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MOTOR TRAVEL IN SWITZERLAND SPURRED BY INEXPENSIVE 'GAS.'

Monitor Traveltalks.

By M. LE TOUR.

Last summer my brother and I rolled, on pneumatic tyres, through 5,000 miles of Europe's most stunning scenery, whose centre and symbol is Switzerland. We found that wherever we went in the surrounding countries we were continually turning our motor's nose back in the direction of this paradise of assorted marvels, and my diary now reveals the fact that we actually spent three times as many days within the borders of the Confederation as we originally planned.

Many were the elements that combined to form this country into an irresistible holiday magnet to our humming motor. Mountains that are the talk of the world; valleys like the Emmenthal and the Val d'Hérens that are as individual as the cheese and the sand pillars for which they are respectively known; lakes as blue as the gentians on the alpine pastures; falls that roar like a Brazilian resaca; a score of mountain passes, each vying with the others in spectacular beauty; a pervading cleanliness that has long made Switzerland a legend and a model; the virtuositics of unseen yodlers heard faintly from distant alms; and the tuneful "hallali" of the big post busses recalling the postilion's horn of a departed century.

These and other facts of Switzerland's composite brilliance had been familiar to me for years, most of them from boyhood, yet the potency of their charm was unabated. I have mentioned the motor, however, humming as eagerly as my own excited enthusiasm. Its alien nostrils whenever they drew near to a Swiss frontier twitched with ecstasy as they whiffed the fragrance of inexpensive gasoline. In Switzerland, as against its neighbour countries, one saves 10, 20, 30 cents a gallon. In some countries of Europe importing costs are high, duties and taxes prodigious, and it is by no means unusual to pay 50 or 60 cents a gallon. Oil, tenderly served to the motor almost by the spoonful, cost us sometimes as high as a dollar a quart! How natural then that I should present the joyous fact that Switzerland grants to the foreign holiday motorist a 30 per cent concession on its regular gasoline prices, which are already low by European standards of comparison. The visitor must remain in the country three days or more and the reduction is applicable up to 300 litres (66 gallons) which should take almost any car a good thousand miles, a long distance in a land the area of which is less than half that of the State of Maine.

The concession operates very simply. At the frontier of entry the motorist is given a gasoline form. Whenever he buys the precious fuel in Switzerland he presents this to the filling station attendant who writes down the number of litres purchased. The motorist pays the full price (we found it generally 43 centimes per litre for the "regular") but when he leaves the country he displays his document to the customs guard and promptly receives in cash a sum equal to 13 centimes for each litre bought. There is no question about it, no red tape and no delay. One may fill the tank just before quitting Switzerland (as every motorist does) and roll for 200 miles or so on alien soil powered by Swiss generosity.

With such a friendly filip to one's travel budget how doubly glorious does everything in Switzerland seem. Our meandering tyres cut the map of the Confederation into metaphorical ribbons, entering from France (Delle-Porrentruy) and leaving for Austria (Martinsbruck Landeck); entering again from Italy (Como-Chiasso) and leaving for France (Vallorbe); entering still again at the double village of St. Gingolph on the lake of Geneva, a village which splits its allegiance squarely between France and Switzerland, and bisecting the country to emerge at Constance in Germany. We turned back the centuries in such slumberous old towns as bi-lingual Morat perching on a lovely eminence above its own lake, and Avenches, a hill town which, as capital of the Helvetii, loomed large on the maps of Roman conquerors. We delighted in wild strawberries and cream in Gruyères. We knotted together by quick motor jumps a chain of bright Swiss cities from Geneva to Zürich, from Lugano to Basle. We made a petrol pilgrimage to Einsiedeln, a mountain shrine of glorious setting. We swam in half the lakes of Switzerland from the super-civilized plage of Montreux to the gorgeous Wallensee. On Switzerland's dependable roads we negotiated stupendous mountain passes, including the Klausen Pass from Altdorf to Glarus, Lenzersheide-Julier Pass, the San Bernardino from Grisons to Ticino, and most of

the others. We drove up several superlative valleys. One such drive brought us to Saas-Balen whence we climbed on foot to that lofty miracle village of Saas-Fee which depends on muleback transportation to supply the needs of thousands of tourists every summer.

* * *

The infinite varieties that make up Switzerland, seen from train, funicular, and lake boat had been accumulating in my mental treasure chest of travel for years, but the recent experience of motor travel has woven with threads of intimacy a bright tapestry of the whole land.

Big brother to the private car, in Switzerland, is the Postal Motor Coach, a great yellow chariot which is to me one of the most glamorous articles on four wheels. A large fleet of these sleek monsters covers 45 postal routes in Switzerland and about half of them I have taken. Their motors, their brakes, and their drivers are specialists in mountain roads and they scale incredible heights even when snow 12 or 15 feet deep is banked on both sides, making a white canyon of the road. Giant rotary plows, motorized editions of those used by our railways in the Rockies, chew their way briskly through vast drifts twice their own height. Behind them come the yellow coaches of public service, six-wheeled behemoths that can lift two of their wheels, when these are not needed for traction. The Postal Motor Coaches have been pioneers in Switzerland's long but successful battle to subdue her scenery to man's pleasure. Switzerland is equally brilliant, equally enjoyable, whether viewed from behind one's own driving wheel or from the "box seats" provided so amply by the motor squadron of the Alps.

Ch. Sc. M.

NOUVELLE SOCIETE HELVETIQUE.

Following the monthly meeting of this Society on the 24th June last, there was a causerie by Mr. A. Tall of the Swiss Federal Railways. Mr. Tall had chosen as his subject "Swiss Alpine Guides and Mountaineering" and it was immediately evident that this theme is one which he commands "par excellence." Introducing his subject Mr. Tall explained the evolution of the sport of mountaineering showing how whereas in the initial stages the guide was in reality nothing more than a carrier, subservient to his master's orders nowadays it is the "Patentierter Bergführer" who decides the course of action and is directly responsible for the safety, etc., of the tourists. In short guides today are highly qualified and experienced men in whom implicit faith can be placed.

The lecturer then gave us an account in the original text by *Adolf Schaller* of Zermatt of that guide's experiences on an ascension of the Matterhorn, the gist of which was to show how weather conditions may alter so rapidly and unaccountably that a peak that one has climbed ninety-nine times in relative ease the hundredth time may present almost insurmountable difficulties.

Very amusing was the recital of the adventures of *Hermann Schaller* and the record breaking Yankee who accomplished the amazing feat of going up the Matterhorn and back non-stop in three hours fifteen minutes. This kind of stunt may come off once in a lifetime! Incredible as it may seem it succeeded and it is hardly likely that anyone will attempt to go one better.

Finally Mr. Tall switched over to his "engere Heimat" and after a humorous interlude showing how the wearing of a harmless badge may lead to complications, he read us an excerpt from *Kaspar Grass*, of Pontresina, describing that guide's nerve-racking experience and hair's breadth escape from certain death while engaged with a rescue party. They were transporting a corpse on a sledge across a ridge when an avalanche overtook them and all but swept them into the abyss.

The lecturer stressed the fact that guides are born not made and one can well believe that this love and passion for the mountains is carried from one generation to another.

Hearty applause greeted the lecturer on the termination of his exposé and Mr. Suter aptly voiced the feelings of all present when he thanked Mr. Tall for a most instructive and entertaining evening.

I am sure we all hope to be given the opportunity of hearing Mr. Tall again in the near future.

ANGLO-SWISS.

DIE SCHWEIZ DEN SCHWEIZERN.

Zahlen die zu denken geben.

Die Wohnbevölkerung betrug am 1. Dezember 1930: 4,066,400 Personen. 3,710,878 Schweizer und 355,522 Ausländer. Kein Land Europas hat verhältnismässig so viele Ausländer in seinen Grenzen, wie die Schweiz! Deutschland hat etwa zwei Prozent Ausländer, Belgien etwa dreieinhalb, Frankreich etwa vier Prozent. Die Schweiz über acht Prozent Ausländer!

In vielen Grenzorten und in manchen Städten sind die Verhältnisse in dieser Beziehung ganz bedenklich. So zum Beispiel wohnen in Krenzingen 5,505 Schweizer 3,110 Ausländer
Baselstadt 125,295 Schweizer 29,735 Ausländer
Genf 130,478 Schweizer 40,888 Ausländer

Die erwerbstätige Bevölkerung der Schweiz betrug am 1. Dezember 1930: 2,054,296 Personen, hiervon waren nicht weniger als 219,315 Ausländer, nämlich: rund

37,000 selbständige Erwerbsinhaber
400 Direktoren
900 Leitende technische Angestellte
3,200 übrige technische Angestellte
23,000 untere Angestellte
145,000 Arbeiter verschiedener Art
und nahezu 9,000 Lehrlinge verschiedener Art.

Es leben in der Schweiz 154,000 Deutsche, (inkl. Oesterreicher) — Es leben im Deutschen Reich 55,000 Schweizer. Es leben in der Schweiz 127,000 Italiener. Es leben in Italien 16,000 Schweizer. Rund 100,000 Schweizer waren kürzlich brotlos. Es arbeiteten mehr Ausländer in der Schweiz als wir schweizerische Arbeitslose hatten. 1536 Schweizer wanderten im Jahre 1936 übersees aus. 2,991 Ausländer wurden im gleichen Jahre bei uns eingebürgert.

Die Verausländerung der Schweiz macht jedes Jahr durch Zuwanderung von Ausländern, Auswanderung von Schweizern, Einbürgerung von Ausländern und Einheirat von Ausländerinnen Fortschritte.

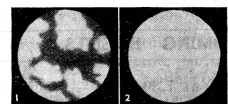
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