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In the South, the Swiss, who in the middle ages were the most feared warriors on the Continent, were equally successful. At one time their rule extended far into present day Italy and for ever brought under the Swiss Government the lovely town of Lugano as well as Locarno, of Peace Treaty fame.

In 1815 Geneva became a Swiss Canton and thereby added to the circle a place of learning and culture, which is now known the world over as the site of the League of Nations.

Nearly 600 years were needed to give Switzerland the contour which it holds to-day. The 22 cantons which now go to make its constitution have in nearly all instances retained their peculiarities, their age-worn customs and, above all, their languages.

Just as in years gone by, cities like Neuchâtel, Lausanne and Geneva are still celebrated for the pure French, which is spoken in them and which, in England, could be compared with the King's English.

Around the Lake of Lugano, the melodious burble of Italian tongues still fills the picturesque houses, the narrow streets and the vinecellars and is a fitting corollary to the same romantic south which used to delight our ancestors.

The industrialised German speaking part of Switzerland prides itself on as many patois as there are cantons. Though German is the written language and is taught in school, the patois differ from it to such a degree that they cannot, or only with difficulty, be understood by German visitors. This peculiarity becomes even more evident, when we realize that very often the inhabitants of one canton find it almost impossible to follow the conversation of persons from a neighbouring department.

While German, French and Italian are the three official national languages, it is interesting to note that a fourth and very little known language is also in existence. It is called Rômanche and the district in which it is spoken lies high up in the beautiful canton of Grison, famous for its holiday resorts, such as Davos, St. Moritz, etc.

There a small community of approximately 40,000 persons still converses in this peculiar language which, it is said, traces its origin from a race who invaded and lived in Switzerland round about 100/200 B.C. This language has never spread and while maintained by the local press and society, most of the people also know Swiss German, of which they avail themselves in communication with the outer world.

Statistics show that 70% of the inhabitants of Switzerland speak German, 21% French, 8% Italian and 1% Rômanche; truly a mixture which is as varied as the Swiss scenery which holds within its reach everything that is scattered all over Europe from the arctic solitude of snow-fields and glaciers in the North to the palm-, olive- and orange trees reminiscent of the tropical vegetation in the South.

This diversity in language has also led to a position which is unique in the legislation of European countries. Whereas the Supreme Court in England admits only one language, in Switzerland the cases are tried in the language of the interested parties.

In respect of commerce, the mastery of several tongues has greatly assisted the Swiss export industry to penetrate foreign markets and has enabled approximately one tenth of its population to find remunerative occupations abroad.

In politics the predominance or subordination of any of the three official languages has never been a point of issue. Large sections of the inhabitants of Switzerland being bilingual, the fact that it harbours a variety of races, languages and traditions has never been found a disadvantage but rather an asset, whose singularity has even more closely united the people.

Thus it happened that while recent history saw Europe repeatedly reverberating with the din of never-ceasing wars, Switzerland has preserved peace — adored and protected by a people, small in number, but great in their loyalty to their own country.

WHAT IS THE SOURCE OF SWITZERLAND'S ATTRACTION?

For almost two centuries Switzerland has been visited by travellers from all lands and spheres; by wanderers and mountain-climbers, by scientists and pleasure-seekers, working people and convalescents. It was out of the happy recollections of these thousands that Switzerland's reputation as a tourist centre grew. Yet it requires powerful, natural, perpetual forces to enable a country to retain this reputation in our times, when distances are as nothing and journey's end may mean some alluring spot in the farthest corner of the world. Wherein, then, lies the source of this legendary reputation, which to-day seems to be as much alive as ever before?

The inevitable and spontaneous answer is bound to be: "The mountains allure us!" So it was in the middle of the 18th century, when the Alpine world still appeared sinister and menacing to the superstitious. And the same natural enthusiasm and satisfaction which Goethe felt when, in Schwyz, he came really close to the mountains for the first time, is still predominant in the hearts of the plain-dwellers and townsfolk when they see the rocky fastnesses rise above them in their awe-inspiring magnitude.

Never shall I forget the bright curiosity of the Hungarian father who, on visiting the Lower Engadine with his family for the first time, put his head out of the carriage window and asked excitedly: "Are there any glaciers in St. Moritz?" — Many a traveller who at first believed he would find glaciers spread out before his hotel windows, was in no way disillusioned when he saw how simply and pleasantly the glacier grottos can be reached from the largest resorts.

A visit to Switzerland has enriched and widened the geographical knowledge of innumerable people; they have looked, enjoyed and learned. Other countries also possess mountains and Alpine resorts, but the extraordinary attraction of our country lies in the unique magnitude and multifariousness of our mountains. Alpine beauty-spots follow one upon another from Piz Bernina to the Matterhorn and Monte Rosa, from the Jungfrau massif to the Mont Blanc district. Tourists who have travelled considerable distances to see Switzerland find a special charm in being able to visit the most varied kinds of mountain scenery during one stay, and all in the one small country.

They derive from it a wealth of impressions which are a source of happiness to them for many a long year. And they come back again, realising well enough that during one single visit one cannot drink one's fill of the inspiring view of the mountains. Thus the travel pictures are kept alive and glowing from visit to visit, from traveller to traveller, from generation to generation, impressing themselves upon the memory of a whole world of tourists. And from this springs that mysterious attraction which tempts ever new people in the farthest lands to visit Switzerland, the most famous land of travel.

One of the secrets of Swiss scenery is its richness in unexpected contrasts. From the highest passes, where the Alps become a vivid experience, a comfortable journey of a few hours brings one to lake shores possessing all the enchantment of a Riviera. A wonderful spectacle on the flower-decked shores of Lugano and Locarno, are the near-by mountains glistening with their new-fallen snow. From window, balcony and garden, beautiful contrasts intermingle to form the charm of the complete picture. On the Lake of Geneva a magnificent series of bays opens out between Vevey, Montreux and the Castle of Chillon, radiating the magic of the Southern clime and at the same time conveying the knowledge of mountains within easy reach. Even the large Swiss towns are not immune from this element of contrast, — Berne lies as a historic settlement of

unique architectural beauty in the heart of Switzerland. But one has not merely to suspect the presence of the mountains here: their panorama unfolds itself triumphantly in the full glory of its lovely charms. In Lucerne, Zurich and Geneva one admires the beauties of a garden city on a lake, and everywhere it is the mountains that give to the picture a brilliant background.

Switzerland's powers of attraction as a land of travel, however, are not only based on the quality of the scenery. It is known and acknowledged throughout the world that Switzerland is the land of pleasant travel and comfortable resorts. The points of interest in the landscape have been developed from the traffic point of view in a manner unequalled in any other country. In former years this development chiefly concerned the mountain railways and their ambition to open up more and more sightseeing points. Then the increasing attention paid to the traveller's comfort led to the establishment of a surprisingly large number of communicating lines between the separate traffic areas, and the arrangement of the communications in as convenient a manner as possible. The express train lines, running through the most beautiful mountain districts and connecting the Bernese Oberland with the Lake of Geneva, Davos with St. Moritz, the Engadine with Zermatt, are unparalleled feats of modern railway technique. In addition, there are innumerable routes over the passes, made possible by the Swiss Alpine postal service.

As regards the care expended in making her resorts pleasant, comfortable and refined places to stay in, Switzerland has always been to the fore. This is not only a question of individual concerns and holiday resorts, but of every place catering for the visitor: hotels of every class — sanatoria, pensions, etc. Thus the possibility of disagreeable surprises is entirely excluded, whatever eventuality the journey may bring. This gives the traveller a feeling of security. It is not only round about the valley stations and touring centres, of which Interlaken was formerly the most outstanding example, that resorts have sprung up during the course of the last century — resorts that are unexcelled the wide world over, but also high up in the beautiful Alpine passes themselves. Davos, Arosa, St. Moritz and Pontresina, as also Zermatt, offer the travelling public every comfort and convenience that even the city can give. Switzerland is thus a real international land of travel, and everyone knows in advance that he will find there resorts and accommodation, charming educational facilities and all possible amenities for sport. These are the qualifications which Switzerland has developed as an international travel centre during the course of decades. She has built them up by constant labour and care, and now they form the foundation of her permanent power of attraction.

Swiss National Tourist Office, Zurich.

PAGINE DI STORIA TICINESE.

By E. EUSEBIO.

(Continued).

I SETTE BALIAGGI.

Con l'occupazione definitiva di Mendrisio e di Balerna nell'anno 1527 risultò costituito territorialmente l'attuale Cantone Ticino, allora conosciuto come i Sette Baliaggi italiani. Poco dopo vi si aggiunse Stabio.

Negli anni susseguenti i nostri avi furono costretti a riprendere una lotta simile a quella vinta nelle epoche feudali per conservare la propria libertà, i privilegi avuti e soprattutto la giustizia popolare nell'istituto dei congiudici, contro i landvogti mandati a governare dai Cantoni confederati. Il Dr. Otto Weiss nel suo libro intitolato "Baliaggi Ticinesi" ci dà il

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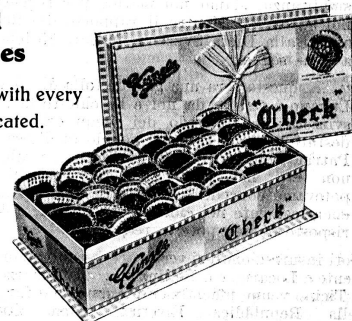
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seguita severo giudizio su quest'epoca: "La legge veniva violata, verso i poveri usando una severità eccessiva, e di fronte ai ricchi applicandola con troppa mitezza." Un altro scrittore asserisce che "l'unico commercio esistente in quel povero paese era quello della giustizia."

LA RIVOLTA LEVENTINESE DEL 1775.

Troppi sono gli abusi ed i soprusi ai quali si abbandonava la più parte dei landvogti, perché ve li descriva sia pure succintamente, basti dire che la dominazione dei landvogti, nel lungo periodo di trecento anni ebbe, nel suo complesso, la condanna di tutti gli storici confederati. I Ticinesi, d'altro lato, non la subirono senza reagire in difesa degli antichi diritti e delle loro libertà; così Lugano e Blenio nel 1749, la Valle Maggia e la Lavizzarra nel 1757. Ma soprattutto fece rumore il tentativo leventinese del 1775 di insorgere a mano armata per opporsi apparentemente a modificazioni che Uri voleva introdurre negli Statuti, ma in realtà per farsi liberi. La rivolta fu soffocata nel sangue. Ecco la descrizione drammatica di Stefano Franscini — primo Consigliere Federale ticinese e padre dell'educazione popolare svizzera — delle esecuzioni capitali che seguirono sulla Piazza di Faido:

"Allora incominciò a sfogarsi fredda e feroce l'ira dell'offeso sovrano. Fu convocato in Faido, luogo dei generali parlamenti della valle, il popolo leventinese (2 giugno) e fu ben forza ubbidire alla chiamata. Quasi tremila uomini comparvero peini di ansietà e in crudele aspettativa. Le armate schiere dei Confederati circondavano un'inerte, silenziosa e scorata moltitudine. Toccò al popolo leventinese di giurare che si rimetteva all'obbedienza verso Uri e che gli si rendeva a discrezione. Gli toccò d'assistere nuda la testa e ginocchioni, al supplizio dei suoi principali magistrati e capi: l'Alfiere Forni, il Consigliere Sartori, il Capitano generale Orso. Da quell'orrenda cerimonia, partendosi i leventinesi, si avviarono alle case loro per diverse vie, ma tutti con l'animo in preda al cordoglio ed allo spavento. Il dì seguente le soldatesche dei Confederati rivalicarono il Gottardo, seco traendo incatenati altri otto dei più colpevoli fra i sediziosi. Questi subirono in Uri la loro condanna a morte, spettacolo di compiacenza per quella plebe sovrana. Ad alcuni fu salvezza un perpetuo esilio."

NAPOLEONE E I BALIAGGI TICINESI.

L'ondata d'entusiasmo per la più grande libertà, i principi di libertà, uguaglianza e fratellanza, partendosi dalla Francia, non tardarono a giungere nelle nostre valli. In un colloquio a Parigi l'8 dicembre 1797 con gli Svizzeri Reubell e Och, Napoleone Bonaparte s'incaricava di propagare egli stesso nei Baliaaggi ticinesi il seme della nuova fede politica.

Il 12 Aprile 1798, alla vecchia Confederazione Svizzera dei tredici Cantoni, subentrava la Repubblica Elvetica. Una ed Indivisibile, suddivisa in diciotto regioni, delle quali il Ticino comprendeva due: precisamente Bellinzona e Lugano, la prima formata dal Bellinzonese e dalle tre valli superiori, e la seconda da tutto il Sottoceneri, il Locarnese, le Valli Maggia, Verzasca ed Onsernone.

I FATTI DI LUGANO.

Un altro avvenimento di capitale importanza nella nostra storia succedeva a Lugano nelle giornate del 14 e 15 febbraio 1798. I Luganesi dopo aver respinto decisamente un tentativo d'invasione della città da parte delle truppe della finitima Repubblica Cisalpina, innalzavano sulla pubblica piazza l'Albero della Libertà, al grido — oramai famoso — di "Liberi e Svizzeri" e fatti prigionieri i Rappresentanti dei tredici Cantoni sovrani non li liberarono finché ebbero promesso al Ticino l'uguaglianza dei diritti con gli altri Cantoni.

L'intimazione presentata dal capo dei rivoltosi, il Pellegrini, era così redatta:

"Noi domandiamo i sacri diritti: vogliamo la libertà svizzera: alla fine, dopo secoli di sudditanza, siamo noi maturi per reggerci da noi stessi." Mentre il rapporto dei Rappresentanti alla Dieta Svizzera, in data 15 febbraio, era come segue:

"..... questa sera una grande folla di popolo di Lugano è venuta da noi e ha chiesto la libertà svizzera; in riguardo dei tempi critici e per destare maggior zelo nel popolo in difesa della Patria, abbiamo loro annunciato che tale cosa non era nel nostro potere, cosicché non potevamo concederla. Ma insistendo il popolo energeticamente nel chiedere la libertà, abbiamo risposto di non poterla respingere."

Moti insurrezionali si verificarono contemporaneamente a Locarno e a Bellinzona. Il 13 marzo 1802 il Ticino venne ufficialmente ammesso a far parte della Repubblica Elvetica, come Cantone Sovrano.

(To be continued).

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Wednesday, September 4th at 7.30 p.m. — Société de Secours Mutuels — Monthly Meeting, at 74, Charlotte Street, W.1.

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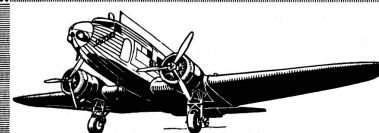
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