

Christmas and new year traffic

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As Foreign Minister he watched over Switzerland's neutrality unceasingly. The last years of his life saw his path beset with many difficulties, he had to tread warily in a world full of pitfalls. No wonder that his heart began to fail, but after the briefest of respites he always returned to his office, to resume his burden. He died almost in harness.

How well do I remember him in his office. The central seat of Switzerland's Government is a simple, sunny building — no guns in front, nor smart soldiers standing to attention. In Berne flowerpots grace the window-sills, and a few feet from the entrance door a vegetable market is held. It does not spoil the Government's dignity, for they need not fear each other, Government and people in Switzerland, since they share the same virtues of solidarity and simplicity.

To the last Giuseppe Motta retained his youthful vigour. His forehead was almost classically Roman in an otherwise robust and square peasant face, engraved with countless little lines. Parent of ten children, he looked eminently the jolly father — yet not to be tampered with.

He was very simple in his taste. In his study, overlooking the snowcapped peaks of the Bernese Oberland, hung only one painting of Tessin women kneeling at a wayside chapel. Once when he had been talking of his increasing political burdens, he suddenly, gazing at it intently, said simply: "... then I have to go back to my native Tessin, and walk hatless in the silence and purity of the mountains of my youth. As the years mount I feel my communion with nature grow deeper ..."

A man of peace has now gone to his reward, the Eternal Peace which is God.

CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEAR TRAFFIC.

(*"Railway Gazette,"* 26.1.40.)

The almost total lack of foreign visitors on account of European conditions resulted, as was to be expected, in a marked decrease in holiday traffic as compared with 1938-39 figures. During Christmas week (December 20th to 26th) the Federal Railways ran 217 special trains, as against 625 the previous year, and passenger receipts amounted to fr. 3,013,300, or a decrease of about fr. 200,000; this figure does not, however, include receipts from military traffic originating at a number of small stations from which soldiers returned home on leave. Conditions were better during the New Year week (December 27th to January 2nd), when 253 specials were run on the Federal lines (as against 490), and receipts were some fr. 345,000 above those of the previous year and amounted to about fr. 3,100,000. Most of the winter sport resorts reported excellent numbers of Swiss visitors.

Generous facilities are now granted by the Federal Railways and most of the private companies for conducted winter excursions of parties of pupils from public and private schools, with a view to attracting traffic from points some distance from suitable resorts. The lowest existing rates, namely, those for parties of children under 12, with reductions between 65 and 75 per cent., are applied in such cases, irrespective of the childrens' actual ages.

SWISS MERCANTILE SOCIETY.

Following the Monthly Meeting on Saturday, January 13th, Mr. B. St. Regensburger, a member of the Society, delivered a very interesting lecture entitled "*On Horseback Through Ireland.*"

Mr. Regensburger intended to spend last year's holiday on horseback in Hungary but owing to the political situation altered his plans and made Ireland the venue of his ride. The latter country was already known to him for the fame of its horses, for he rode Irish horses in the Swiss army. In all the 26 counties of Ireland horse-breeding is prevalent. Poetry helped the lecturer to choose the County of Wicklow for his purpose and he quoted Ruth Duffin's impression of that county in rhyme:

"When you have left us, keep in mind
The things that you have left behind ...
The "purple spears" when twilight's veil
Turns Wicklow to a fairy tale."

Wicklow is a county of mighty, yet gentle mountains, of loughs buried among the mountains, wild valleys, brown moors, black and emerald forests. Wicklow has, as its own special attribute, many waters, streams, torrents and lakes. It was the very county where the fighters for Irish freedom were able to resist the English invasion the longest, because the wild mountains and vales were inaccessible to anybody who did not know the country.

The lecturer went to Ireland via Liverpool and reached Dublin by steamer. On arrival he was greeted by beautiful sunshine and did not fail to visit Phoenix Park — the Hyde Park of Dublin.

The County of Wicklow is south of Dublin, along the East Coast, about 30 miles down. Mr. Regensburger spent the night half-way between Wicklow and Dublin with an old friend of his, who on the following day, helped him to find a suitable mount. After driving by car from farm to farm he was eventually successful in finding the horse he was looking for at a mansion-like farm in a lonely bay — called Brittas Bay. It was a small, typically Irish horse. In the evening he sat down to fix an approximate route for his tour which was rather difficult since that part of the country was entirely unknown to him.

On the following morning, a Monday in early July, he left Brittas Bay on the tour proper. He rode along the so-called "Silver Strand" with its smooth white sands and marvellous rock formations. He then turned inland where the country is rather sparsely populated, and due to its mountainous nature there are few farms. Some old people told him about castles

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