

Six years to build a tunnel

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WHAT BRITISH CONTEMPORARIES THINK ABOUT SWITZERLAND.

Liberty, Tolerance and Peace ...

There is a special significance and value about the Swiss National Exhibition which would not attach to an exhibition organised by any other nation. To call Switzerland "the playground of Europe" is to tell only a fraction of the truth. She is also, by her situation, the heart of Europe, and, by her history, the guide of Europe. When I think of Switzerland, three memories in particular come to my mind.

I remember Switzerland in the Great War, and the great change one felt in coming away from regions in which man was bent on doing the utmost evil to his fellow men to a country where, in the midst of considerable daily hardship, people seemed to be bent on relieving the human suffering that surrounded them and reminding us in the midst of our struggles and afflictions that ordinary kindness and the sense of brotherhood had not perished out of the world.

I remember coming year after year, when tired and often fretted by committee work on practical public affairs, up to the high Alps, to breathe serene air, to walk over glaciers, to watch the great soaring birds, and the brilliant wild flowers, and feel at peace with the world and almost — for the time being — young again.

I remember the great historical achievement of Switzerland, in teaching men to live together in concord. Only here do French, German and Italian co-operate as free men, rejoicing in a common citizenship and service to society, finding their bond of union not in aggressive nationalism or dreams of military ambition, but in building by united effort "a good life for man." Members of three of the great nations of Europe permanently have their homes and their national patriotism in Switzerland; of the other, the Anglo-Saxon, it may be said that if its members have not that privilege, at least they come pouring into Switzerland every year for their holidays, as to a country more adapted to human happiness than any other region of Europe. It is adapted to human happiness not merely through its beauty, but because it is free from oppression and cruelty, free from intolerance, and permeated by a friendly spirit between man and man. Catholic and Protestant live together in mutual respect, nor have I ever heard of any persecutions of Jews or Freethinkers. Town and country, mountain and plain, industry and agriculture consider one another's needs.

Switzerland is a living witness to the practical value of some of the highest elements in human civilization, Liberty, Tolerance and Peace. One of the most famous poems in the English language speaks of two great voices, one from the mountains of Switzerland, one from the seas round England, as the "chosen music of Liberty" calling to the world her great message. Let us hope that in the Exhibition of 1939 Switzerland will be seen strong, confident and true to herself, and that the troubled nations of Europe as they look towards Zurich may learn of the wise and calm little country lying in the midst of them the lesson she has been holding before their eyes for so many hundred years.

Gilbert Murray.

A Creation of the Human Will ...

Switzerland, in the midst of Europe, stands before the world as the prototype of Western civilization. This is no mere phrase. It is a demonstrable truth.

To begin with, Switzerland is a bundle of paradoxes.

The most united and vigorously conscious nation of Europe, it has no natural frontiers, no unity of race, no unity of religion, no unity of language, no unity of literary culture, and, despite appearances to the contrary, no unity of tradition. Yet, Switzerland is one and the fact impresses the stranger upon arrival, no matter in which part of her soil, race, religion, language, culture or civilization he may land.

The most democratic nation in the world, Switzerland has no parliamentary system and, though its people retains in its hands those two powerful, and even dangerous, levers of policy control, the plebiscite and the right of initiative, it boasts ... but, no, Switzerland never boasts, it may claim to possess the stables executive in the world, not excepting, curiously enough, dictatorial and totalitarian States.

A people of peasants and cattlemen, on the whole rather poor in raw materials and lacking coal, it has developed one of the most advanced industrial civilizations in the world, so that men from all countries come to Switzerland in search of industrial experts, schools, technical advice and competence; and that Swiss machinery has secured and maintains an enviable reputation for quality, workmanship and finish.

This countryside people, moreover, have become masters in the difficult art of urban construction and management. Switzerland keeps its little towns in a high state of efficiency, cleanliness, character, and culture, far above that achieved by other nations more abundant in industrial resources and possessing huge towns.

This people of professional soldiers, who once were the cannon-fodder of all Europe, out of their own choice and for the fun — and the profit — of it, have become the nation of permanent and constitutional neutrality and are as determined never to fight other people's battles now as they were once ready to fight everybody's.

Finally, in the midst of a Europe in which the conflicting characters and ambitions of Germans, French and Italians are a constant source of irritation and war-mongery, Switzerland has become a haven of peace composed precisely of Germans, Frenchmen and Italians who have decided to build up a Commonwealth across their differences, as if to show the world that it can be done and how.

All these paradoxes have but one key. The Swiss have achieved all these apparent impossibilities because they have made up their minds to do so. *Switzerland is a creation of the human will.* Now, the human will differs from mere human impulses in that it is intelligent and purposeful. Knowing whither it goes, it studies the way. Knowing the way, it keeps to it.

And since it is evident that the specific feature of Western civilization is precisely that it seeks to achieve clear aims by the operation of the human will, it follows that Switzerland is the prototype of our Western civilization and the masterpiece thereof.

Salvador de Madariaga.

Zurich — A City that Raises the Spirits.

Zurich is a town of many attractions and blessed with many advantages. In the first place, unlike some more definitely interesting Cities, it is an extremely cheerful, even often gay looking town. There is nothing melancholy or morose about it. It is full of energy and life. A busy and bustling river, the Limmat, runs through it. On clear days it commands a magnificent view of the distant Alps. It is built on the edge of a far spreading lake, along which extend promenades shaded by masses of trees and bordered at intervals by sun and lake baths which are crowded with happy people during the golden months of the summer. On the heights round the City there are splendid forests offering to everyone the health and beauty of endless delightful walks and rides. All this is to the good. But Zurich has much more to offer than this.

I believe it to be a singularly healthy City. But this is a strictly personal view. I have not consulted doctors on the point. My belief comes to me from my own experience. Whenever I visit Zurich, I feel better in health there than I do in almost any other place, whether in town or country. It has been said that the greatest sufferer from insomnia can sleep in Rome. I incline to the belief, judging purely from my own personal experience, that the greatest sufferer from dyspepsia will feel at his best in Zurich.

I once asked a Zurichois why this was. He said: It's the water. Zurich has marvellous water. I was so influenced by the earnest sound of this voice that directly he left me I went to my bathroom, turned on the cold water tap, filled a tumbler and drank off the Elixir. And since then I swear devoutly by the water of Zurich.

Zurich of course contains first-rate hotels. This need hardly be dwelt upon since Switzerland is noted for its hotel keepers. There are, too, restaurants innumerable, two or three in the old part of the town possessing an almost irresistible lure for the gourmet. There are fine picture galleries, a splendid University, two golf courses, one amusing and swell at the Dolder, the other grandiose at Zumikon a little way out. There are many first-rate tennis courts at the Baur au Lac, behind the Dolder Grand Hotel in the Forest and elsewhere.

And there is music, much music of the best kind in Zurich. Vienna used to be called "The Singing City." And every waiter and chamber maid there in the old days, now gone, seemed to be an acute judge of music. One would not say quite so much as this of Zurich.

Nevertheless I believe Zurich to be one of the most musical Cities of Europe. During the

Season, before the bathing season has fully set in towards the end of June, when most people seem to spend the best part of the day in the sun and swimming baths, there is a concert, and usually a good one, almost every night of the week. And the Opera Season at the Stadt-Theater lasts, I believe, during nine months of the year. (At Covent Garden Opera House in London the Season of Opera lasts for barely two months.)

The people of Zurich care greatly for music, but better still, they seem to me to care most for really fine music.

A good while ago, on one of the first of my many visits to Zurich, I went to a concert with what might be called, though not by me, a programme of very "stiff" music. The only composer's name on the programme was Bach. The concert took place in the big concert room of the Tonhalle. Rather to my surprise this was crammed. Not a seat was empty. And the big audience was devout. The applause at the end was tremendous. One discerned warm gratitude in it, a "thank you" worth having.

Since then I have heard programmes entirely devoted to works by Mozart, Chopin, etc., which were equally well attended — even difficult ultra modern Chamber Music draws good audiences. The people of Zurich like to know what is being done as well as what has been done.

No wonder Wagner was so attracted to Zurich; no wonder Busoni passed so much of his time there; no wonder the great conductor, Furtwängler, brings his Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra there, and even conducts now and then at the Stadt-Theater.

Zurich is a genial City, a City that raises the Spirits. I venture to recommend it even to the pessimist.

Mainfeld, June 1938.

Robert Hichens.

SIX YEARS TO BUILD A TUNNEL.

By H. L. McNALLY.

Swiss railway engineers — the men who burrow, tunnel, and gnaw their way through the rock and ice of the Alps like mites wandering through a cheese — have been celebrating the 25th anniversary of the opening of the Loetschberg Tunnel, which, with the better-known Simplon, links the Channel ports with Milan.

I have just completed a tour of the Bernese Alpine Railway.

In four days I have sweltered in temperatures over 100 degrees, been hailed on at Gornergrat, where the highest open-air railway in Europe reaches a height of 10,290ft., and been snowed on at Jungfraujoch, which is 11,340ft. high — so high that an egg takes 10 minutes to boil, and boiling water is nearly cool enough to drink.

The Jungfrau herself provided me with a strip-tease act beneath her veil of clouds of tantalising but incomparable beauty.

I shall not forget meeting Bernard Shaw's Captain Bluntschli in the person of Dr. Seiler of Zermatt, who owns 2,400 beds in his chain of Alpine hotels, and is the only man I ever met who owns a glacier — the Rhone Glacier, one of the finest in Switzerland, in which there is an artificial cave 100 yards long and 10ft. high, cut in the ice.

Switzerland in the summer has a special charm — the charm of contrast. Electric rack railways wind and climb slowly, but steadily, up from the sun-baked valleys; up through the pines thousands of feet to where gentian, even bluer than the sky, and other many-coloured Alpine flowers grow; up to cool refreshing air where patches of last year's snow lie around defying the sunshine.

I have funny memories too. I think of Blausee, whose water is so blue that one imagines the lake must be closed annually for re-blueing. I recollect that this little lake — surrounded by 1,000ft.-high rock cliffs down which water cascades in streams that look like white smoke — is the home of thousands of blue trout, so tame that a notice says: "It is forbidden to take the fish out of the water."

The electric train carried me away from Blausee through tunnel after tunnel until I

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reached the Loetschberg Tunnel. A searchlight revealed, as we sped at 56 miles an hour, the vast rock-blasting that had been done. Seventy-four million francs — about £3,000,000 — were spent on the line, and £1,500,000 on the tunnel alone.

It was planned that the tunnel would take 4½ years to build, but an avalanche which killed 12 men and injured 15, and a roof collapse which buried 25 workmen, made it necessary to divert the tunnel to avoid a dangerous fault in the rock. The work took six years and nine months, and traffic began in July 1913.

M. Bittel, engineer of the line, told me of the opening of the tunnel. "All Switzerland took part," he said. "Cannonades of joy were fired, chamois hunters, guides, and people in local costumes attended from every part. Ministers representing foreign Governments were there when, at noon, mines were exploded and the new international link was open."

"The tunnel was an international enterprise. French money, Swiss and Italian technicians, designers, and workmen all co-operated in this work which Switzerland planned to aid international friendship and tourist traffic. It was so popular that the train services had to be doubled from the first day."

Out of the tunnel — whose nine miles the train covers in 15 minutes — we were running high over the Rhone Valley, looking down on the level-straight poplar-lined road to Brigue which was first laid out by Napoleon as the route to Italy.

Kandersteg, best known in winter, was full of visitors who had gathered bunches of Alpine flowers, now in full bloom. For a moment I paused at the cemetery where the men who died in the building of the Loetschberg are buried — the men who made my trip possible.

I should have liked to stay at the Ritz in Niederwald, for it is the original Ritz, opened 300 years before César Ritz founded the hotels which have made the name world-renowned, but its four bedrooms were full.

Rain was falling at Zermatt, but a fine morning followed, and a rack railway brought me above the pines, past the blue gentians, up to the snowy Gornergrat, where the temperature was at freezing point.

On the summit I found myself surrounded by the most awe-inspiring peaks: Monte Rosa, the Breithorn, the Matterhorn, and the Little Matterhorn.

You Can't Hurry.

Ten thousand feet up clouds swirled and drifted about me in a battle with the sunshine, and ominous-looking black daws with bright yellow beaks flew around seeming like small eagles.

At this height, for anyone unaccustomed to it, it is necessary to move slowly, even for a few paces. A quick walk of ten yards makes the heart palpitate.

My highest climb was by the Jungfrauoch railway from Scheidegg at 6,770ft. to the Jungfrauoch station at 11,340ft. Almost the whole of this line is tunnelled through the rock under the glaciers, and the gradient is 1 in 4 most of the way.

The five and three-quarter miles journey to the magnificent hotel which has been built in a seemingly impossible position at the top takes just an hour.

There the Jungfrau (the Maiden) played her strip-tease act. Fine snow veiled her altogether as I went into the Ice Palace, a wonderful excavation in the glacier ice. There is a bar, complete with piano, and "stove" made of ice, also a skating rink, where one's breath settles as crystals of frost on the ice walls, and the exertion of a few rounds on skates is enough to make one out of breath.

Back in the open again, the Maiden gave me my first glimpse; a cloud rested on the summit and others drifted around, letting me see one part and then another, but never the whole mountain. Tantalisingly, the summit remained invisible.

(Daily Mail.)

VISIT TO THE MONASTERY OF ST. BERNARD.

Lake Geneva glittered like a sapphire in the sunlight as we took a car at Montreux for a day's journey to the St. Bernard Hospice. Skirting the lakeside, we passed the medieval Castle of Chillon, and then, turning south at the old Roman station of Villeneuve, we drove through the Rhône valley to where the river joins the Drance by Martigny.

For several miles our way led through sun-drenched orchards of peaches, apricots and vineyards. Cow-bells tinkled in the pastures. Coloured chalets like toys perched among the hills, and peasants in bullock-carts made patches of lively colour on the green landscape. At Martigny, where the ascent to the Great St.

Bernard begins, there was a change in the scenery. Pine-clad hills, bleaker pastures and bare mountain bosses came into view. Towering crags reared distant white caps into the blue, and children, scrambling down rocky ways, ran after our car selling bunches of edelweiss. Soon we were driving past deep ravines, foaming cataracts and glassy green glaciers.

A halt to cool our engine was made at Bourg St. Pierre, a wild mountain village, eight miles below the hospice. Here were a Roman milestone with an inscription to Constantine, a bridge built by Charlemagne, and a tenth-century Romanesque church. At the tiny inn called "Déjeuner de Napoléon" we saw the room, the table, chair and plates used by the Emperor when he breakfasted on May 20th, 1800.

The last lap of the journey was a steady climb through a rock-hewn gorge into a wilderness of ice and snow, a land of rugged boulders, deep crevasses and lonely silent wastes sprinkled sparsely with clumps of hardy Alpine flora. In the heart of the mountains, touched by the flush of the sun, we came at last to that centuries-old guesthouse, the Monastery of St. Bernard, 8,111 feet above sea level.

The monks received us in the vestibule of their great stone fortress, and showed us round the ancient dwelling, a barracks-like building of a hundred rooms, capable of accommodating four hundred visitors a night. The present hospice stands on the site of the original eleventh-century monastery built by Bernard of Menthon, which was demolished in 1560 to make room for a larger. With the advent of the motor-car, and the replacement of the old mule-path by a new road in 1893 this, too, became inadequate, and another building known as the hotel has been added for the accommodation of tourists.

To-day the hospice has central heating, telephones, electricity and radio, but still the rooms with their six-feet-thick walls seemed damp and chilly. We sat in the dim chapel while the monks sang psalms, and put on our coats to keep out the cold. Some fifteen monks live in the monastery, but after a few years the rigorous climate (temperature zero for five months) compels them to retire to their mother-house at Martigny, and they are replaced by others. The fathers showed us their treasures — a painting in the refectory of St. Bernard and his dog, a piano given by Edward VII, guest of the monastery when Prince of Wales, and a portrait of Queen Victoria, presented by her Majesty when she stayed here one night. The library contains 2,000 volumes, books of all ages and nations, and there are natural history and mineralogical collections, and Roman coins and tablets, which the brothers excavated some years ago on the site of an ancient temple to Jove which stood close to the hospice.

A monk led us to the kennels of their famous dogs. Some five or six friendly beasts answered to their names, and climbed on the monk's shoulders. In centuries past, the dogs played a great part as guides and rescuers, but nowadays it is customary for travellers to telephone from the valley before crossing the pass, and, in the event of snowstorm, the monks set out on skis to find them. In 1883 the St. Bernard monks obtained two pairs of skis from Norway. They were the first to use skis in Switzerland.

The fathers told us that about twenty thousand visitors come to the hospice annually. Most of them are hurrying tourists or Italian peasants seeking work across the mountains. But the golden age of Alpine hospices is no more. The opening of the St. Gotthard and Simplon tunnels has banished the danger of Alpine transit. The photograph shows tourists on the Mount St. Bernard.

M. B.
(Birmingham Post.)

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