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BRITISH AUTHOR'S TRIBUTE TO ZURICH AND TO SWISS WAITERS' DIGNITY.

Mr. George Bilainkin, the British author and diplomatic correspondent, who has a reputation for outstanding candour in his diaries and in his lectures, refers to his recent visit to Switzerland in a letter in a country weekly he once edited in the West of England. On this journey Mr. Bilainkin travelled by sea from Hull to Hamburg and thence through the Bay of Biscay and Mediterranean to Split, on the Dalmatian coast. In Belgrade he was received for 2½ hours by Marshal Tito whose biography is one of Mr. Bilainkin's recently published books.

The letter is headed across two columns, "Sunshine and Luxury on Sea and Land", "G.B.'s Letter from 'Dream' Hotel in Switzerland". He writes:—

"Inevitably I have to ask myself, what are the advantages of being a great, imperial power in the twentieth century? For I am in the heart of the wealthiest most up-to-date, probably most efficient state in Europe.

I have not yet seen anything approaching a slum, have not yet set eyes upon a badly dressed man, woman or child, have not yet discovered an ill-fed baby, have not yet seen a smelly district and have not yet met a drunken man or woman. I have been travelling round Switzerland, in the most comfortable, clean and courteously operated railways. And the conclusion I have reached is that the four and a half million people in this tiny republic have worked so hard and so long, so intelligently and so calmly, that they have produced a miracle state — where standards of living are remarkably high, where men and women have time for pleasant manners in public and in private, where reasons for human existence are abundant.

After visiting the leading hotels in seventeen capitals in Europe, since 1945, I have no hesitation in awarding the plum for superb service, cuisine, atmosphere to the Baur au Lac, in bustling Zurich.

In my matchlessly decorated suite, I notice magnificent linen in the two important rooms adjoin-

ing the little hall. I discover promptly that the ringing of one of the four bells brings instant attention, with a really glad smile. The waiter is happy to bring up a five course luncheon on a flawlessly laid table, or supper at eleven thirty; the floor porter discusses the pressing of the suit within three minutes of my ringing his bell, and says it can be done tomorrow morning between seven thirty and eight thirty; the chambermaid assures me that all the laundry will be taken at eight a.m. and returned by seven p.m. In the French restaurant meals end at 10 p.m., in the grill room about midnight, in the dance-bar about two a.m. and elsewhere at other times. But the exciting ice-cream in my room as I type and look out on the quiescent lake far below the shimmering lights is a measure of the quality of the meals here.

I have not anywhere else in Europe been so impressed with the professional dignity of waiters and waitresses. For instance, the head waiter in the Baur au Lac's grill room dances round with radiance, slices the ice cream for a crowd of clients at one of the bigger tables, joyfully dances round my table adding sauce to the super-man's portion of sole which a benevolent and good-looking waitress has served with the help of another waiter. The vegetables are all deposited with dignity and pleasure from separate dishes. The silver sparkles. The cutlery is new.

The tiny private hot stove at every table comes on automatically to keep warm the second helpings the waiter has politely left off the crowded plate.

I walked along one of the most fashionable shopping centres of Europe, the Bahnhofstrasse, admire the hundred and one varieties of (£100 down) gold and silver watches, the princess style furs, the palace carpets, the rare china and priceless glass, the £6 shirts, the £30 overcoats, the £3 ties.

The car parks are packed.

In Geneva — my 1939 dream city where my awakening took place only a few days ago — the wealth is even more fabulous and educational standards are equally fantastic. In the railway carriage I study the grandeur of Mont Blanc one second, and, in another, the glamour indescribable of the lake and the playful baby trees.

CITY SWISS CLUB MONTHLY MEETING

on

Tuesday, February 13th, 1951,
6.30 for 7 o'clock,
at

The Dorchester Hotel, Park Lane, W.1.

Mr. A. L. PALMER, Manager of the Anglo-American Oil Co., Ltd., will speak on:

"Oil in European Recovery."

THE COMMITTEE.

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