Where cow-bells tinkle at sunset

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THE ROYAL FAMILY OF EGYPT IN SWITZERLAND

On the 7th April, his Majesty King Farouk I., accompanied by their Highnesses the Princesses Royal, and his Suite, which included his Excellency Ahmed Hassanein Pasha, Governor of the Royal Palace, his Excellency the Egyptian Minister in Paris, Fakhry Pasha and his Excellency the Swiss Minister in Cairo, Mr. H. Martin, left Berne by car for Broc, a village in the Gruyère district some 50 kilometres from Montreux, where the delegates of the Capitulations Conference were gathered at the time.

The Gruyère district is one of the most typical of Switzerland, with mountains, rich pastures "flowing with milk and honey," a medieval castle perched on the hill, chalets, and is the home of a rugged and warm-hearted people. It is here that one of Nestlé's famous chocolate factories is situated.

On arrival at the factory, his Majesty and his Suite were received by members of the general management of the Nestlé Company. After a few words of welcome in the big hall, which was beautifully decorated with baskets of Alpine flowers, the royal party entered the factory where for more than an hour they were able to follow, step by step, the various stages in the manufacture of Nestlé, Peter, Cailler, and Kohler chocolates.

His Majesty, being, as is well known, particularly interested in the industrial development of Switzerland, was already familiar with the main principles of chocolate manufacture. Nevertheless, he frequently expressed his pleasure at having the opportunity to inspect at close quarters a factory in which the machinery was so highly perfected down to the smallest detail, and whose products are widely known the whole world over. It was obvious that the King and the charming Princesses were already familiar with many of the specialities displayed, as chocolate, and particularly a good milk chocolate, is very popular in Egypt.

His Majesty fully appreciated the reasons for the unique character of Nestlé's famous milk chocolate, because, turning his gaze from the vast room full of machinery to the green pastures of Gruyère, which are to be seen through the spacious windows, he remarked:—

"Here you have everything you need—the means, the technique, good soil producing a rich creamy milk, and, above all, the Swiss climate, which, as in the case of cigar manufacture in Havana, plays such an important part."

The King overlooked nothing and examined the various machines in turn with the eye of an expert. Meanwhile, the Princesses were fascinated by the intricate machinery engaged in producing such delicious products and in seeing every kind of chocolate automatically wrapped in attractively coloured packings—some in Nestlé's red and gold, other in Cailler's delicate mauve, or in the various colours of Kohler's and Peter's brands.

His Majesty was much impressed by the massive grinding mills superimposed one above the other, through which the cocoa beans pass; also in the ingenious hydraulic presses which extract the butter fat, and the "conches" where the chocolate undergoes a prolonged mixing for several days, imparting that velvety smoothness characteristic of the Nestlé, Peter, Cailler and Kohler chocolates. The King then saw the moulding machines, vibrating tables and the conveyors passing through cooling chambers where the chocolate is solidified. In the most cordial terms, His Majesty expressed his pleasure at seeing this extensive model factory, ideally placed in such delightful surroundings, and for the respectful attention shown him during his visit.

So ended an event marking another milestone in the history of this Company, famous for offering to the world the richest products of Switzerland, a country which, though small in the limitations of its hospitable boundaries, is great in the importance of its achievements.

As His Majesty King Farouk I. was entering his car for the return journey to Berne, the general management of the Nestlé Company cordially invited him, when next he may be in Switzerland, to honour them by visiting their establishments at Orbe, where sweetened condensed milk, Nestogen (a powdered milk), Eledon (a powdered butter-milk) and Nestlé's Food are manufactured. The King appreciated the invitation all the more on account of his great interest in the welfare of his beloved country whose most promising future lies in the well-being of the rising generation.

His Majesty graciously gave his consent for a medal to be struck in chocolate to commemorate the occasion of his Coronation in July, as has already been done for the Coronation of their Majesties King George VI. and Queen Elisabeth. A bust of King Farouk I. will appear on the face of the medal with the Mosque Al Azhar in Cairo on the reverse.

Financial Times,
(Egyptian Suppl.)

THE GAME OF HORNUSS.

It is spring, summer, and autumn which bring some pleasure into the hard life of the peasants in the German-speaking part of Switzerland. They can then practise one of their favourite games, which they call "Hornuss." In English, the word means "hornet," and it is indeed very descriptive.

Outside every village a good, flat ground is chosen. It must be big enough to accommodate two teams—one which strikes the hornuss and the other which has to stop it. The ground is as long as a football field, but double the width. Immediately after the Sunday dinner, groups of men—young and old—leave the house, while the housewife gives the last loving touches to a complicated toilette. Off they go to the playing-field, one man carrying the switches of the group, another the bats or "palettes" of the opposing team. The society which organises the game provides the little stand or trestle, and the disk which serves as the projectile. It is the latter object which is the hornuss. When all the players are assembled, and have carefully folded up their Sunday coats and turned up the bottoms of their heavy trousers, the length of the field is measured once more—a maximum of 90 metres, the distance which the hornuss must on no account exceed.

The batting team takes up position on the field, the most skilful players at 40 to 50 metres from the trestle, which is the starting-point, the others disposed about the ground up to the limit allowed by the game. Each man holds in his hand a kind of flat spade, with which he tries to stop the passage of the hornuss. He may either hold it firmly in his hand and stop the disk at the place where it would naturally pass in its fall to earth, or he may throw it into the air to meet the whizzing object. If in doing so he is skilful enough to touch his objective, the hornuss will fall at the same time as his "palette," and his team has gained a point. The other team remains near the small trestle, which is made either of iron or of wood. The low, curved support enables the thrower the better to calculate his stroke and gives the maximum of precision to the swing of his switch.

The game begins. The hornuss—a kind of small disk, 2½ centimetres in diameter, rounded at the edges—is placed at the extremity of one of the branches of the trestle. So that it will stay there for a few seconds without falling, the peasant fixes it with a little fresh earth. Then he chooses with care one of the switches, the length of which may vary from 2½ to 3 metres. It is like an extremely flexible rod, one end of which seems to be swollen. The peasant measures his distance—that is to say, 2 to 3 metres. The signal is given to the other team that the hornuss is ready to be struck.. The striker grasps his switch firmly in his two hands and turns round and round until the switch has acquired a tremendous force, thanks to his rotation. At the psychological moment he aims at the hornuss, adjusting his stroke with scientific precision. Planted solidly on both legs, muscles taut, the peasant strikes the hornuss with an incredible force. His stroke is carefully calculated so that the disk rises rather high and cannot be arrested in its course; and yet it will fall to earth within the prescribed 90 metres.

While the group of throwers follow the stroke critically, expressing their satisfaction or disapprobation, according to the course of the disk,a shrill and multiple shout goes up from the opposite camp. One of the men has marked the trajectory of the hornuss; he raises his arm, yells with all his might to indicate to his team-mates the direction. As the hornuss cuts through the air with great violence one hears the characteristic whizzing sound it makes, rather like the hum of a swarm of bees or the buzz of the hornet—whence its name.

To the accompaniment of much shouting, the players rush towards the buzzing projectile and throw their "palettes" into the air to meet it. The latter rise 15 to 20 metres, describing a magnificent circle in the air. In most cases the hornuss passes just a little to one side, or, to be exact, it is the "palette" which misses its mark, either because it did not reach high enough or because it cut through the air too late. Other players have a shot at it. For greater comfort, some of the peasants remove their great, hobnailed boots, and there they are skipping about in the grass, trying to oppose their skill to the swift flight of the hornuss, the whole to the accompaniment of numerous guttural cries. According to whether the hornuss falls to the ground without having been touched by a "palette," or whether it has been interrupted in its course by one of the players, a point is gained by one or the other team. The judges, whose faces express a watchful gravity, note the results on paper.

Thus it may be said that the game is composed of two distinct phases. The first, which is the stroke, resembles the game of golf to a certain extent — the same gesture, the same objective. The other phase is very much like tennis, the point being to intercept the hornuss abruptly in its passage. It is also one of the rare open-air games where the interests of the teams are dissimilar. Football, Rugby, tennis—all team games—are played in the same way by the opposing groups. The game of hornuss differs from these in that the striker's rôle is quite different from that of the men with the "palettes." There is a certain analogy with cricket, but this elegant, leisurely, and gentlemanly game is poles apart from the rustic game of hornuss.

About thirty years ago, all the sections of German-speaking Switzerland were grouped into a federation, and every Sunday grim battles are fought by rival groups. Certain strikers have achieved an extraordinary dexterity, and give to their hornuss a circuit which recalls somewhat that of the boomerang of Australia.

This game is so popular that even the notables of the village do not disdain to turn back their shirt-cuffs and have a go. The vice-president of the Swiss Confederation, M. Minger, a sort of modern Cincinnatus, himself sometimes appears on the playing-fields, and tries to obtain a respite from the heavy responsibilities of office in the exercise of this game. For the time that he participates in these jousts he is no longer the first magistrate of the country, but a simple peasant, and considered as such by his fellow-players. And if he happens to mess up his stroke, criticism rains upon him as upon any other blunderer. The same rusticity of manners is found in certain valleys where the hornuss is played—in the Engadine, in the Valais, and even in certain high valleys of French-speaking Switzerland. In former times, one of the bitterest enemies of the hornuss was unquestionably the Church and its ministers. In old chronicles one can read the protests that were made by the clergy against this inoffensive game. Not that it presents any menace to morality; but those who are addicted to it are apt to forget in their

WHERE COW-BELLS TINKLE AT SUNSET

By Councillor T. Roberts.

Enchantment is everywhere in Switzerland.

On my present visit, the second this year, I have chosen a place remote from the general tourist centres, for here in the country you find the real heart of this friendly people..

Lucerne, Interlaken, Geneva, Montreux, and Lugano are certainly very delightful places, but at Burgdorf, near the Bernese Oberland, where I have made my centre, is to be found scenery unrivalled in its grandeur, a friendly people and a combination of woodland and mountain air that is a tonic.

Burgdorf is a typical Swiss country town, surrounded by thickly-wooded heights, dominated by a centuries-old castle frowning from a steep rock in the centre of the town, with the snow-capped Jungfrau in the distance, the town is a splendid holiday place.

In addition, there are many fine buildings and shops.

It is, moreover, only about 15 miles from the ancient city of Berne, the capital of Switzerland, with its magnificent Parliament House, its colourful monuments, and buildings of majestic proportions.

Its main industry, as befits such a country town, is cheese making, and much of the cheese sold in stores in England can be seen in the factories here in the course of preparation.

The town is governed by a council of 10 elected by the votes of the townspeople, and the councillor gets the same "kicks."

There are plenty of pleasant resorts near at hand. Affoltern, for instance. This mountain resort, about an hour away from Burgdorf, is reached in summer by a bus or charabanc.

The climb up the 800 or 1,000 feet is noteworthy for the acute road bends, and you are wont to speculate on your probable fate if the steering wheel suddenly disobeyed the driver when cornering with a sheer drop of a few hundred feet.

Then, near at hand, is romantic Thun, with the snow mountains flanking the town, and prosperous Langnau with its pretty chalets.

In fact, there is a host of places off the beaten tourist track well worth visiting—places where the tinkle of the bells on the cows high up in the mountain pastures make delightful music at sunset, and where you can listen to men and maidens singing in isolated farm houses or on the roadsides at evening-tide their tuneful folk songs, and songs peculiar to those who till the land.

(*Fleetwood Chronicle*)