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A Famous Visitor from Berne



The Mayor of Berne has had a very original idea. He has sent a Bear, in the name of his home town, on a journey to London. A few days ago this important representative of the capital, weighing appr. 50 lbs and just over 21 inches in height, arrived safely at Northolt after a wonderful flight by Swissair. For the time being it is looking with cunning eyes from the window of the Swiss National Tourist Office in the Strand at the passers-by who admire the brown Brumas from Berne.

Readers will be interested to hear how the town of Berne became to adopt a bear in its coat of arms. It was in 1191 that Berchtold V, Duke of Zähringen decided to found this city. The name of Berne and the coat-of-arms also originate from that time. The legend runs that Duke Berchtold organised a hunt, declaring that the first animal to be caught should give its name to his future town. The captured animal was a bear and it isn't a far cry from the German word "Bär" to the city's present name, Berne, so the story may well be true. At any rate, since earliest times bears have been connected with Berne and one doesn't have to be long here to realise that these animals play quite an important part in the city's life. They are reproduced everywhere, on buildings, on the fountains and on the city's coat-of-arms which is a bear rampant on a field of red and gold.

But most attractive of all are the live bears, kept in pits in the old part of the town. They have a constant stream of visitors whom they keep amused with their tricks and antics. Their admirers keep them well supplied with tit-bits such as carrots and figs. As the bears have no worries about keeping slim they accept with pleasure all that comes their way! The bear cubs are adorable to watch especially around Easter when they come out for the first time. They

seem like small balls of fur, though when fully grown they will weigh about 500 lbs!

The Bernese are justly proud of their city and very fond of the bears; a comparison between the Bernese and their bears has been drawn, that both are rather slow on the up-take though good-natured. However this remark is meant, the Bernese take it as a compliment. To their way of thinking, there isn't a better animal than the bear!

The display window in the Strand will certainly not be the permanent residence of our visitor from Berne. At Christmas Santa Claus will take it to Great Ormond Street Children's Hospital, where it will be received by the little patients with great enthusiasm, for it is the offspring of the ancient Bernese family TOBLER and consists of finest Swiss Milk Chocolate.

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