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NOTES AND GLEANINGS.

By KYBURG.

Let's turn to-day to purely and typically Swiss matters. Let us read about that

Old Game of Hornussen.

Morning Post 10th August.

Although Switzerland is the recognised playing field of so many sports of an international character, the Swiss people have preserved and still practise some popular sports that have been played by the people in this country for many centuries past.

One of the most interesting is the so-called "Hornussen."

As in cricket, Hornussen is played by "batsmen" against a "field." But only one batsman can have an innings at one time. His bat, if one may term it so, might claim to be the historic forerunner of the golf club. It is a long and thick ash-stick and must be flexible; almost a switch, in fact. If it is too short or too stiff, the batsman cannot get the proper swing on to it, and therefore fails to give the right flight curve to the ball.

The fielders are also provided with a kind of bat, but of altogether different shape. The fielder's bat has a blade about a foot square with a very short handle, something like a butter-pat. The ball is small and made of wood.

A Sloping Meadow.

The game begins by placing the ball on a small mound of earth at the top of the field, that is, with the playing-field sloping away from the batsman.

A skilful player can get a beautiful swing with his long pliable stick and strikes the ball with such force as to make it fly with great speed high over the heads of the fielders.

If the ball flies too low the game is spoilt and the batsman loses points. If it is struck too high it expends its force too readily and makes the fielders' task comparatively easy—like a soft catch in cricket.

The fielders are placed in the lower part of the meadow, generally farther away from the batsman than in cricket. Their game is to arrest the flight of the ball by flinging their "batlets" high into the air across the course of the ball. This calls for great skill. Extremely fine judgment is required in timing the fling of the batlet so that its blade will cross the ball's line of passage just at the very second when the ball is at any given point.

This part of the game is always the most difficult to learn, but many of the Swiss peasants show an almost uncanny skill in stopping the ball this way.

The game is a very ancient one, and to-day is usually played in out-of-the-way retreats where tourists seldom have the chance of seeing it.

Short Linen Breeches.

"Schwingen" is another game extremely popular with the peasants and Sennen (the small dairy-farmers and cowherds of the Alpine districts), particularly in the Canton of Berne and in Central Switzerland.

Some splendid Schwingen matches are played at the annual Alpine fête, attended by thousands of peasants and enlivened by the Alpine horn-blowers and yodlers.

Schwingen is really a peculiar form of wrestling. The combatants wear short linen breeches tightly rolled up as far as possible. Each seizes the other by his rolled-up shorts and tries to "spill" him.

Definite rules must be observed. The opponent must be thrown backwards over one's shoulder, and is declared defeated only when his two shoulders have touched the ground.

No Senn is regarded as a true man unless he can Schwingen. Its popularity extends into the upper circles, and many of Switzerland's notables have been famous Schwinger. Madame de Stael has left on record her impressions of the Schwingen match that she witnessed at Unspunnen, near Interlaken.

Well, it never occurred to me, but our "Senn" must be a good Swinger too, because, anyhow, he looks a true man! (Say thank you!)

Speaking of "true men" brings me, quite easily to "true birds" as it were and to one bird the capture of which has ever brought a feather to the cap of the capturer. You note by this, that no inuenda of any kind were meant, because the other sort of bipeds of the feminine sex do the capturing themselves.

I am thinking of the King-Bird, the Royal Eagle or Golden Eagle of which we read at school when we learnt that sad story of the child that was taken off by an Eagle. The Glasgow News of 29th August has the following:

Preserving the Eagles:

If golden eagles can read proclamations a chuckle will be going round all the eyries in the Alps. Until the other day any Swiss marksman

who brought down a golden eagle could claim a reward, as in ancient days in England every man who slew a wolf could claim to be rewarded.

Golden eagles carried off young animals and poultry, said Switzerland, and golden eagles must die. But when Switzerland found the other day that they really were dying, and that there was danger that they would disappear from the Alps altogether, Switzerland changed its mind.

Are not eagles the most glorious of all birds of prey? Have they not been chosen as the emblems of many a mighty nation, from ancient Rome to modern Germany, and figured on the coats-of-arms of valiant knights and noble kings? Shall Switzerland grudge these birds their food? No, said the Swiss legislators, a hundred times No!

To-day the man who shoots a golden eagle will have to pay a fine instead of being able to claim a reward. The marksman says it is a topsy-turvy world, and the golden eagle says that, after all, progress is a real thing.

As humanity evolves, bird-catching becomes more and more a risky sport!

There is a novel published by Faber & Faber, at 7/6, called The Last Spring, by Beatrice Nairn and as it deals with Swiss lives it may interest some of our readers. The Observer, 30th August writes:

A Swiss Family.

This is a first novel that leaves a very definite impression upon the reader. It moves a little stiffly, and at moments becomes a record more exact than urgent. But there is an honesty about it that makes up for occasional inadequacy. One feels that the author meant to set down just what she saw and understood, and that she did not lay hold of other people's statements to help her. When the story is ended, the life of an inn-keeper's family in Switzerland can be apprehended with a curious solidity. It has been seen from the outside certainly. Sympathetic and observant as Miss Nairn is, she remains the observer. But she does set before us quite firmly the days and occupations, the characteristics and the ambitions of the Girof family—their earnest devotion to "commerce," and their united, affectionate, tolerant sense of responsibility to this unromantic god! "Papa," industrious but slow-witted and a little inclined to drink over-much; "Maman," whose cooking had made the name of the inn; Pierre, who even at six years old would run in from school to help Maman wash dishes, and who at twenty-one was serious, devotedly industrious, and the real force behind the business, a bit of a prig, a lover of beauty in a simple way, and, unhappily, a consumptive.

Miss Nairn has avoided the sentimentalism that the story of Pierre's love for Carol Sedge, the English girl, so easily might have harboured. She is concerned to set all the people in her tale upright on their own legs, and then watchfully to record their doings. Save in the case of Carol, she does not analyse much—and Carol is her least successful character—nor delve deep. She paints the picture of Pierre's "last spring" objectively, and with the tempered poignancy of simplicity.

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