

# The bi-millenary of Geneva

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## THE BI-MILLENARY OF GENEVA.

*The following two contributions to the above event seem to be opportune. The first is reprinted from that staunch friend of our country "The Christian Science Monitor," July 3rd, and gives a condensed survey of Geneva's history. The other one is taken from the "British Weekly," July 30th, whose correspondent has cabled a short account of the historic pageant.*

Geneva, headquarters of stupendous neutral relief works for the war, is preparing to celebrate the 2,000th anniversary of its foundation.

Possibly it is no coincidence that American's fete day, July fourth has been chosen as the official day of Geneva's "Bi-Millénaire." In ordinary times, fireworks on the waterfront, bonfires on nearby hills and general festivities would have commemorated the event. This time, the Geneva people are aware of their higher duties to their unhappy neighbours in Europe and are mainly concerned to fulfill them to the maximum of their possibilities.

The fetes will be of a modest nature. A pageant of about 2,000 participants will show the life of the city across the ages. Various periods will be represented both in the pageant and in the several exhibitions of paintings, enamels, engravings or watchmaking, which will remain open for the summer.

The absence of fires burning at night will be regretted by the Swiss people, who would have seen in them the symbol of the brotherhood of man shining on a darkened continent.

To the celebrations will come people who were formerly well-to-do citizens of other countries; now they are refugees and in need. Playing with the Swiss young folk will be hundreds of children, freshly arrived from Axis-controlled territories.

There will also be British, Polish, and Czech college students, finishing their terms at the Geneva School of Interpreters or at the Graduate Institute of International Relations.

Geneva made its debut in history exactly 2,000 years ago. In Book I of Caesar's "Commentaries" it is referred to as "Genava." The Roman conqueror tells how he destroyed the bridge over the Rhône in order to prevent a westward migration of the Helvetii in 58 B.C.

Geneva became a free Republic in 1535. A few years before, in 1530, Erasmus and Martin Luther were protesting against the abuses of the Roman Catholic Church. Six years later, Geneva officially announced its position as a reformed city. A few weeks after this event, John Calvin, a young French erudite, visited Geneva. Invited to stay, he soon organized what he intended to be a "model church" and made education free to common people.

At this time, the Bible was finally published in one volume and thus made readable to the common people. Meanwhile, John Knox and a number of English adherents of the new faith settled down in Geneva. Thomas Cartwright of Cambridge joined then and preached to large audiences.

The writings of Jean Jacques Rousseau elevated intellectual life at Geneva to lofty heights in the eighteenth century. The city became the favourite abode of Europe's leaders in natural science and literature.

A milestone in Geneva's newer history was the signing of the International Red Cross Treaty on

August 22nd, 1864, in the City Hall. The founding of this noble institution was due to the efforts of Jean Henri Dunant, a philanthropic citizen, who had been an eye-witness of the incredible sufferings of soldiers wounded in the battle of Solferino in Lombardy in 1859. From that time dates the insignia of the Red Cross, i.e. a red cross on a white field, a tribute to Switzerland's flag in a reversed arrangement. To-day, 64 countries are members of the Geneva Convention.

During the first World War, activities of the International Red Cross Committee on behalf of prisoners of war and war sufferers in general proved an inspiration to all mankind. In the present war this labour of love has assumed such gigantic proportions that the bureau operates in three buildings at Geneva, also in auxiliary offices in towns throughout Switzerland.

In Geneva's City Hall is the "Alabama Room" where the first International Red Cross Convention was held and where, from December 15th, 1871, to September 14th, 1872, the Alabama Claims Commission was in session. Several historic mementos are displayed in this chamber, including a small facsimile of the Liberty Bell.

Geneva, with its historic University and numerous public and private schools, has been singled out as one of Europe's foremost seats of learning. In prewar days, it also was the preferred spot of international organizations. The International Labour Office has an impressive abode on the lake and in close vicinity rises — now tragically silent — the new Palace of the League of Nations.

Geneva hopes the League, which was organized to eliminate wars, will in due time live anew in a permanent form and that the huge group of stately white buildings in Ariana Park will be rededicated to their original lofty purpose.

The bi-milennary which Geneva has just celebrated was a festival of remembrance, of gratitude, and of faith. It called up to the imagination the two thousand years of history of a city whose extraordinary destiny is expressed in the motto "*Post tenebras lux.*"

In early times Geneva became the seat of a Bishop. Its territory belonged to the Empire, but the Emperor placed it under the temporal jurisdiction of the Bishop of Geneva, who assumed the title "Prince-Bishop." For over two centuries the Church defended the interests of Geneva against the feudal lords, but fifteenth-century citizens lost the protection of the Church, which transferred support to the Duke of Savoy. In the procession Episcopal Geneva was called to mind by a brilliant group of prelates accompanied by monks and choir boys singing Gregorian allelulas.

In spite of its pomp, the Episcopate lost its hold over the freedom-loving citizens, who were determined to resist the ambitions of the House of Savoy. The movement for freedom culminated in the sixteenth-century Reformation, which was represented by a striking group in the procession. Preceded by a trophy symbolising the Reformation — a great gold sun adorned with the Christian sign IHS — the noble figures of the reformers moved forward clothed in black robes. There was the fiery Farel, the indefatigable pioneer of the Reformation. There was the great Calvin who detached Geneva from the past "to offer to God"; the learned Theodore de Beza, Calvin's successor, and, finally, valiant John Knox, who, exiled to Geneva, became in turn the principal agent of the

Reformation in Scotland. The grave, noble bearing of the four reformers offered a symbolic contrast between the ostentation of Episcopal Geneva and of the new age which opened with the preaching of the pure Gospel. The reformers were followed by "Syndics," that is, the magistrates who presided over the famous Plebiscite of May 21st, 1536, whereby the people of Geneva officially adopted the Reformation.

Once established, the Reformation strove to develop education in order to form a new generation of conscientious, enlightened ministers and magistrates. In 1559 the College and Academy were founded and became a famous nursery for ministers and teachers. The public greeted with due deference a group of professors from the Academy "Regents" of Calvin's College. After them came a great Bible borne on a tripod. The essential character of the Reform could not be better brought out than by reserving the place of honour for the Book which Calvin had made the charter for the new Geneva, thereby winning for his city the name "Protestant Rome."

After winning liberty and repulsing the final assault by the Duke of Savoy, Geneva was ready to write one of the finest pages in its history. French and Italian Protestants who were persecuted and threatened with extermination preferred to leave their homes rather than renounce their faith. They looked towards Geneva as a haven of safety. First to come were Vaudois of Piedmont, who were represented in the procession by a group of their authentic descendants. Geneva was also a city of refuge for the French Huguenots, victims of the revocation of the Edict of Nantes. These came in their thousands to seek shelter in the little Calvinist Republic, wherein they soon formed an intellectual working-class élite. This event was symbolised by a trophy representing somewhat originally the Edict of Nantes torn in pieces.

In the succeeding two centuries Geneva, which became a literary, artistic and intellectual centre, shone throughout the world. Later political and religious struggles appeared to eclipse Calvin's influence. But the Christianity of Geneva still retained vigour, and was to bring forth its finest fruit. In 1863 a Genevan Christian, Henri Dunant, founded the Red Cross which made Geneva the city of Charity. The motto, "*Inter arma caritas*," was, inscribed in gold letters on the sides of an allegorical "float" representing the Red Cross. Is there not in this institution, which to-day benefits millions of wounded and prisoners of war, an outstanding manifestation of that Christian spirit Calvin made to shine forth over Geneva and through which Calvin made to shine forth over Geneva and throughout the world?

### OUR NEXT ISSUE.

We hope to go to press again on Friday, September 25th, and wish to thank the following subscribers for their welcome contributions towards the steadily increasing costs of production, viz: Mrs. Ellison, Mr. A. Kunzler, J. H. Speich, Dr. J. Arpel, E. Wey, J. H. Meyer, Mrs. Streit, G. Luzio, H. Pfärter, C. Filliez, W. Weber, V. Tenger, L. Musy, J. Blaser, J. H. Brutsch, M. E. Lichtensteiger, F. Isler, H. E. von Gunten, J. C. Bachmann, J. C. Nussle, Mrs. M. Heinzelmann, L. W. Krucker, J. J. Huber, E. Belart, H. E. Burnier, J. Heimerdinger.

### OUR RATIONING.

*The following two casual articles in the English Press treat this subject from different angles; the first one is from the "Daily Sketch," July 28th, and perhaps stresses the matter unduly for the comfort of English readers.*

Those of us who are sometimes inclined to complain about our minor difficulties in obtaining favourite foods should think of Switzerland.

The little mountain republic is now almost completely cut off from the outside world. Conditions in the towns are almost intolerable.

Like ourselves, Switzerland depended in normal times on imports for most of her food supplies, and these have nearly all been cut off.

A friend from Geneva tells me that at places like Lausanne and Berne meat is an unheard-of luxury. Transport is so difficult that peasants do not bring their produce from the hillside farms.

The only access to France from the whole country is through the little town of Annemasse, on a single-line track outside Geneva. But at the frontier and in the railway station, although the officials wear French uniform, they are closely watched by Gestapo agents in civilian clothes. Black market smuggling across the lake from Evian les Bains, home of the famous mineral water, has reached formidable proportions.

*The second one from the "Glasgow Herald," August 3rd, is on philosophic lines and suggests that brains are at a discount in Berne as far as rationing is concerned; the same applies, of course, to this country though in a lesser degree.*

The Swiss have set a very bad example with their meat-rationing, which is based on a different scale. The most meat is given to the most deserving, and all "intellectuals" are given the minimum ration. The reason advanced by an expert is that intellectual work does not require great energy. "Even genius is quite gratuitous," said this rationing person, "and involves no strain on the body as a whole."

The implications of this doctrine are deeply disquieting to all those who work with their brains, when they work at all. A thorough-going intellectual is convinced that his mental efforts put a serious strain on his sanity, if they do not positively imperil his life. He watches the simple toil of navvies and steeplejacks with undisguised envy. How pleasant it would be to indulge in such healthy and invigorating exercise, and then return in a warm glow to an evening of leisure, untroubled by high and dangerous thoughts.

But these are pleasures the intellectual cannot know. Suppose he is pursuing the True, the Beautiful,

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