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Autor: E.A.G.

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A NOVEL WAY OF TRAVELLING IN SWITZERLAND.

By waterway from Neuchâtel to Soleure.

After reading "Holiday Observations" by the Editor in the October 11th issue of the "Swiss Observer", on my return from my fourth trip to the Continent this year, I feel prompted to recount a pleasant experience, the more so as it may be of interest to some readers on a future visit to Switzerland. First, I may be perhaps permitted to recall a little anecdote.

Many years ago, I was one day visiting the old "pasteur" of my native town, whom I knew to be a great lover of nature and who had been in every corner of our home Country. He was telling me he had never been holidaying outside Switzerland and, myself full of enthusiasm about the various countries I had visited, I asked him if he had never felt the urge to go abroad. "Of course, it has always been my wish and my hope to see other countries, but first I must finish discovering Switzerland", was his reply. Well, he died well over 80 years of age and he had not finished discovering Switzerland!

My knowledge of Switzerland is very small compared to what the "pasteur" of my youth knew of his homeland. Nevertheless, I was thinking of him when I had the infinite pleasure of discovering some countryside at home unknown to me and especially an original way of travelling.

On the beautiful last Saturday of September this year I was invited to a celebration which took place at Soleure and our party was conveyed there in three comfortable motor-boats from Neuchâtel.

A man and his wife are the owners of these three motor-boats, which have a carrying capacity of about 70 persons each and are named Romandie 1, Romandie 2, and Nautilus. This couple run a public service every day between Neuchâtel and Soleure (except Saturdays, which are reserved for private excursions) from 1st May to 30th September.

Great public works have been undertaken many years ago to make the river "Thièle" navigable from the lake of Neuchâtel to the lake of Biel and then from the lake of Biel to Büren an der Aar, where it joins the Aar to Soleure. This is part of a big project: Rhône-Rhine Canal, which one day may be fully realized, but it will take years to build the Canal to link lake Léman to lake Neuchâtel.

We left Neuchâtel shortly before 9 a.m. and arrived at Soleure at 12.30 p.m., after a most delightful journey on the opalescent waters of the canals and the lakes.

It was a very restful trip as our boats were gliding smoothly on the peaceful water of the lake Neuchâtel under a brilliant sun. Then we entered the first canal of the Thièle linking the lakes of Neuchâtel and Biel. We met on our way a dredger and a solitary fisherman in his little boat. To me, the countryside with high trees overhanging the river was rather reminiscent of the upper reaches of the Thames between Wallingford and Oxford.

Entering the lake of Biel, we passed the island of St. Peter, which is more of a little peninsula and well worth a visit, so I understand, for its wild countryside and reminiscences of Rousseau. But the

big revelation to me was the extent of the vineyards on the slopes of the Mount Chasseral. I never realized that so much wine was produced there in that part of the Canton Berne. When you travel by train between Neuchâtel and Biel, one always looks to the lakeside and so the great area of vineyards between Landeron and Biel escapes generally the notice of the traveller. That is what happened to me.

From the lake the view of the vineyards was extensive and I began to think of my journeys abroad in the past. How many times did I find a bottle of Neuchâtel wine in some remote place of the world? Never a Dézaley or a Fendant, always and uniquely a Neuchâtel! Now, I realized that many gallons of "Schaffiser" and "Twanner" wine must go into Neuchâtel bottles and I felt sorry for the name of Berne as a producer of wine being so wrongfully unsurpassed by Neuchâtel. Thinking a little more deeply, however, and remembering the constant endeavours of Berne to centralise and encroach on the cantonal institutions, I finally rejoiced to witness a case where a Canton had the better of Berne!

At Nidau, close to Biel, we entered the second Thièle canal, the Nidau-Büren Canal, not so solitary and wooded as the former, but with more open country and dwellings. There is a lock soon after Nidau, but the level of the water being the same on both sides when we passed, we went quickly through one gate.

At Büren, a charming little town from what I could see from the boat, where we passed under a picturesque old covered wooden bridge, the canal joins the old bed of the Aar.

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After meandering over a distance of about 15 km. from Büren through a peaceful countryside our boats arrived at Soleure, the end of our remarkable journey by water from the "Suisse Romande".

Soleure lies gracefully across the Aar which flows there indolently and looks like a very big river. Walking through the streets of the town for the first time I was impressed by its air of old dignity which is, after all, very becoming to our first federal capital, within whose walls ambassadors resided.

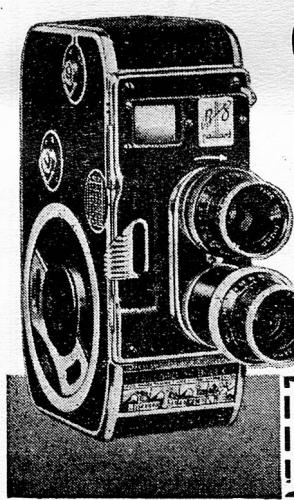
I was wondering why Soleure does not appear much on the tourist maps; but perhaps this is just as well for the sake of lovers of nature and ancient beauty.

Unfortunately our dinner lasted too long and we had to rush to our train without exploring this — so well preserved — medieval city, with its fortifications, tower and "zeughaus".

But I shall return, taking a little more time to stop "en route", especially at St. Peter island. If some readers would be guided by my experience for a future visit to Switzerland, I would recommend them starting from Morât (Murten) and going by boat to Neuchâtel by the Broye canal alongside the made-fertile big estate of Witzwil. I understand that in the vicinity there is a bird sanctuary belonging to the Ornithological Society of Berne, which is probably open to the public.

E.A.G.

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An Interesting Meeting.

Attainments and progress in the field of Atomic Science are subjects which occupy at present scientists and laymen alike.

The Nouvelle Société Helvétique, therefore, very appropriately and much to their credit, arranged a lecture which was given by Dr. A. D. Merriman, G.C., O.B.E., M.A. D.Sc., F.R.S.E., an authority in this sphere, at the Swiss Hostel for Girls, 9, Belsize Grove, N.W.3, on Tuesday, October 22nd 1957.

In introducing the lecturer Mr. W. Renz, President of the Nouvelle Société Helvétique, very briefly outlined some of the progress made in Switzerland in this field (for peaceful purposes only).

A numerous audience listened with great interest to Dr. Merriman, who spoke on the subject "Atomic Science and Technique".

Although the subject is a complex one, and somewhat outside the comprehension of non-technicians, the distinguished lecturer succeeded in explaining a number of highly technical processes used in industry based on atomic science. His most interesting résumé — intermingled with dry humour — kept the audience spellbound, and gave them a glimpse of what is done in the sphere of Atomic Science.

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