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Autor: Meakin, Derek
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ROUNDOABOUT SWITZERLAND.

DEREK MEAKIN'S monthly review of tourist activities in Switzerland.

What a grand old time they are having in Lucerne right now! An endless stream of pounds, dollars, francs, marks and lire (in that order) are pouring into Switzerland's Town of the Golden Purse. The shops are selling out of nylons, embroidered blouses and lace undies almost quicker than they can wire for further supplies. Dozens of those gay little pédalos, despite their hire charge being double that of their cousins on Lake Léman, are always to be seen weaving in and out of the romantically-named paddle steamers, crowded with excited sightseers. And carriages of Bernhard Zimmermann's Pilatus Railway are hauling themselves two miles 677 yards into the heavens like brilliantly-painted red ladybirds on a conveyor belt.

All of which goes to show that despite devaluation increasing their holiday costs by between 30 and 40 per cent., Britons and their European neighbours can still find enough cash for their annual fling on the banks of the Reuss.

It is not true that Britons go to Lucerne solely because it is the thing to do. There they find every ingredient for the perfect holiday — an old-world atmosphere that reminds you of Berne and the modern gaiety of Lausanne; with its Casino it introduces a dash of Monte Carlo, and its beautiful southern horizon brings a crescent of High Alps to its doorstep.

And Lucerne has really gone out of its way to pander to British holidaymakers, so much so that while

French is the second language for the rest of German-speaking Switzerland, the people of Lucerne have unanimously chosen English.

My wife comes from Lausanne. Imagine her surprise then, when in Lucerne earlier this year shop assistants and even bus conductors insisted on answering her in English when she spoke to them in French!

* * *

Opening up Lucerne to the British in a big way actually goes back to the time of Bob Mitchell, the founder of Polytechnic Tours. Passing through the town on the way back from Rome he was inspired by drinking a cup of tasteless Swiss tea, bought a hotel on the spur of the moment, added the now famous Lucerne chalets for £10,000 and filled them with second-hand furniture he bought on the cheap. They became a roaring success, and they still are. At the beginning of the century you could stay there 17 days for £10. To-day a fortnight costs £35. But the crowds are still flocking there..

More than anywhere else in Switzerland, tourism in Lucerne is now a highly developed industry. It has its own "factory" in the lovely Schweizerhofquai where they are constantly turning out a flood of brochures, leaflets, maps, folders and photos, all bent on persuading foreigners with money to spare that Lucerne is a "must" for everyone. In charge of this unique workshop is chubby, despectacled Dr. Edward Schütz, a former schoolmaster who now looks upon the world as his classroom.

That he has more than succeeded in putting over his lesson is obvious to anyone who has visited Lucerne this summer.

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