

# Notes and gleanings

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## NOTES AND GLEANINGS.

By KYBURG.

## Chamois the Will-o'-the-wisps of the Swiss Alps.

When you come to think of it, how little our beloved Switzerland really is, compared with other countries and when, on the other hand, you read—see below—that there are now some 11,000 Chamois living among our mountains, you may well wonder why it is that one sees them so rarely and sometimes even pays in vain to look through a telescope at rocky walls where these elusive creatures are supposed to appear from time to time.

Says the *Illustrated Sporting & Dramatic News*, 13th July:

The chamois make their Alpine homes among the steepest of rocky cliffs, where they remain the greater part of the year. Hence it is always difficult to get near them. Moreover they are constantly on the look out, and climb with astonishing rapidity to the summit of the rocks. At one time, before the shooting was regulated by the State, the complete disappearance of chamois from the Swiss Alps seemed probable, but since then the Government has created a great reserve among the mountains where the shooting of a chamois at any time of the year is strictly forbidden, while special licenses are granted to shoot them on the other Alps. Skiers frequently have an opportunity of seeing a herd of ten or fifteen head.

There are now over eleven thousand chamois on the Swiss Alps, and no finer shooting is to be had anywhere. Even when the animal is hit the sport is not at an end, for the carcass will often get lodged in some awkward spot, to reach which is sometimes fraught with considerable danger.

## Learning by "Talkie."

The Swiss have ever been in the forefront of advancing civilisation and the "Talkie" is no stranger to them. The *Shields Daily News*, 12th July, has the following:

Talking films as a means of education will be demonstrated at the World Conference of Education Associations which opens at Geneva on July 25. Over 600 delegates, representing non-sectarian educational movements in every part of the world will be present.

"Ever since 'talkies' were introduced their potential value in disseminating knowledge has been realised by educationalists," declares an authority. "Famous lecturers and professors in a few years, will talk from the screen to students in every university in the world instead of being confined to their own small class of pupils at one institution. . ."

The Swiss National Fete which coincides with the conference at Geneva will be included by the delegates in their study of educational methods as well as a series of special demonstrations by Monsieur Jacques Dalcroze, the pioneer of eurhythmics.

Swiss engineering feats have long ceased to surprise but who could fail to be filled with admiration when reading the following wonderful account of

## The Greatest Power Station.

On a recent excursion in the Alps I interviewed one of the leading engineers of the "Grimselwerk," Mr. Stämpfli, and was very kindly shown by him over the premises of what is going to be the biggest power station of the world. Just below the summit of the Grimselpass, the valley of the Aare is being blocked by a dam of concrete with iron reinforcements 248 metres long and 113 metres high. At its base it will be seventy-eight metres thick. With its 340,000 cubic metres of iron and concrete it will be the biggest wall in Europe.

The lake whose pressure it will have to resist will be over three miles in length and half a mile in breadth, and will contain 100,000,000 cubic metres of water. By a three-mile tunnel blown into solid granite, this water is conducted to the Gelmersee, a basin containing another 13,000,000 cubic metres. It will fall 540 metres, which is nearly half the height of Snowdon, on four turbines, each of 30,000 horse-power, and be conducted through another tunnel of nearly five miles to a power station producing 88,000 horse-power; and thence through another three-mile tunnel to the third power station, producing 52,000 horse-power.

Though there is more water available further down the valley, its efficiency will be reduced because of the lower water column on the turbines, which is 400 metres at the second power station, and 240 at the third, which will be at Innertkirchen. From there the current will be conducted at a tension of 150,000 volts across the Brunigpass, and on to Berne and Bale, the two cities chiefly interested in the undertaking.

But it is not these figures, impressive as they are that amaze one most. It is the bold-

ness of the enterprise which you admire, the intrepidity with which the obstacles have been overcome, and the foresight that has been shown. Practically all the work has to be done far above the last dwelling-places, in a wilderness of granite, where winter reigns for three quarters of the year, and even the Dog Days are liable to heavy snowstorms. The climate permits work for five or six months; it is then carried on continuously, Sundays not excepted.

The 500 workmen are accommodated at the old Grimsel Hospice and the new hotel erected high above the lake. It took three years of preparation before the enormous dam itself could be tackled. For the transportation of materials a railway had to be built from Meiringen to Innertkirchen, which runs in a tunnel parallel to the well-known Aareschlucht, as the gorge itself affords no room for a line. Then the traffic swings on to an iron rope fixed on hundreds of boldly constructed masts enthroned on rocks and promontories. At intervals of 150 yards you watch the three ton cars gliding steadily up their airy course. From the side of the mountain you see the gigantic pipe line descending to the plant at Handeck, where the turbines are now ready to start their work. At its side you see the funicular climbing up the rocks at an angle which seems almost perpendicular. It can carry sixty people up to the Gelmersee at a time. At regular intervals you discover caves high up the slope. These are places where the material taken out of the tunnel was thrown out. There is hardly a turn in the road where you do not find machinery, workshops, barracks.

But the most wonderful view awaits you when you come on to the new road which had to be built 100 feet above the present road, as the latter will be submerged by the reservoir, along with the buildings of the old hospice. Who would expect such giant engine-houses nearly 8,000 feet above sea-level, in the immediate neighbourhood of eternal snow and ice? You see a dozen iron ropes spanning the valley 300 feet above the river. You see the cranes gliding along them and dumping their loads of concrete into kennels in which they rush down on the dam. The workmen down there wear steel helmets and look quite warlike. As there is much fog in the valley the mechanics control the movement of the cranes on a board of indicators.

You follow the double track of a railway line for three miles, which brings you to the very mouth of the Aare Glacier, where the sand and stones are fetched which must be mixed with the cement. It seems a very slender wooden structure indeed on which the 18-ton locomotives cross over right into the engine-house. In the beginning the drivers did not trust it, and the engineers had to stand on the bridge when the first locomotive passed it. Near by you see a sand-hill, now about 200 feet high. I asked my guide what it was for, and was told that it is the material which will be required in the last period of building when the lake will submerge the railway line. This will be in 1931 or 1932. This week the floods of the Aare will be dammed. The river will take about a month to fill the basin up to the present height of the dam, and then the production of electricity can begin.

No wonder that the Grimselpass was favoured by tourists last year! It is certainly one of the most interesting sights in Switzerland to-day. The statistics of the Post Office show that the traffic in June was nearly double the traffic in the same period of last year.

And, isn't it typical of our Homeland that, beside the most wonderful new methods of transport, power and education, to speak of a few only, we also find the most charming and old-fashioned methods of farming.

## Harvesting in the Alps.

I might preface this article, so as to produce the right atmosphere, with a remark about those little heaps of drying hay one sees, for instance, in the Reuss Valley at Altdorf. The hay is piled up on sticks, to give the air plenty of opportunity and from afar these little hay-stacks look exactly like little brown bears standing on their hind-legs with arms outstretched. Do you remember them?

An English harvest is made on such a scale that a sense of festival is almost inevitable.

But it is different in the Swiss Alps. Here are no wide meadows. The hay is carefully garnered from little tilted, odd-shaped plots among the protruding rocks. The scythe is the most capacious mowing-machine, and the sickle is by no means unknown. Fortunately, hay-grass grows thick where it grows at all. By night drenched in wet mist, and by day exposed to the rays of a brilliant sun, it is small wonder that almost before the last of the snows has left the meadows the diminutive fields are encouraging the farmers to think about harvesting arrangements.

The greater difference between Alpine and British harvesting occurs immediately after the

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reaping. Under the scorching sun the mown grass lies drying. Two or three days at most and it would be ready for storing, or would be, that is to say, but for those drenching mists that envelope the mountains each night. Each evening, therefore, the peasants bring out huge sheets, laboriously make them up into enormous bags by tying the four corners together, and inside place the drying grass.

As each bag is made up it is hoisted on to the back of a peasant, who carries it to a neighbouring chalet, where it will be free from the night mist. In the morning it is brought forth again, spread in the hot sun, and the process is repeated until the drying is complete. Sometimes this is a long job—as, for instance, when a sudden storm surprises the half-dried hay as it is spread out.

But no one who has seen the peasants making their way across the hillside beneath the enormous bags of hay is likely to forget it. One is reminded of Atlas. And after all, why not? Is not the toiling peasant shouldering the troubles of his own little world? In any case, one must respect his patient industry in face of unpromising conditions.

#### President Hoover of Swiss Stock.

Observer, 14th July.

It has been generally supposed that the name Hoover was an Americanised form of the frequently occurring German name Huber. The papers now bring the news that the "Amerikanische Schweizer Zeitung" has received a letter from the White House to the effect that Mr. Hoover's old country is the Canton of Berne, and that his ancestors have been traced back to one Johann Heinrich Huber, a linen weaver.

This possibility had already been pointed out by the Swiss American Historical Society; since the beginning of the eighteenth century the Canton of Berne had systematically and officially encouraged the emigration to America, and numerous families had settled in Pennsylvania, where they form a sect known as the Swiss Mennonites.

Well, well, I have always said, with my usual modesty, that if you want a really good man. . . . (that will do.—Ed.).

#### DICKENS ON SWITZERLAND.

As is known, Charles Dickens spent many months of his life in Switzerland in a small house near Lausanne, where he worked at some of his novels. He had a good many kindly and some amusing words to say about our country and our people, as the following quotations from Forster's "Life of Charles Dickens," his great and intimate friend, will show:

Of the ordinary Swiss people he formed from the first a high opinion which everything during his stay among them confirmed. He thought it the greatest injustice to call them "the Americans of the Continent." In his first letters he said of the peasantry all about Lausanne that they were as pleasant a people as need be. He never passed, on any of the roads, man, woman, or child, without a salutation; and anything churlish or disagreeable he never noticed in them. "They have not," he continued, "the sweetness and grace of the Italians, or the agreeable manners of the better specimens of French peasantry, but they are admirably educated (the schools of this canton are extraordinarily good, in every little village), and always prepared to give a civil and a pleasant answer. There is no greater mistake. I was talking to my landlord, who was 18 years in the English navy, about it the other day, and he said he could not conceive how it had ever arisen, but that when he returned from his eighteen years' service in the English navy he shunned the people and had no interest in them until they gradually forced their real character upon his observation. We have a cook and a coachman here, taken at hazard from the people of the town; and I never saw more obliging servants, or people who did their work so truly with a will. And in point of cleanliness, order, and punctuality to the moment, they are unrivalled. . . ."

"One of the farmer's people—a sister, I think—was married from here the other day. The fondness of the Swiss for gunpowder on interesting occasions, is one of the drollest things. For three days before, the farmer himself, in the midst of his various agricultural duties, plunged out of a little door near my windows, about once in every hour, and fired off a rifle. I thought he was shooting rats who were spoiling the vines; but he was merely relieving his mind, it seemed, on the subject of the approaching nuptials. All night afterwards, he and a small circle of friends kept perpetually letting off guns under the casement of the bridal chamber. A Bride is always dressed here, in black silk; but this bride wore merino of that colour, observing to her mother when she bought

#### THE PORT OF BASLE AND RHINE NAVIGATION.

The Port Authorities of Basle have chosen a favourable moment to publish a historical sketch of the navigation on the Rhine to Switzerland, since the beginning of the Great War. The authors pay special attention to all questions relating to the improvement of navigation conditions and examine at length the efforts which have been made by the authorities of Basle and of other Swiss localities, in view of enlarging the Rhine harbours as well as perfecting the existing methods of unloading goods from water to rail. At present the Company has at its disposal: a Wharf-length of 2,100 meters, 18 cranes, 8 pneumatic grain unloaders, and 14.5 kilometers rail. In addition, vast storehouses, grain pits, benzine and petroleum tanks are ready to receive large supplies. The cost of all these installations came to 18 million francs. Further, the activity of several private enterprises should not be overlooked; in fact, there exist at present in Basle five private shipping concerns.

The Swiss Rhine fleet is composed as follows: 4 paddle steamers, 1 screw steamer; 4 screw motor boats, 6 freight motor boats, 108 Rhine barges with a carrying power of 121,052 tons and finally 1 crane ship. The Rhine Steamship and unloading Companies established in the Rhine harbours dispose of a share capital of 22 million francs. The harbour buildings, wharfs and docks belonging to these companies are insured for a value of 10.3 million francs. The capital invested in the various constructions and ships amounts to a total of 30 million francs. Aside from the staff belonging to the public administration, 1,000 to 1,200 persons are occupied in the Swiss Rhine navigation.

Important quantities of the following goods are transported by waterway to Basle: coal, iron, bar, clay, oil, benzine, grain, and chemical raw materials. The import of phosphates and wood recently attained a far higher proportion than formerly. The following statistics throw light on the total traffic by water way to Basle, but it is necessary to add that the year 1923 cannot serve as a comparison for, owing to the occupation of the Ruhr district, the Rhine navigation practically came to a standstill; 1925 was also an ex-

ceedingly bad year on account of the unfavourable water level.

	Up-Stream Navigation			
	Coal and Coke tons	Grain tons	Chemicals tons	Liquid Fuel tons
1913 .....	23,497	599	7,099	—
1914 .....	23,619	5,377	8,678	—
1922 .....	54,997	57,315	2,658	—
1923 .....	5,264	11,552	748	8,564
1924 .....	65,807	104,335	4,059	10,914
1925 .....	19,966	19,810	1,075	5,732
1926 .....	75,028	115,029	5,379	19,641
1927 .....	231,370	262,093	39,239	48,132

#### THE KEMBS POWER STATION.

What is destined to be the greatest hydraulic power station in Europe is now in course of construction at Kembs on the Rhine about 5 km downstream from Basle. France has been given the right to construct the new station on the understanding that she constructs at the same time a lateral canal which will enable Rhine shipping to be carried on without impediment. The canal will begin in the neighbourhood of Village-Neuf in Alsace and the banks will be so constructed that, at a mean depth of 10 metres in the canal, the available surface breadth will be 120 metres. If the rapidity of the current is 70 centimetres per second the volume of water passing through the canal will be 850 cubic metres per second.

Three km. downstream the canal will widen out until it is almost twice as wide as the Rhine itself and it will have this width for about 1.8 km. until it reaches the sluices and turbine house situated about 4.8 km. downstream from where the canal leaves the Rhine bed. Here a dam or wall 800 metres long, will divide the canal into two streams, the narrower of which will lead the water to the gigantic sluices while the wider arm will be utilised for the production of hydraulic power. The two sluices mentioned will measure respectively 100 and 180 metres in length, and each will allow of a whole chain of barges being towed through within 30 minutes.

The water which passes through the arm for the production of electric current will be 12 metres higher than the lower section or the level of the Rhine itself, and this water will pass through five turbines and produce 165,000 h.p.

showed him to be so far right. "P.S. 6 o'clock afternoon. The fête going on, in great force. Not one of 'the old party' to be seen: I went down with one to the ground before dinner, and nothing would induce him to go within the barrier with me. Yet what they call a revolution was nothing but a change of government. Thirty-six thousand people, in this small canton petitioned against the Jesuits—God knows—with good reason. The Government chose to call them 'a mob.' So, to prove that they were not, they turned the Government out. I honour them for it. They are a genuine people the Swiss. There is better metal in them than in all the stars and stripes of all the fustian banners of the so-called, and falsely-called, United States. They are a thorn in the sides of European despots, and a good wholesome people to live near Jesuit-ridden kings on the brighter side of the mountains." "P.P.S. August 10th. . . . The fête went off as quietly as I supposed it would; and they danced all night." . . .

The close of the letter (25th of July), mentioning two pieces of local news, gives intimation of the dangers incident to all Swiss travelling, and of such special precautions as were necessary for the holiday among the mountains he was now about to take. "My first news is that a crocodile is said to have escaped from the Zoological gardens at Geneva, and to be now 'zigzag-zigging' about the lake. But I can't make out whether this is a great fact, or whether it is a pious fraud to prevent too much bathing and liability to accidents. The other piece of news is more serious. An English family whose name I don't know, consisting of a father, mother, and daughter, arrived at the hotel Gibbon here last Monday, and started off on some mountain expedition in one of the carriages of the country. It was a mere track, the road, and ought to have been travelled only by mules, but the Englishman persisted (as Englishmen do) in going on in the carriage; and in answer to all the representations of the driver that no carriage had ever gone up there, said he needn't be afraid he wasn't going to be paid for it, and so forth. Accordingly, the coachman got down and walked by the horses' heads. It was fiery hot; and, after much tugging and rearing, the horses began to back, and went down bodily, carriage and all, into a deep ravine. The mother was killed on the spot; and the father and daughter are lying at some house hard by, not expected to recover." . . .

Mont Blanc, and the Valley of Chamonix, and the Mer de Glace, and all the wonders of that most wonderful place, are above and beyond one's wildest expectations. I cannot imagine anything in nature more stupendous or sublime. If I were to write about it now, I should quite rave—such prodigious impressions are rampant within me. . .

it (the old lady is 82, and works on the farm), 'You know, mother, I am sure to want mourning for you, soon; and the same gown will do.' " . . .

As for the country, it cannot be praised too highly, or reported too beautiful. There are no great waterfalls, or walks through mountain-gorges, close at hand, as in some other parts of Switzerland; but there is a charming variety of enchanting scenery. There is the shore of the lake, where you may dip your feet, as you walk, in the deep blue water, if you choose. There are the hills to climb up, leading to the great heights above the town; or to stagger down, leading to the lake. There is every possible variety of deep green lanes, vineyard, cornfield, pasture-land and wood. There are excellent country roads that might be in Kent or Devonshire; and, closing up every view and vista, is an eternally changing range of prodigious mountains—sometimes red, sometimes grey, sometimes purple, sometimes black, sometimes white with snow; sometimes close at hand; and sometimes very ghosts in the clouds and mist." . . .

On the ninth of August he wrote to me that there was to be a prodigious fête that day in Lausanne, in honour of the first anniversary of the proclamation of the New Constitution: "beginning at sunrise with the firing of great guns and twice two thousand rounds of rifles by two thousand men; proceeding at eleven o'clock with a great service, and some speechifying, in the church; and ending to-night with a great ball in the public promenade, and a general illumination of the town." The authorities had invited him to a place of honour in the ceremony; and though he did not go ("having been up till three o'clock in the morning, and being fast asleep at the appointed time"), the reply that sent his thanks expressed also his sympathy. He was the reader, with this from having discovered, in the "old" or "gentlemanly" party of the place ("including of course the sprinkling of English who are always tory, hang 'em!"), so wonderfully sore a feeling about the revolution thus celebrated, that to avoid its fête the majority had gone off by steamer the day before, and those who remained were prophesying assaults on the unilluminated houses, and other excesses. Dickens had no faith in such predictions. "The people are as perfectly good-tempered and quiet always, as people can be. I don't know what the last Government may have been, but they seem to me to do very well with this, and to be rationally and cheaply provided for. If you believe what the discontented assert, you wouldn't believe in one solitary man or woman with a grain of goodness or civility. I find nothing but civility; and I walk about in all sorts of out-of-the-way places, where they live rough lives enough, in solitary cottages." The issue was told in two postscripts to his letter, and