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Capering down the Rhine

THE annual festival of the three guilds – known as Companies of Honour – of Kleinbasel, the part of Basle city on the right bank of the River Rhine, falls on January 13, 20 or 27, depending on which company is presiding.

The three emblematic figures of the companies, Griffin, Wild Man and Lion, meet up after the Wild Man has travelled down the Rhine on a raft. Their reunion takes place at midday and they dance and caper on the Central Rhine Bridge to the beat of drums.

★ ★ ★ ★

MARKING the Patronal Festival on January 20, two huge and richly decorated cakes are borne in solemn procession to the church and later divided up among the congregation.

★ ★ ★ ★

ON Meitlisunntig, the second Sunday in January, the girls of Meisterschwanden and Fahrwangen in the Seetal district of Aargau stage a procession in historical uniforms and a military parade before a feminine "General Staff." This is followed by a popular festival.

According to tradition the custom goes back to the Villmergen War of 1712. The



Vogel Gryff in Basle

women of both communes are said to have given vital help that led to the victory of the Protestant Bernese over the Catholic forces of Central Switzerland.

★ ★ ★ ★

ON Epiphany, January 6, Christian customs mingle with usages which are wholly archaic and reminiscent of pagan

practices.

The noisy, money-soliciting parades contrast with the procession of the three kings with their star, illuminated from the inside.

The custom is widespread except in the canton of the Valais, where nowadays it is carried on only in the Lotschental, where the white-clad kings with a small escort, including the starbearer, "gallop" through the villages on beautifully-carved hobby horses.

Events of the month

| | | |
|--------------|--------------------------------------|---|
| 1981 | Fribourg/ Solothurn Interlaken | 500th anniversaries of Cantons Fribourg and Solothurn «Harderpotschete», ancient popular custom with procession |
| Jan 2 | | 11th international pharmaceutical further-training congress |
| Jan 11-17 | Davos | Palais des expositions: International cat show |
| Jan 24/25 | Geneva | 51st International Lauberhorn ski races |
| Jan 24/25 | Wengen | Lenzerheide 24-hour relay cross-country event |
| Jan 24/25 | Lenzerheide- Valbella | 14th Lenzerheide-Valbella public night cross-country event |
| Jan 29 | Lenzerheide- Valbella | 11th European management symposium |
| Jan 29-Feb 7 | Davos | |

Geneva's Youth Music Festival

THE International Youth Music Festival will be taking place in Geneva from July 2 to 6.

The programme includes individual performances, parades, a concert at the United Nations European Headquarters (Palais des Nations), a live broadcast, a gala concert, and participation at school graduation festivities.

Further information or appli-

cations: Official Tourist Office, Case postale 440, 1200 Geneva 11, Switzerland.

Passion play returns

AFTER a lapse of 11 years, the Great World Theatre passion play will again be presented at the open air theatre in Einsiedeln's monastery square with two showings a week from June 15 until September 15.

Winter sports world championship

FROM March 8 to 18, 1982, the second world championship of winter sports for the disabled will be held at the resorts of Diablerets, Gryon, Leysin, Mosse and Villars in the Alpes Vaudoises.

Events will take place in various classes of disability in Alpine, Nordic, sledge and sledge hockey.

Much on offer at Leukerbad

THE facilities of the spa centre in Leukerbad have now been greatly extended by indoor and open air swimming pools, restaurants, rest-cure halls and covered passages to two open air swimming pools.

There is now a total of 10 indoor and seven open air swimming pools.

A special weekly all-inclusive arrangement is on offer including seven nights half board, four free entrances to the spa centre, seven days unlimited use of the Torrent aerial cableway and all ski lifts or, for langlauf, free use of the Gemmi aerial cableway.

Prices start from Sfr. 251.

Further information from: Official Tourist Office, 3954 Leukerbad, Switzerland.

Further details about any of the items reported here can be obtained from Swiss National Tourist Office, Swiss Centre, London W1V 3HG. (Tel: 01-734 1921).