

Notes and gleanings

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NOTES AND GLEANINGS.

Fête des Vignerons.

Readers of the *S.O.* will remember that one of the Clubs in our Colony arranged a collective visit to the Festival at Vevey, followed by the traditional "social." Nothing has yet been allowed to reach the ears of the Colony about this unique event with the exception, perhaps, that the treasurer of the particular Club has exhibited some trepidation when asked to foot the bill and that the President of the Confederation has sent a telegram expressing sympathy. We shall, no doubt, be supplied with an official report in due course, i.e., before the advent of the next Fête des Vignerons, 25 years hence, but in the meantime we reproduce an article from the *Manchester Guardian* (Aug. 15th) which, under the title "The Spirit of Switzerland," records the impressions of an Englishman who attended the Festival.

Swiss writers have applied that poor ill-used word "unique" to the Fête des Vignerons, held four times each century in the canton of Vaud. They have in this case some justification, but I look for it on grounds other than those set forth by such enthusiasts as M. Edouard Rod, who wrote a brief history of the fête for the celebration of 1905. It is true that there is a long record behind these festivals—beginning with the probability that the culture of the grape was introduced into Switzerland by the Romans—and that from 1651, the date of the first "parade," of which documentary evidence remains, the fête has grown in importance. But in this case it is not the history that matters so much as what the tradition has produced—a thing so different in its effect from the achievements of the most inspired designers and producers of pageants.

A superficial description of the festival, though it might contain a few points of unusual interest, would not greatly distinguish this from other pageants. There is the place, Vevey—the last of that string of towns bordering the eastern end of the Lake of Geneva, Tour de Peitz, Clarens, Montreux, Territet, Villeneuve, before you come to that ugly break in the mountains that marks the depressing width of the Rhone Valley. There is, also, the magnificence of the preparations; the building of a stadium in the form of an elongated U capable of seating 14,000 spectators; the training of 2,000 performers from every class of Swiss life, peasants, workmen, shopkeepers, students, members of the *Confrérie de Vignerons*, a work that has been proceeding for the past two years. This setting and the work that has gone to the production are tempting enough to induce descriptions, but they would differ in unimportant details only from accounts of other performances of more or less similar celebrations. Where I found the quality that justifies the word "unique" was not in these things; it was in the discovery of the Swiss race.

We look upon Switzerland, commonly, as a pleasure-ground, and, so far as mountain Switzerland is concerned, as being conducted by its inhabitants mainly for the entertainment of the foreign visitor and the profit that is to be derived from him. I have been living in Switzerland for the past three months, in this little English-haunted village of Château d'Oex, and that is still the aspect of the country that I see on the surface. A little, expensive country, protected economically by its excessive tariffs, and run generally with the unimaginative efficiency of one of its own innumerable hotels. I was, therefore, surprised to hear that the Swiss resented the foreign element in the form of sight-seers that was entering this year into the celebration of the Fête des Vignerons, because that was the very first complaint I had heard against a foreigner in this little trilingual, cosmopolitan confederation.

I understand it now. The spirit of the fête is that of a country, or at least one part of it, although it has nothing to do with history as we know history, nor, remarkable omission, with religion. (In the whole book of the songs there are but two very casual allusions to *le bon Dieu*; and one even more casual still to the Church. The latter was in the popular song to the health of Noah: "Ne cessons cependant pas de croire à Eglise"! This spirit is, indeed, pagan in quality; even if it be a paganism altered by climate and mountain conditions; the paganism of those who live close to the earth and are dependent upon her gifts.

The gods and goddesses of the Vevey fête are Bacchus, Ceres, Flora and Pales (goddess of flocks and shepherds), and if, in keeping with the avowed object of the celebrations, Bacchus and his troupe come to the platform with an air of climax, they by no means dominate the ceremony. He and his followers may wear their vine leaves and panther skins in the classical manner, but your Swiss is no Dionysian warmed into idleness by the Mediterranean sun. He may revel in the final Bacchanalian dance, performed by young men and women of the student class, but I feel that he is incapable of an orgy. This is surely a paganism that hibernates, to

arise in spring at once reinvigorated and chastened.

And the Swiss are not an imaginative race. I am willing to maintain that even now that I have witnessed their national fête. The effect of these representations is not achieved by any deliberations of the self-conscious artist. It is a natural growth, and the spirit of which I have spoken is inherent in it, just as the spirit of religion is inherent in Gothic architecture. Here we have no attempt to re-enact dramatic episodes in Swiss history, or to recall the patriotism of William Tell or of Grütli, and certainly no least hint throughout of the doctrines of Calvin. There is, indeed, no kind of dramatic action in the course of the four-hour performance, which is entirely occupied by processions, songs, whether solos or choruses, and dances that one does not remember as ballets.

I believe that even the colours of the dresses must be founded on some tradition: the dominant yellows of the spring processions, warming to the oranges, reds and purples of summer and autumn, relieved by a sprinkling of clear hard blues, the blue of a mountain sky before rain. For, even though we must assume designers, producers, and tedious rehearsals to achieve these assured and managed effects, we may also assume that everyone connected with the production was wholly or partly inspired by the one informing spirit that is in their blood. I found that also in my sight of the performers, who for these eight days of festival wander through Vevey up to Montreux in their fancy dress without the least sign of self-consciousness. Such a queer medley of dresses it is, from the classical robes or the panther skin and loin-cloth of the Bacchanalians, through Swiss national costumes of every Canton, the uniforms of the old National Guard, to wigs and satin coats that might have been taken from a Molière comedy. Yet none of them seemed out of place in those modern streets during this week of sober revel that is as different from a Nice Carnival as the flowers of a mountain spring from the gaudy extravagances of a hot-house.

But at the end of it all the thing that remains clearest in my mind is the Gruyère patois song of the *Ranz des Vaches*, with its cattle cry, its unforgettable refrain of "Liaba! liaba" and the weird call of the dancers on three falling notes that is something between a wail and the laugh of a hyena. Surely a relic of paganism stirred responsively in my own blood.

The Italo-Swiss Frontier.

The many frontier incidents are not passing unnoticed in the English Press, though an exaggerated importance is attached to many of the reports. It is, however, nothing short of a scandal that Italian Fascist guards should cross the borderline and without any provocation or much ado, arrest, strip and imprison harmless Swiss tourists. The arrogant assertion that they claim the right to shoot anyone who approaches to within 600 yards of the Italian frontier is a challenge singularly inimical to and irreconcilable with the lofty ideals so liberally professed at Locarno and Geneva. Official apologies cannot smother the irritation caused by these continual pinpricks, and it is not surprising that one English paper asserts that the cockpit of Europe has shifted from the Balkans to the Alpine region. The following extract from the *Times* (Aug. 15th) puts the position in a nutshell:

"The Italian Government has apologised for the recent unpleasant incidents along the Alpine frontier, and in particular for the arrest by Fascist guards of Swiss citizens on Swiss territory, but the Swiss Federal Council is not satisfied with the Italian reply.

The Swiss Federal Council is resolved to maintain the absolute integrity of Swiss territory, and it will now request the Italian Government to take the necessary steps to avoid the recurrence of such incidents. In connection with this two suggestions were made to the Swiss Government, the first to the effect that the Swiss frontier guards should be reinforced so as to keep a closer watch along the border. This the Swiss Government does not accept, as it considers that its frontier guards are in sufficient numbers and if any measure is to be taken it is for the Italian Government to take it, as the trespassers were its officials.

The other proposal was to the effect that the Swiss Government should prevent tourists from approaching within half a kilometre of the Italo-Swiss frontier. This is considered to be quite inadmissible, as Swiss territory extends right up to the frontier, and the Federal Council is unanimously resolved to maintain the right of any tourist to approach that frontier if he wishes to do so. If such a measure were adopted it would make it impossible for foreigners to take excursions in the Higher Alps or to climb such border peaks as the Matterhorn or Monte Rosa, over the top of which the frontier passes, and the Swiss Federal Council is decided to secure respect for every inch of Swiss territory. It further refuses to admit that Italian Fascist guards have any right on which to base what is said to be their practice to shoot at tourists

on Swiss territory who happen to approach within 600 yards of the Italo-Swiss frontier. The only thing the Swiss Government can and will do is to advise tourists not to attempt to enter Italy except by the recognised passes.

The Federal Government has the full support of public opinion, and will defend to the last its unquestionable right to allow all Swiss citizens and foreign guests to visit every yard of Swiss territory."

The humorous side of this jingoism is illustrated in the following from the *Daily Mail* (Aug. 17th): the Italian demigod has now soared to the highest heights of Europe.

"Frontier "incidents" between France and Italy, which have loomed large during the present summer owing to the action of Fascist enthusiasts on the one hand and equally determined French patriots on the other, have developed into a harmless but spectacular dispute over Mont Blanc, the highest peak in Europe.

Mont Blanc, properly so-called, is in France but the great mountain has minor peaks in Italian and Swiss territory. The Italian Fascists, headed by Signor Curati, general secretary of the Fascist Party, climbed the highest point of that part of the mountain which is on the Italian side of the frontier, solemnly planted the Italian flag thereon, and named the peak the Monte Benito Mussolini.

The action of the Italian Fascists roused the ire of French patriots, who engaged a party of Mont Blanc guides to reply to the Italian gesture by planting the Tricolour on top of the highest peak of the Mont Blanc range, which is actually in France.

This was done with equal solemnity, and the Frenchmen took an oath to the effect that Mont Blanc, which is French, should always remain French."

The Great Saint Bernard.

The opening of this pass to motor traffic is heralded in the *Times* (Aug. 15th) by the following recital of its fascinating history:—

"The road to the Great Saint Bernard Pass (8,110ft.) is now open to vehicles, and every day motor-cars and motor-coaches coming from Switzerland and from Italy are taking up hundreds of tourists. Most visitors spend the day there, while some spend the night at the hotel, which has now begun its third season.

A revolution was brought about in the history of the Great St. Bernard when, three years ago, the Chapter of the Monastery decided to transform the new hospice into an hotel. Since the foundation of the hospice in 962 the monks never asked a farthing from the travellers, to whom they freely gave food and shelter. The expenses were met from the general funds of the Monastery and by voluntary gifts; but during past years the number of visitors has so much increased, principally through the development of motor transport, that the Chapter was compelled to consider new means to cover the increasing expenses, the more so as only about one in seven of the visitors put anything in the church box. The new hospice was therefore converted into an hotel under the direction of a professional manager, in which tourists are charged ordinary hotel rates. Meanwhile the old hospice is only used for accommodating poor people and, when the hotel is shut, those tourists who cross the pass during the winter. The new arrangement is quite satisfactory, and has reduced by several hundred pounds a year the expenditure incurred by the Monastery for the feeding and accommodation of visitors.

The hospice stands at the summit of the pass, on Swiss territory, in a spot of most impressive wildness. The inmates of the monastery are about a dozen Augustinian Canons, whose superior, the Provost, has the rank of a Prince Abbot, a dozen attendants, and some 15 or 20 pupils. The duty of the Canons is, according to the statutes of the founder, Saint Bernard de Menton, to receive and lodge strangers gratuitously—though an exception has now been made—and to give help to travellers during the snowy season, which sometimes lasts about nine months. The Canons, assisted by their intelligent dogs, have rescued hundreds of persons who had been caught in snowstorms or who had fallen exhausted on the way.

The St. Bernard dog, a breed crossbred from Great Danes and Newfoundlands, dates as far back as the 14th century; these dogs are carefully trained to look for persons buried in the snow, and their keen sense of smell not only enables them to discover the people lying in the snow, but also exactly to follow the track of the road, even in the worst snowstorms. Whenever the departure of a traveller is signalled by telephone from the Swiss Cantine de Proz or from the Italian Cantine de Fontente, the monks set out with their dogs to meet the traveller. Thus the number of accidents is small, though the frozen or desiccated bodies preserved in the morgue speak of many a tragedy. The morgue is now closed, but some years ago, when it was open, one could see, for instance, the body of a mother with her child in her arms,

who had both been frozen to death while attempting to cross the path in winter.

The pass was used by the Gauls; the legions of Caesar crossed it and constructed a road, some remains of which are to be seen on the Plan de Jupiter, where a temple dedicated to Jupiter Peninus was erected on the site of a Celtic sanctuary; there are traces of the temple near the statue of Saint Bernard de Menton, as well as traces of other buildings, probably a travellers' rest-house. The museum of the hospice contains a number of Roman relics, coins, medals and implements. Charlemagne passed over the Great St. Bernard in 812, and at Bourg St. Pierre an old bridge still bears the name of Pont Charlemagne; in May, 1800, Bonaparte crossed the pass with his army before the battle of Marengo, and in the church there is a monument to General Desaix, who fell in that battle. Up to the end of the 19th century thousands of pilgrims, merchants, soldiers and travellers passed over the Great St. Bernard, which is not only used by human beings but also by animals and plants which have chosen this way for migrating from one side of the Alps to the other.

The Canons are nearly all men of science, and have made important contributions to natural history and meteorology; they have at their disposal a library of 30,000 volumes and collections of animals, plants and stones that are to be found up there, as well as a meteorological station which was opened a century ago by Marc Auguste Pictet, of Geneva. The meteorological observations made here show that there are about 118 days of rain, that the average temperature is about 17deg. Fahr. in winter, 27 in spring, 33 in summer; very often the lake on the pass is covered with a thin skin of ice even on summer mornings, and it remains completely frozen from the middle of October to the first days of July. Several attempts were made at acclimatizing fishes in this lake, which is 350 yards long, 210 yards wide and 36ft. deep, but the tench and carp which were put in it in 1817 and 1820 did not live long, some minnows introduced in 1822 still exist in great quantities, while trout brought in 1827, disappeared in a few years. The Hospice is the highest permanent dwelling in the Alps, and though the climate is very trying, the Canons and their companions enjoy perfect health and good sport when, in winter, they go about skiing in the neighbouring mountains.

The Canons of the Great Saint Bernard are helped in their rescue work by the men of the village of St. Rémy, in Italy, who enjoy a curious privilege: they are completely free from military service, but, on the other hand, they are bound to answer any call for assistance, to maintain the road in good order, and to accompany travellers if they should ask for guides, and all this work they have to do gratuitously; the men of St. Rémy are therefore called the "Soldiers of the Snow," a name of which they are proud.

The Seiche.

The storms which have ravaged the western part of Switzerland have been accompanied by that curious phenomenon locally called the "Seiche." No conclusive explanation has yet been offered by the scientists, but a description which appeared in the *Referée* (Aug. 14th) supplies some interesting information:—

"Western Switzerland seems to be passing through a spell of ill-luck, all the more unfortunate because it has come just at the height of the tourist season. Hurricanes, landslides, tremendous thunderstorms, and such hail as is never seen in England have all combined to wreak their fury upon that delectable country which lies between Mont Blanc and the Jungfrau.

The lake of Geneva, by whose shores Rousseau dreamed and Gibbon wrote, has once again displayed that strangely perplexing phenomenon known locally as the "Seiche." One English paper, in despair of expressing it in any other way, called it a tidal wave, though almost the only thing certain about it is that it has nothing to do with the tides.

From the most distant period at which the great lake has attracted anything like scientific observation it has been noted that its waters suddenly rise at irregular intervals about a foot. The rise is not, apparently, connected in any way with the Rhone or of the other streams which flow into the lake, for the phenomenon lasts on an average only about six minutes, which certainly would not be the case if it were due to any great influx of water.

Thursday's "Seiche" seems to have been quite abnormal for the rise was as much as twenty-nine inches—and it lasted for twenty minutes. The thing remains a puzzle which no one as yet has been able to solve, and we seem to be driven almost to the conclusion that there must be some sort of upheaval of the bottom.

Yet Geneva is far away from the region of volcanoes and earthquakes and there is no sort of evidence of any such disturbances when the "Seiche" happens. Whatever the unknown cause, it must have operated on Thursday on a most astonishing scale, for there is no record of

any previous "Seiche" which raised the level of the lake to this extent.

That it happened when a great storm was raging is probably only a coincidence, for the "Seiche" occurs in any sort of weather, and has often been observed on a perfectly calm day. Take it altogether, it is perhaps the most perplexing geological phenomenon which Europe has to show. Unfortunately, since it obeys no ascertainably periodic law and may be years without making an appearance, the Swiss cannot catalogue it as among their attractions to tourists."

The strange spectacle was witnessed by the many English visitors along the banks of Lac Lemman.

Though this is one of the worst Alpine years, reports seem to show that it has not affected the influx of tourists. The damage to orchards and crops has been considerable, but human life has been spared, and the passengers on the great trans-continental lines have never been exposed to danger thanks to the efficient system of supervision and timely warnings.

The Moving Alp.

This is what the *Daily Chronicle* publishes under this heading:—

"Motto Arbedo, a mountain near Bellinzona, in the canton of Ticino, whose summit has subsided several yards in past years, is causing much anxiety in Switzerland.

As a result of a recent geological report upon the subject, the Government has decided that a large number of villages in the neighbourhood must be evacuated.

So great is the movement becoming that the Government is making a monthly examination of the crevasses, which are widening.

This widening must result in the fall of the summit; and what might prove a catastrophe will follow.

Since 1888 a watch has been kept on this 5,500ft. height of Arbedo.

Measurements show that the platform which forms the summit, 100,000 square yards in area, is dangerously undermined.

It has long been slipping horizontally at the rate of nearly an inch a year, and this rate has recently increased to four inches a year.

Fissures and hillocks have appeared, and at times projecting rocks have broken off and been hurled hundreds of yards into the abyss.

When the underlying mass of rock gives way—an event which no human skill can avert—the whole plateau will crash into the valley.

From the Coalmines to the Alps.

In connection with new research work and experiments to determine the effects of ultra-violet ray treatment in industry, a party of seven pit lads has been taken to Switzerland under the auspices of the New Health Society; the immediate purpose is to demonstrate what can be achieved in a short period by the enjoyment of pure natural Alpine sun. The following particulars are culled from the *Yorkshire Observer* (Aug. 13th):—

"Five bright, smiling lads, with kit-bags on their backs, travelled from Nottingham to London on August 12th from the pithead of Sherwood Colliery, Mansfield, on the first stage of the journey to the top of the snow-clad Alps of Switzerland.

They will cross the glaciers to mountain huts 8,000ft. up, and will climb the Blumelis Alphon, 12,600ft. high.

They were bubbling over with excitement and enthusiasm. Two or three weeks' adventure lay ahead of them. None of them had previously been so far as London, and the prospect of going abroad filled them with exultance.

These lads are all sons of sons of miners—pitboys by inheritance—and they are part of an interesting experiment of the effect of light and air on people engaged in the heavy industries.

Although the trip will be a holiday for the boys, the result of the experiment will be shown by the heights and weights when they return.

Lieutenant-Colonel G. S. Hutchinson, a super-enthusiast regarding the value of ultra-violet rays in industry, is in charge of the boys.

"I have chosen these boys from what is reputed to be the healthiest pit in Britain," he told me. "They were selected haphazard. I am taking them to the Châlet Soldanella, Gris Alp, Kiental, Switzerland, where we shall stay for two or three weeks, according to the weather and the state of their own progress.

"While the two ends of the mining industry are fighting with each other, I am taking this step to draw attention to something really practical—the need for doing everything to improve the health of the people engaged in the mining industry and to safeguard them from diseases peculiar to that industry."

The trip is a preliminary to a pithead test of the value of ultra-violet light.

Colonel Hutchinson, who is a member of the New Health Society and the Swiss Alpine Club, is anxious that every colliery company in the country shall follow the lead given by the Sherwood Pit owners, in providing baths of ultra-violet rays for the workers, and in the

establishment of an up-to-date clinic at the pit-head, with artificial sunlight lamps.

It is hoped that the Sherwood Colliery clinic will be completed by October. When installed a medical officer will keep records of the various blood-tests, weight-tests, and X-ray results, while a specialist will superintend the actual ultra-violet ray treatment.

Colonel Hutchinson has taken a record of the boys' physical fitness, and when in Switzerland they will be exposed without clothes to the full light from the wide horizon. They will live on simple food, and indulge in long walks and rock climbing. They will not be allowed to drink beer, but they can smoke.

"If I had taken boys from a South Wales pit," Colonel Hutchinson explained, "my experiment would not have been difficult, but by taking boys already healthy in every respect I hope to prove the great beneficial effect exposure to light will have upon them."

When the boys return their records will be sent to the Safety-in-Mines Research Board, and it is hoped that the results will be sufficiently satisfactory to justify the installation of clinics at all pitheads.

None of the boys would say that he liked mining. "I should like to be a butcher," said one of them to me to-day. "And I want to be a photographer," chimed in another.

Nevertheless, they were a party of jolly boys; and however much they may be measured and weighed and examined they intend to have a great time—and Colonel Hutchinson is confident that they will prove his case."

The Scouts' Châlet at Kandersteg.

Of the many schemes to promote international understanding and friendship the Scouts' Châlet at Kandersteg should prove one of the most hopeful; unfortunately, the scheme is at present run on too small a scale for its influence to permeate the coming generation in the different countries. The following is taken from the *Dublin Evening Mail* (Aug. 15th):—

"Visitors to Switzerland are tremendously interested in the International Châlet for Boy Scouts at Kandersteg, one of the most attractive holiday centres in the Bernese Oberland. Here, Scouts of all nations are spending a cheap and healthful holiday among the mountains.

One finds them everywhere—little Britons, Germans, Italians, French and Swiss—in perfect chumship, talking a composite language that carries them comfortably over all their difficulties. It is remarkable how quickly the Scouts obtain a working smattering of the various languages and dialects of their youthful colleagues and settle down as members of a large and happy family.

It was in 1923 that the International Châlet was presented to the Scout movement by Count Bonstettin as a house where Scouts of any nationality could spend a holiday at the trifling cost of 50 centimes, or about 6d. a day.

Such a chance was eagerly taken by Scouts from many countries, and the fame of the International Châlet grew like a snowball.

There is every indication that the International Châlet will soon become even more popular as a centre for all scouts who are able to visit the Continent."

QUOTATIONS from the SWISS STOCK EXCHANGES.

	BONDS.	Aug. 16		Aug. 22	
		Fr.	Fr.	Fr.	Fr.
Confederation 3% 1903	...	79.50	79.50		
5% 1917, VIII Mob. Ln	...	101.80	101.75		
Federal Railways 3½% A—K	...	84.05	84.15		
" 1924 IV Elect. Ln.	...	101.35	101.40		
SHARES.					
	Nom	Aug. 16	Aug. 22		
	Fr.	Fr.	Fr.		
Swiss Bank Corporation	500	782	782		
Crédit Suisse	500	846	841		
Union de Banques Suisses	500	717	725		
Société pour l'Industrie Chimique	1000	2578	2565		
Fabrique Chimique ci-dev. Sandoz	1000	4270	4210		
Soc. Ind. pour la Schappe	1000	2578	2860		
S.A. Brown Boveri	350	574	563		
C. F. Bally	1000	1247	1255		
Nestlé & Anglo-Swiss Cond. Mk. Co.	200	719	714		
Entreprises Sulzer S.A.	1000	1065	1065		
Comp. de Navig'n sur le Lac Léman	500	575	565		
Linoleum A.G. Giubiasco	100	137	140		
Maschinenfabrik Oerlikon	500	750	752		

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J. H.'S WEEKLY LETTERS TO HIS FRIENDS AND COMPATRIOTS.

Ladies and Gentlemen.—J. B. Rusch, the Editor of *Die Republikanischen Blätter* likes to tell his neighbours the truth. I have always read his articles with great interest, and I admire his courage while not concurring in everything he writes. He has written an article in the *National Zeitung* on the "Demagogentum," condemning the demagogues of to-date as bunglers not knowing the ways of their trade. In ancient Greece, he says, the demagogue was looked upon as an essential member of the community. His duty and pleasure it was to draw out of the heart of man the last thing sentimentality and emotion could produce. He had to kindle the fire, to feed it with