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SKITTLES.

By KYBURG.

In one of our recent issues "a regular Reader" testified to my ability of knocking down ninepins. His remarks, couched in a most delightful vein of amused and amusing humour, with just that little touch of caustic wit in it which made them not only extremely readable, but made their points "find the billet," were greatly appreciated by Kyburg's wife who flatters herself of knowing her man through and through, and who has since asked all her friends to read that excellent "showing up" of Kyburg's well-known love of criticism! In vain do I often point out that we SWISS, citizens of a free country, living under a system of democracy which gives each citizen the right to criticise, have not only the right to do so, but that this right amounts to a duty. How, otherwise, could democracy flourish or even live?

Naturally when it comes to criticizing affairs of the home, concerning which I am not supposed to understand much, there may be a modicum of truth in my beloved's argument, that I criticise often for the mere sake of criticism, and not because criticism is really required, nor even desirable.

So you will guess, from the above few hints, how extremely well that article of our "Regular Reader" was received at our breakfast table that Saturday morning. And, lest I forget later on, will you, dear "Regular Reader," please accept my very best thanks for your remarks and be assured that they gave me not only real pleasure, but also made me wonder whether, perhaps, there was some stratum of real truth in your shafts of witty arguments?

But why, oh why, use or "coin?" such an ugly word as — careful with the spelling now — *Cinematographogenous*?

I admit I like playing skittles. When I visit my old home-town Winterthur, I am invited to join a "Kegel-Abig" every Friday night and, perhaps just because I do not get any skittling over here, my luck is generally quite good, and I often succeed in shooting a Kranz or even, not so often though, a "Babeli."

I only wish, I could hurl my missiles so well at those ninepins — Inquisition, Robber Barons, Sovietism, Hitlerism, Fascism, the dark ages, etc., and shoot a "Babeli!" It would be worth the extra tip for the "Kegelbub," and I would add a still more "extra" tip for him not to put the ninepins up again. I think I would put it to the fellows that we should call it a day and go in and celebrate!

The platitude mentioned in the penultimate paragraph of our "Regular Reader's" remarks, viz., that it may well be that in the distant future even our present generation may be considered to be barbarous and unenlightened, is very much to the point and probably very true. Also, to my way of thinking, it proves the Einstein theory of Relativity, because, without going to very much trouble, we can discern all the above mentioned ninepins to-day. They are still with us, even the inquisition, the robber barons and the dark ages, while Hitlerism and Fascism seem to have obtained a new lease of life and are considered by not a few, i.e., by all those who judge things by success they attain, — even if it be a temporary success only — as becoming the form of Government most suited to our "enlightened" age.

Most of us know that Fascism arose as a direct consequence of the terribly corrupt conditions prevailing in Italy at the time, and which were leading our southern neighbour towards Communism. Most of us know that Hitlerism is due to quite similar conditions prevailing, and becoming accentuated in our northern neighbour during the last few years. Some of us think, that the mistaken policy or lack of policy of the other Great Powers, notably France and America is the real Sire of German Hitlerism.

I listened in, yesterday morning, to a really beautiful speech by Adolf Hitler on the occasion of the laying of the foundation stone of the new Institute of German Art at Munich. The evening before I listened in to Adolf Hitler's broadcast explaining why Germany had left the League of Nations. That speech too was extraordinarily good, statesmanlike and in neither of the two speeches was there any sign of the hectic vituperation indulged in by Adolf Hitler during the last German Elections.

Most of you have either heard or read speeches by Signor Mussolini, speeches which were admirable in their text and equally admirable in their delivery.

We all agree, I take it, that both Mussolini and Hitler have achieved things, have engineered actions, have sponsored deeds of which any Statesman might be proud. They both have been instrumental of ridding large numbers of their peoples of their previous inferiority complex. They both have done a lot, Mussolini more so, because he has had more time in which to do them in, to improve the lot of their peoples.

Does this fact make us swallow the methods by which such means have been attempted and achieved? Do we open our arms to welcome their policies of intolerance? Do we agree to deprive ourselves of the freedom of speech, of the liberty of action as free men and women? Do the good things which Fascism and Hitlerism have achieved blind us to the other side of the picture? Do we forget the concentration camps, the political exiles on those Italian Islands?

Do the astonishing governmental successes achieved by those Leaders really make us wish we could do the same in Switzerland or England? Can you imagine what it must be like, not to be able to discuss political matters with your friends, without first looking over your shoulder to make sure that no *Spy* is overhearing your remarks? Just try to imagine that state of affairs! —

Germany is building a wonderful Institute of German Art at Munich, to replace the old Glass-Palace which burnt down in 1931.

Italy is building wonderful Avenues through Rome, the eternal city.

Russia, no doubt, could show buildings, especially industrial ones, such as have never been thought of before in that country. No Zsar ever thought of such things, no Zsar ever built a memorial such as was built for Lenin. I agree, tastes differ, but when that is said, a lot has been said.

My friend, our "regular Reader" refers to the wonderful things which were built and done in those other dark ages. Agreed. Still further back in History, or in the dark ages, if you prefer, the Egyptian Pharaohs built Pyramids. It has been estimated by competent authorities that the building of one of those huge Pyramids imposed a strain on the Nation comparable to the strain on the modern Nations imposed by the late War! Do you wish us to go back to those marvellous times?

Some of the beautiful Cathedrals which are still with us to-day and are the gems of some of our towns, were built, no doubt, by pious folk who wished to honour GOD. But, has it never occurred to you that in those days, when some of those beautiful altars were built, the Church itself was frightfully corrupt and in no way the successor of the founder of the Christian Faith, at least, not in the sense of that Founder when he preached the Sermon on the Mount.

Would you like to have those days back?

As regards ancient Rome, i.e., the Rome of the 5th century, what about the Fall of Rome shortly afterwards and its causes? And what about, if it comes to that, Babylon and even earlier centres of civilisation?

I am quite prepared to be told that once upon a time there must have been a civilisation transcending ours in splendour and also in cultural value. What I am concerned with, however, being a child of a democratic 20th Century people, is not so much the splendour, but the conditions in which the ordinary man and woman are living and passing through their earthly pilgrimage. Are we better off now than then? Do we get more out of life, we simple ordinary human beings, we children of the people, than did those in a similar condition in those old, dark ages? I think, there can be no two answers to that query, at least, not as far as we Swiss and as Englishmen and a few other civilised peoples are concerned. But, where Fascism, Hitlerism, Bolshevism rule, the answer may be different, albeit, the splendours of public edifices or other achievements may also be greater, than they are with us. It's a contrary world!

So contrary that things have a knack of coming to pass, "although" they have been foreseen long ago. When the Treaty of Versailles was signed, it was generally understood that it would not be possible to keep a Nation like Germany, with its 60 million people, down for any length of time. Since then the policy of the then Victors has accented to such deadly effect that we have to-day a Germany presided over by Adolf Hitler and an Adolf Hitler who can be absolutely sure of having the undivided support of all those 60 million people when he directs Germany to face the world. The old truth that pressure from without leads to unity within.

So you see, dear "regular reader," that the more we probe into things, the more we find to criticise. Some may hold the view that it is not much good criticizing, because it will not affect things. They are wrong. Demonstrably so. Every criticism, by which I do not mean the idle tilting at windmills, à la Don Quixote, but the showing up of defects and the possible alternative to it, is bound to leave a little mark somewhere, somehow. — Vide parable of the Sower! —

In other words, Knocking down ninepins is a very useful and laudable pursuit, and if it were not that I am afraid of my "Home-Secretary" reading these lines again on Saturday, and accusing me afterwards of having too high an opinion of myself, and proceeding there and then on the congenial task of trying to eradicate such inflated opinion, I could add a few more adjectives describing this game of Skittles, adjectives which would be very soothing to me, but might, alas, have the opposite effect on H.W.I.L.A.O.

SWISS MERCANTILE SOCIETY LTD.

At the Monthly Meeting of the Swiss Mercantile Society, Ltd., held at Swiss House on Wednesday, October 11th, Mr. C. Chapuis, Member of the Council, gave his impressions and experiences on his visit to the Union of South Africa. Since the subject matter of the lecture is of general interest, we are sure that our readers will appreciate its publication.

Although Mr. Chapuis did not claim his address to be a "Lecture on South Africa," the Members present listened very intently to his causerie, which was not merely a very interesting description of a journey to a country with a comparatively young history, but a source of information from a commercial point of view.

Mr. Chapuis first gave his audience a general survey of a country with vast tracts of land comparatively sparsely populated, abounding with mineral and natural beauty. He revealed some very interesting figures with regard to the population of about seven million, of which less than two million are whites.

The purchasing capacity of the country, the lecturer said, is generally over-rated, business men in Europe looking at it from the point of view of its size and not from the number of its inhabitants. This mistake, he reiterated, was made by all those who had not visited that part of the globe.

The scanty increase of the white population of a country with one of the finest climates in the world, was, in the lecturer's view, very unsatisfactory. The English language is predominant in the larger towns, whereas "Afrikaans" has ousted "Hollands" Dutch from the position it once held in the country districts. This is the reason why the larger proportion of Civil Servants and Government employees is of South African Dutch descent, for English settlers did not take kindly to learning Afrikaans. All government notices of the Union are published in both languages, and public appointments are becoming limited to bilingual candidates.

The lecturer then enumerated the products which form the principal exports of the Union and which in the year 1930 were approximately £81,710,000. The imports for the same year amounted to £60,188,000 of which the British Empire had the lion's share, and Switzerland, it is worthy to note, participated with £533,747.

The home industries, though still in the making, are practically self-supporting as far as the general necessities of life are concerned, and the lecturer referred to their remarkable progress since his first visit nine years ago.

Mr. Chapuis proceeded with a vivid description of the outward journey of 17 days and commented on the punctual service of the boats. He referred to the comfort and social life aboard ship and gave an account of his stay at Madeira, the only stop between England and Cape Town. The speaker's experiences after an outing in the old-fashioned native bull-cart caused great merriment amongst the assembly. That tips or gratuities can become a burden to the traveller was revealed by the speaker being asked to tip not only the driver and cart, but even the bull.

Social life aboard ship does not start until leaving Madeira when Mr. Chapuis, who was asked to take charge of the entertainment, found that his past experiences on the Entertainment Committee of the Swiss Mercantile Society, served him in good stead.

The lecturer picturesquely described the impressive sights which can be witnessed when the sun sets on the restless waves of the sea, and during starlight nights when the moon comes across the sky like a huge Dutch cheese hanging from nowhere. The lecturer said that nowhere else did he realize the grandeur of Nature more vividly, save in the Swiss Alps, where one experiences a similar dwarfing feeling by the greatness of Nature. After seventeen days full of interest and good fellowship Cape Town with its Table Mountain is reached.

The lecturer described the beautiful surroundings of the Capital of the South African Union and the majesty revealed to the traveller by Table Bay. He gave a graphic description of the town with its diversity of inhabitants and its wonderful stores. The modernisation of the natives was curiously related by the speaker who encountered two negroes fully dressed up in European, though flash style, carrying their patent leather shoes in their hands. The lecturer in particular pointed out, that in the case of servants one was well advised to choose natives who go barefooted, as those who wore footwear were already too much spoilt and modernised. He said that the greater freedom given to coloured people was most noticeable and a great change had taken place in this respect since his previous visit.

The itinerary takes us further along to Durban, a journey of 812 miles, with calls at Port Elizabeth and East London. Durban is the third city of South Africa and a favourite holiday resort. Referring to the hospitality of the South Africans Mr. Chapuis said that the Durbanites