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HOME NEWS



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FEDERAL.

SWITZERLAND IN A DAY.

The daylight services from London to Basle on Wednesdays and Saturdays at 9 a.m., and due in Basle at 10.43 p.m., have been greatly appreciated this summer by visitors desirous of avoiding night travel. The interesting town of Basle has also been a gainer by the services, as passengers by them spend at least one night there before going on to their destination in the Alpine districts. The last departure for this season are September 12th from London and the 13th from Basle.

NEW ELECTRIFICATION.

Plans are reported to be under consideration for the electrification of the mountain railway between Alpnachstadt, near Lucerne, to the summit of Mont Pilatus. The line, which has been operated by steam locomotives since its construction in 1886-88, starts at a level of 1,443 ft. above the sea and rises to a height of 6,789 ft. The steam trains occupy 75 minutes for the journey, including stops for water, and it is estimated that by the adoption of electric traction this could be reduced to 33 minutes. Plans are also under consideration for the electrification of the local railway between Waldenburg and Liestal at an estimated cost of about £45,000.

E.R.

DISASTROUS ALPINE SEASON.

This year's climbing season in the Alps will assuredly rank as one of the most disastrous on record. Already the total number of fatal accidents is close upon 100.

No wonder the Swiss papers are issuing warnings to tourists against attempting mountain ascents under present conditions. Many English climbers who arrived in Switzerland at the beginning of the month and engaged guides for high ascents have had to be content with minor excursions and what is known as training climbs.

The mountain hotels have been rapidly emptying as a result of the inclement weather and also owing to the intense cold and the mists which shroud the peaks. Throughout the month and part of last month hotels, even in the lower Alps, have had to put on their central heating.

THE SWISS MINISTERS AT HOME.

Our diplomatic representatives abroad arrived at Berne for the usual annual conference; the meeting terminates with an excursion to Attisholz.

TOURIST TRAFFIC.

The economic depression and the unfavourable weather conditions are reflected by the reports from the different tourist centres. This also has its effect on the seasonal traffic of the Swiss Federal Railways and the auxiliary services. The gross takings of the railways in July amounted to 36.6 million francs (39.3 in 1930), the travelling public being responsible for a falling-off of 1½ million francs.

On the other hand the "Swiss Hotel Revue" states that a slightly larger contingent of visitors has arrived this summer from England, France, Holland and Scandinavia.

LOAN TO WARSAW.

A note which appeared in our last number to the effect that the Saurer Works at Arbon have made a loan to the town of Warsaw has since been contradicted.

NEW GARRISON TOWN.

The Federal Council is studying the matter, whether to declare Sursee as a garrison town.

SWISS PARLIAMENT.

The autumn Session of the two Chambers will begin on the 14th September.

LOCAL.

ZURICH.

According to a return for 1930 by the municipal treasury there resided 413 millionaires in the town (406 in 1929). About 15,000 citizens pay no taxes their income being below the minimum. No less than 13% of the taxpayers are regularly prosecuted for payment of their dues.

Prof. W. Johannes Häne, for thirty years lecturer on history at the Zurich schools, died at the age of 69.

In the by-election for a member of the Stadtrat the liberal candidate, Dr. Hefti, was returned with 11,294 votes, his two opponents Dr. Maag (Democrat) and M. Müller (Communist), obtaining 7,023 and 2,878 votes respectively.

BASLE.

Mixed bathing in the modern Gartenbad, recently opened at Eglisee, has raised a storm in the otherwise tranquil town of Basle.

The Education Authorities, justly proud of the new local institution, have decreed that attendance at certain hours shall be obligatory on all school children. The local priests and a number of parents have, in consequence, strongly protested against this regulation.

The parents in question first petitioned the authorities to make attendance at the Gartenbad optional, since they objected to their swimming and bathing promiscuously, particularly with adults of both sexes. This action failing in effect, the priests ordered the parents to withhold their children from the baths.

This form of passive resistance, however, has proved most unpopular with the children themselves, who threaten to revolt against their parents and their ecclesiastical mentors.

The matter was eventually brought before the City Council, which has just passed a resolution by 65 to 35 votes to the effect that, since attendance at the mixed baths cannot be considered an offence against freedom of belief and conscience, the State Council be advised not to grant exemption except on grounds of health. The City Council adds that it vigorously opposes all interference of ecclesiastical functionaries in educational matters.

The Gartenbad itself is one of the finest and best equipped in Europe. Besides the swimming baths and diving pool there are gymnastic and sports sections, an extensive "strand" of fine clean sand, large grassy plots, and a wooded park, in which one can wander in the shade.

Around the baths there runs a shallow cemented moat for children too tiny to get into the baths.

The restaurant, buffet, and tea-room are excellent and at prices to suit all purses. The entire institution is kept scrupulously clean and tidy. It has become so popular that as many as 14,000 persons visit it on a single day.

LUCERNE.

It is stated that the City authorities are negotiating to acquire the Wagner-villa at Tribschen where the great composer resided from 1866 to 1872 and created his "Siegfried."

* * *

A fire destroyed the factory of the firm Hunkeler Söhne at the Friedentalstrasse. The damage is estimated to be 30,000 f.

UR.

The cantonal authorities entertained last week the remnants of the old guard who took part in the defence of our frontiers during the Franco-German war in 1870-71. The troupe has shrunk down to 23 veterans; speeches, a banquet and a motor car excursion marked the occasion.

GLARIS.

A serious motor accident happened near Seon when a large car skidded on to the railway track and, in an endeavour to regain the road, overturned. Of the seven occupants the Rev. Jakob Schildknecht, pastor of Glaris, was killed on the spot; his wife, one of the twin boys and the nurse were transported to the cantonal hospital at Aarau where the boy subsequently died. The pastor's mother-in-law and the chauffeur were the only ones who escaped unharmed.

* * *

The "Neue Glarner Zeitung" celebrated the 75th Anniversary of its existence.

BASEL.

M. Franz Baur, a well-known decorative painter has died in Basle. For over 40 years he

attended to the paintwork of the Town Hall, and many of his works in decorative art have become famous.

BERNE.

The 3,000 Rover Scouts from thirty-eight countries who camped together at Kandersteg from July 29th to August 8th have now all returned or are on their way to their own countries. Reports from Kandersteg say that the ground was left in excellent condition and no litter whatever was left behind. The Chief Scout was once asked what Scouts should leave behind after camping and replied, "Nothing but thanks."

At the entrance to the camping ground at Kandersteg it has been decided to erect a handsome gateway, which will be dedicated to the memory of the late Mr. Mortimer Schiff, president of the Boy Scouts of America, whose generous gift made possible the purchase of the land.

Sufficient money for the gateway was spontaneously contributed by the Rover Scouts at the recent moot.

AARAU.

The recent census shows the following population for the principal districts: Aarau 11,666, Baden 10,143, Wettingen 8505, Wohlen 5862 and Zofingen 5563.

ST. GALL.

A popular figure in local politics disappeared last week through the death of Leonhard Kellenberger, at the age of 70, after several years of failing health. A leading and ardent socialist he has been a member of the Grosse Rat uninterruptedly for forty years.

* * *

The Swiss Railway authorities have under consideration a scheme for the erection of a 12,000 kw. power station at Rapperswil.

THURGAU.

The largest "town" in the canton is Frauenfeld with 8,795 inhabitants, then follow Arbon and Kreuzlingen with 8,615 each. Weinfelden with 4,437 is sixth on the list, Sirmach (7,246), Amriswil (6,387) and Romanshorn (6,095) taking precedency.

The family of the late M. Gustav Laager-Müller, paper merchant, has bequeathed an amount of 50,000 f. for charitable purposes, in memory of the deceased.

* * *

The Novaseta, Limited, in Arbon, is about to reopen its factory, which has been idle for almost a year. This concern produces acetate yarn, whereas all the other rayon factories in Switzerland make viscose. The company was formed in 1928 and has a share capital of 5,000,000 Swiss francs (about £200,000).

It is reported that German rayon producers have invited Belgian makers to come into the recently formed rayon syndicate. The only outside makers so far represented in the cartel are Dutch, Italian, and Swiss producers. It is generally assumed that a meeting between the two parties will soon be held. Opinion in Belgium is much divided about the advantages of joining the cartel. The keenest competition in the Belgian home market comes from the Dutch, who are members of the cartel.

GRISON.

At Davos a quaint and charming monument to children has just been set up.

Unlike many monuments, it is most admirably fitted to the subject and sentiments which it was designed to express for, besides being attractive to the eye, it is of practical use, since it incorporates a fountain.

The base of the octagonal tank which receives the water is ornamented with bas reliefs of boys playing at leap-frog and other gymnastic forms of fun, while the central column, from whose base the water flows in four jets, is composed of the figures of four little imps sitting on each other's heads. The fountain stands in a court shaded by trees.

VALAIS.

The local "cause célèbre" has fizzled out through the written admission of states councilor Walpen, the chief of the cantonal military department, that his charges against the late Col. Schmidt were mistaken and based on misleading information. The councillor had stated that in consideration of a personal loan the late Colonel had procured military advancement for Mayor Defayes.

L'ASPECT PITTORESQUE ET LE CHARME DE L'ENGADINE, FOYER DE LA CULTURE ROMANCHE.

A plus de 2,000 m. d'altitude, au pied du Lunginn et de la masse rocheuse de Gravasalvas, baignant un névé et des éboulis, dort un petit lac gris... et le torrent qui s'en échappe deviendra l'Inn qui traversera les lacs de la Haute-Engadine et descendra la vallée de la Basse-Engadine ayant de s'enfuir en Autriche et de mêler ses eaux froides au bleu Danube.

Cette longue vallée qui attire chaque année des milliers de touristes suisses et étrangers a un charme bien particulier, et ceux qui l'ont une fois aimée ne pourront plus l'oublier. De Sent à Maloja, sous les mélèzes et les arolles, on monte graduellement, passant tantôt dans des villages alourdis de grands hôtels, tantôt dans des hameaux tranquilles. La vallée, plus étroite dans sa partie inférieure, s'élargit vers la région des lacs, la plus captivante peut-être de toutes : Saint-Moritz, Campfer, Silvaplana, Sils, Maloja... et de là c'est la descente brusque sur la vallée de Berguel, chaude, méridionale déjà, et protégé par des montagnes hallucinantes aux profils fantastiques, Piz Badile, Piz Disgrazia, etc.

Imposant panorama.

Pour se rendre compte du caractère de la Haute-Engadine il faut la voir à vol d'oiseau, d'un sommet. Les quatre lacs, bleus ouverts, sont séparés par de petites terres basses où se sont élevés les villages blancs rassemblés autour de l'église qui est comme un grand tas de neige, puis les forêts d'aroles et de mélèzes s'élèvent rapidement sur les versants arrondis des montagnes, qui, à bout de souffle, dirait-on, s'arrêtent pour laisser la place aux pentes herbeuses, d'un vert tendre et aux éboulis gris dominés par les glaciers et les arêtes des sommets.

Et, au sud, comme au nord, se creusent de nouvelles vallées latérales et des cols, au nord le Flüela, l'Albulia, le Julier, au sud l'Offenpass, la Bernina, le val de Fex... Partout les paysages, sont charmants, dans les villages, au bord des lacs ou dans les forêts toutes en clairs-obscur, tapissées de roses des alpes et de myrtilles. L'altitude de la Haute-Engadine étant déjà de près de 2,000 mètres, la zone des arbres et des cultures est mince et le domaine de l'Alpe est atteint en quelques heures.

Des maisons typiques.

Les plus belles maisons, et les plus beaux villages, sont dans la Basse-Engadine tandis que les paysages les plus attachants se trouvent dans la haute. Hélas, de nombreux incendies ont détruit déjà les villages qui étaient les plus typiques, Sent et Süs entre autres qui ont été reconstruits avec goût, mais sans pouvoir atteindre naturellement leur beauté primitive. Les maisons sont à peu près du même type, la façade blanche à la chaux, est percée de petites fenêtres enfouies dans le mur et souvent protégées par de belles grilles forgées. Près de la porte, et sur la rue se trouve "Fercker" faisant saillie sur la façade et d'où l'on peut voir tout ce qui se passe sur la route pavée... Des oeillets roses pendent de ces fenêtres et éclatent sur le fond blanc comme la neige. Ces "ercker" portent souvent des moulures ou des armoiries d'une grande beauté et des "scraffitti" ornent la façade, l'embrasure des portes et des fenêtres tandis qu'un fronton, variant de forme de village en village, orne le faîte de la maison. La grange, exposée au midi, aérée par deux grands panneaux, est contiguë à la maison d'habitation qui possède une entrée unique. Cette entrée permet aussi bien aux voitures, aux chars de foin et aux habitants de pénétrer. Sur ce vestibule s'ouvrent les portes des chambres et de la grange. Les pièces sont peu éclairées, elles sont boisées d'arole bruni qui dégage une odeur particulière. De vieux bahuts sculptés, de grands poêles et des lits monumetaux ornent.

L'amour du sol natal.

La population de l'Engadine est fortement attachée à son sol. Mais, comme la vallée est relativement pauvre, que le sol est ingrat, l'hiver long et l'industrie à peu près nulle, des centaines de jeunes gens doivent s'expatrier chaque année. Beaucoup d'entre eux ont occupé ou occupent encore des situations en vue dans le commerce, l'hôtellerie et l'industrie du monde entier, et en Italie particulièrement. Mais pour tout cela ils n'oublient pas leurs montagnes et, dès qu'ils le peuvent, ils viennent passer leurs vacances au pays, dans les vieilles demeures familiales fermées une grande partie de l'année. Leur amour du sol natal se traduit, entre autres, par leur attachement au romanche, cette langue mélodieuse faisant penser à la fois au latin et au vieux français. Le romanche, heureusement, n'est pas en voie de disparaire. Il est vrai qu'en Haute-Engadine particulièrement il subit des attaques et que l'allemand s'implante de plus en plus, ce qui est regrettable. Le romanche, parlé par 40,000 personnes, n'est pas uniforme dans toutes les régions ; il y a cinq dialectes présentant certaines différences. Toutefois, grâce aux efforts qui ont été faits, grâce surtout à l'enseignement scolaire, le romanche garde toute sa valeur.

Parmi les défenseurs de cette belle langue — qui n'est pas un patois — il faut citer le grand poète M. Peider Lansel, de Sent, industriel et consul de Suisse à Livourne, qui a de nombreux amis à Genève, et qui, infatigablement, défend tout ce qui fait le charme de l'Engadine. Auteur de plusieurs livres en romanche, M. Lansel est connu et estimé dans toute la vallée où il aime à revenir avec sa famille chaque année.

Les sommets de l'Engadine sont fort intéressants. Le groupe de la Bernina, avec les pics Palü, Morteratsch, Roseg, etc., les pics Basile et Disgrazia, dans le val Berguel et que l'on fait depuis la cabane de Forno, attirent de nombreux alpinistes. D'autres sommets les pics Julier, Golvatsch, Polachin, la Margna sont plus faciles à gravir mais sont des points de vue qui valent la Bernina. Et si les grands hôtels de l'Engadine attirent une clientèle disparate, brillante ou bruyante, et si les orchestres jouent une partie de la nuit dans de fastueux salons, on peut trouver sur les montagnes une joie infiniment plus grande.

J.-E. Chable.

TWO ALPINE SEASONS.

Memories of mountains hover round the armchair before many a fireside. It is from these reminiscences as much as from the actual moments of action and ease on the hills that the mountaineer derives his philosophy; not merely an ordered system of climbing procedure, nor only a satisfaction in deeds well accomplished, but "a feeling and a love" which is the very essence of mountain happiness. This ardent pleasure is present, of course, in difficult ascents, but not less present, though in a different form, in lesser achievements.

Towards the end of August 1929 I arrived in Zermatt to climb with Hans Brantschen of St. Niklaus, one of the finest of Alpine guides. Our programme which was to be compressed into ten days was somewhat ambitious, as programmes often are before the weather censors them. On the evening after our arrival we tramped up for an hour and a half to the Trift Hotel in heavy mist, and descended next morning in flickering snow. It was a sad start to our mountain quests and two of our valuable days were lost. One more day was spent in going to the Fluh Alp Inn, a crazy building in a green pasture, again without much hope. Hans, however, had ambitious plans and declared that we would ascend the Rimpfischhorn and descend by the North Ridge. Next morning we started at 3.30 under a heavy cloud, and ascended the rough and ready path to a little col. Here the pillar of cloud changed to a pillar of fire and hearts rose as the dawn informed the billowing vapours with its incomparable colour.

A fierce wind drove across our path and sent the new snow scurrying down the slopes, and only during a brief breakfast in the shelter of the rocks did we fully realise the promise of the day. In a few minutes we had left the drifted snow and passed the summit, and stood on the tapering arête. Details of the climb are lost in the gusts of wind and the excitement and freedom of airy positions. But at 9 o'clock we reached an unexpected broad ledge with a ten-foot wall between us and the wind, there to idle away one of the unforgettable alpine half-hours. To our left the grand ridge of the Täschhorn and Dom mounted into the sky; far away in a little valley, as it seemed, there were the dull, green waters of the Lago Maggiore; opposite and above, the snow peaks of Monte Rosa rose into towers. There was magic in those moments and in the cleanliness and grandeur of all around us. Here were Life, Joy, Empire, and Victory. We passed on at length, and ended the ridge with a Cumberland chimney preceded by an awkward traverse; and then riotously glissaded down snow slopes for an unbroken twelve minutes to the Allalin Pass. The difficulties were over, and the heart of man was refreshed for further exploits. At 2.45 we arrived down the long valley at the inn on Täsch Alp; a family of marmots at play was our only distraction on the way.

Next morning we set out under a cloudless sky at 1.45 a.m. At an early stage it was obvious that Hans was suffering from sickness, and it was with some anxiety that I contemplated our project for the day, the ascent of the Mischabelgrat of the Täschhorn and the traverse to the Dom. But not for an instant during a very long and arduous climb did he falter, beyond one or two extra halts. No greater tribute can be paid to his immense reserve and complete reliability under trying circumstances. My first memory is that of a plunging icefall which Hans led through by seemingly hopeless approaches without a false step. Great indeed is the gap between the technique of a good guide and all but the very best of amateurs. At 5.30 we breakfasted on a charming little col between the two arms of the glacier, and after a steepening climb over snow and rock we arrived on the main ridge. From here up to the final pyramid the going was heavy, over rocks laced together by narrowed snow ribbons, and a steep plunge through a white froth of snow. At the base we gazed for a few moments

at the terrific South face, only once ascended, and then by a miracle of skill and courage on the part of Franz Lochmatter. It is a head which seems eternally nodding or frowning over the white tresses of glacier below. There is something sinister and forbidding in the bare yellow wall of rock, scarred by two slender couloirs. We crept like silent flies up the final pyramid, by snow steps where snow rested, and by sun-warmed rocks. Below the summit we breakfasted a second time. It was now 9 o'clock; we had been already seven hours on our way, and the traverse yet remained. What had before been heavy work now became difficult as well. The narrow arête was covered by a shaky crust of snow, nearly all of which had to be swept away before holds were visible. The glare became more puzzling, and there was little time to seek relief from the green valleys of Saas and Zermatt far down below. The next step, and then the next, was our only care. At length we reached the Domjoch, after what seemed many hours, but was actually an hour and a half; and here Hans paused for the last time to recover his strength.

The ridge to the Dom from the Domjoch has a kindly appearance, which actual contact sadly belies. From a little distance it appears to be a straightforward rib of mountain sloping at an easy angle, broad and comfortable, in contrast to the narrow crest which runs down from the Täschhorn. But in reality it is a succession of tottering rock towers, crazy beyond belief, joined by diaphanous ribbons of snow which seem anxious to disappear at a touch. The climb began over and under, round and through these groaning ruins. A child's idly-built tower could not be more hideously insecure than these rock pinnacles seemed; only the thought that they had withstood forces far more shattering than the cliffting of our feet and hands kept me trusting in the ultimate safe arrival on the summit. After four hours of threading out a precarious way we clambered up the final easy yards and at 2.30 looked at last on a new world. For thirteen hours we had been on our way, nine of which had been spent on a difficult ridge with our faces and thoughts fixed to the next few yards and no more. Now we were in a world which stretched out to the fine haze of a far distant horizon; only an easy flight down snow was before us. The contest had been severe, the success hardly yet realised. Yet something of the magnificence of this mountaineering came upon me; certainly the doubts of the unininitiated would have vanished could they have seen and experienced. Little else of impression remains, save floating on a sunbeam down the snows to the Dom-hut, and a green dive through the woods to Randa, and an aching ride by train to Zermatt—a bath, and a bottle of Château Yquem!

Our last climb was before us and on a sweltering day we toiled to the Weisshorn hut, once again from Randa. Twilight at the height of 10,000 feet clothes the mountains in a garment of terror, and formidable is their cold aspect. In four and a half hours next morning we reached the tip of the Weisshorn. On our way the sun had shed its garments from deep rose to orange and gleaming white. Slowly a pyramid of cloud formed from the valley and mounted some thousands of feet above us, to dissipate in the manlier rays of a climbing sun. We sped, crampions on our feet, down the North ridge. So firm was the snow that we passed the Great Gendarm in twenty-five minutes, and stood on the Weisshornjoch in two and a half hours, interrupted only by a pause for Hans to yodel to his brother at the Tracuit Hut through three miles of ice-clear air. In another hour and a half we had alighted on the Biesjoch. The spell of mountain adventure was ended: only memory and exultation at having achieved six summits in seven days accompanied the descent to St. Niklaus. From there we hurried even faster to Visp and the English train. "Schön grat" was Hans' remark as he glanced back at the shining North ridge. It was the only possible comment on all our journeys.

Just as the details of 1929 are lost in the main stream of achievement and excitement, so the details of 1930 stand out as stones in a shallower stream. The inexpressible zero hour when work ceased and holiday began, the journey out, cream cheeses and red wine in the wagon restaurant, the swaying, noisy hours of darkness, all these are remembered. Sunset darkened behind a bank of mountainous cloud, and sunrise at Belfort came up steadily, soon to evaporate in gloomy mists. Half-past four in the morning is perhaps the best time to drink French coffee, delicious from thick-lipped cups. A few hours more and I arrived at Göschenen to a bath, lunch, and the friend I was to meet, whom I will designate as P. Owing to a recent illness, P. was unable to do long expeditions, and we were therefore committed to short and easy climbs; we had no guide with us.

Göschenenralp lies in a green pasture beside the waters of comfort. An off-day was spent in brilliant sunshine in a valley. "Vocal with the angelic rilling of rocky streams," a deep and necessary quiet after the toil of long

(Continued in next page, column 3).