of the "Londoner's Diary" got his cue from it is evident he has gone very much astray. He is equally at sea whether he means to convey that Böcklin painted "German" landscapes or was a German by birth or nationality. With the exception of a few allegorical and personal subjects, practically all the works of the great painter are inspired by impressions gained in the Southern part of Europe. As to his origin, we beg to inform our contemporary that Böcklin descends from an old Swiss family domiciled in Beggingen in the canton of Schaffhausen and known in the local vernacular as "Böckli." Conditions of existence in that isolated village were extremely hard and the great-grandfather emigrated with his family to Basle, where, after another two generations, Arnold Böcklin was born on the 16th October, 1827. The appreciation of Böcklin's paintings is by no means as universal as the above cutting would indicate. I well remember about 16 or 17 years ago when, during a short stay, I was visiting the Basle museum—which contains a large collection of Böcklins—and when I was pulled away from the contemplation of one of his paintings by an old school friend with the remark that it was considered bad taste to be seen standing in front of it. Even now, to judge from comments we have come across in connection with this centenary in the German Press, opinions are divided, though a well-known publishing firm in Munich has, by its excellent reproductions, contributed much to a popular appreciation of Böcklin's art.

Hidden Art in Ticino Village.

The hamlet of Ponte Capriasca has suddenly leapt into fame through the following report in the *Daily Mail* (Oct. 18th). It is to be hoped that these rare frescoes will attract foreign art students and thereby bring some relief to the poor villagers.

"To be a labourer in the fields and at the same time a Roman Catholic priest in charge of historical paintings valued at between £50,000 and £100,000 is the paradoxical situation of Father Rocchi Battista, curé of the picturesque village of Ponte Capriasca, near Tesserete, in the canton of Ticino, in Switzerland.

One of the most illustrious of the Italian refugees who fled to Ticino to escape the Spanish oppression in Milan more than 400 years ago was Francesco Melzi, an intimate friend and pupil of the great Leonardo da Vinci, and in recognition of the kindness of the people of Capriasca he decorated their churches with frescoes of infinite beauty. Over the altar in the church of St. Ambrosio is a copy of da Vinci's "Last Supper," and experts have described it as "the world's best replica of the world's greatest painting."

Unlike the original in Milan, it is in a state of perfect preservation and remains almost as fresh and vivid as when it was painted.

Although the existence of the art treasures of Capriasca have been known to connoisseurs for some time, they have escaped public attention owing to the village being off the beaten track of tourists.

The interest of the authorities was recently stimulated by the investigations of an English painter, who drew attention to the value of the works, and they are now on the list of Swiss national monuments and cannot be removed.

Melzi's "Last Supper," 20ft. long and 10ft. high, is about two-thirds of the size of the Milan picture, from which it differs slightly in the colouring of the Apostles' robes, and instead of the three windows in the original, Melzi has painted two panels portraying the sacrifice of Isaac and Jesus praying in the Garden of Gethsemane.

According to Father Battista there can be no doubt of the authenticity of the fresco. In 1519 Melzi accompanied da Vinci to St. Cloud, in France, whither the latter had been summoned by King Francis I., and on the death of his friend there took possession of the original cartoons used for the Milan picture. He is believed to have worked direct from these.

Father Battista, whose inadequate stipend of £30 a year obliges him to work his own farm, spends most of his leisure piecing together the chain of evidence to authenticate his treasures. He is a Latin scholar, and during his researches among the village archives has unearthed a Latin document written in 1809 by Antonic Menghelli, the village priest, who put on record the tradition handed down by the oldest inhabitants that when Melzi took refuge in Capriasca in 1522 he begged the inhabitants to procure him the colours to paint a copy of his master's picture.

When some years later he left Capriasca he sent a present to the village priest of a vestment of wonderful texture, dated 1526, which is still used at high ceremonials of the church.

Father Battista told me that a group of Americans who recently visited Capriasca offered £20,000 for the fresco, but although the parish is desperately poor neither this nor the other paintings, which would grace any museum in Europe, are allowed to leave the country."

A League Air-Port.

From the *Daily Express* (Oct. 17th).

"An infringement of Switzerland's neutrality if a League of Nations' airport is built on Swiss territory has created embarrassment for League supporters of the plan by which it was intended that, in case of a threat of war, members of the League could arrive in Geneva with the smallest loss of time.

Construction of an air-port for the League, it has been discovered, might endanger Swiss territorial rights. It was originally proposed that the existing aerodrome at Cointrin might be greatly enlarged so as to meet the League's requirements. This would make it possible for League members, summoned by air in a matter of war or peace, to land at Geneva and be immediately available for a conference.

The airport, however, would also be used for the despatch of military missions to any frontier in Europe where a war might threaten, and jurists who have studied the international law on the point, fear that such use of the aerodrome would constitute a breach of Swiss neutrality.

Issues involved will be submitted to the Swiss Federal Council. Should it be unable to grant the League's request for the use of the aerodrome, it is believed that France will come to the rescue and offer a site on the French side of Geneva. As this is only a few miles distant from Geneva itself it is thus believed that the difficulty would be overcome."

Kidnapped by Fascists.

The latest frontier incident has been reported upon in all the English dailies. Although these incidents which seem to become a fixture arouse considerable indignation the aspect is not as serious as the following version from the *Westminster Gazette* (Oct. 18th) would lead us to believe:—

"When will the Federal Government at last intervene with sufficient energy in Rome to obtain definite reparation for Fascist insults?" ask nearly all the Swiss papers, following a fresh grave incident on the Italo-Swiss frontier.

Last week a Swiss citizen named Manfrini, while working on the bank of the River Ribellasca, near Borgogne, in the Swiss Canton of Ticino, was arrested by Fascist guards and put in gaol at Santa Maria Maggiore, being released after two days' incarceration.

A communiqué from Berne states that after an enquiry made by both Swiss and Italian Customs officials it was established that the arrest took place on Swiss soil, Manfrini being kept in prison though the Fascists were aware that they were in the wrong.

The Lugano paper *Popolo Liberta* writes: "This new incident is most deplorable, being a continuation of various similar incidents. The Swiss population are rightly much alarmed and call for energetic measures."

Some irony is added to the occurrence by the fact that President Motta was at the time spending his holiday on the Italian Riviera.

QUOTATIONS from the SWISS STOCK EXCHANGES.

BONDS.		Oct. 18	Oct. 25	
Confederation 3% 1903	...	80.00	80.00	
5% 1917, VIII Mob. Ln	...	97.25	101.00	
Federal Railways 3½% A—K	...	84.75	84.00	
" " 1924 IV Elect. Ln.	...	101.30	100.75	
SHARES.		Nom	Oct. 18	Oct. 25
Swiss Bank Corporation	...	Frs. 500	823	821
Crédit Suisse	...	500	882	870
Union de Banques Suisses	...	500	740	750
Société pour l'Industrie Chimique	...	1000	2730	2651
Fabrique Chimique ci-dev. Sandoz	...	1000	4382	4200
Soc. Ind. pour la Schappe	...	1000	2860	2810
S.A. Brown Boveri	...	350	572	551
C. F. Bally	...	1000	1307	1290
Nestlé & Anglo-Swiss Cond. Mk. Co.	...	200	818	790
Entreprises Sulzer S.A.	...	1000	1165	1150
Comp. de Navig. n sur le Lac Léman	...	500	530	530
Linoleum A.G. Giubiasco	...	100	159	166
Maschinenfabrik Oerlikon	...	500	740	735

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