

Notes and gleanings

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NOTES AND GLEANINGS.

By KYBURG.

Limericks:

A Box of Cigarettes has been forwarded to Mr. G. J. with Kyburg's best Compliments and as per request of our amiable poetess Mlle. E. Fischer.

A reader, A.J.H. (Ilford), kindly sends me the following letter, which, as it summarises my own feelings concerning this Competition so very aptly, I propose publishing in full:—

Dear "Kyburg,"

You have my deepest sympathy.

Just fancy, after all the expense and organisation entailed in launching your great competition with its mammoth prize, to get only ONE entry; and that of a very doubtful quality!

Does this imply that among all the Swiss in London (not to mention the remainder of Great Britain and "furren" parts) there is only one poet; or is it just apathy; or can it be that all the Swiss are so well endowed with this world's goods that the prize was not of sufficient value to excite their cupidity?

There were, unfortunately, two reasons why I personally did not compete—No. 1 was that, not being Swiss I considered myself barred. No. 2 was that, not being a poet, even of the "Limerick" school, I am totally incapable of producing even the blindest of blank verse.

Why not try them with something easier—say a German Crossword with French and Italian "clues?"

With many thanks for your always interesting and often amusing contributions to the "S.O.," and wishing you better luck in your future ventures.

I beg to subscribe myself,

A READER.

P.S.—I have just noticed that even the "one poet" is not in the London Colony, but in Switzerland!—A. J. H.

And I most especially wish to draw my readers' (small 'r' please!) attention to the postscriptum!

As for organizing a Crossword Competition and giving another mammoth prize, I have just sufficient Thurgau-Blood in my veins to prevent me from throwing good money after bad, and that's that. But, oh, what a joy to work for the *Swiss Observer* and its sporting crowd of readers. What a joy and how true it is that virtue must always be its own reward!

As I am in a playful mood this wintry morning, the following statistical bit of news from *The Christian Science Monitor*, 11th Feb., appealed to me:

World's Playground Found in Switzerland:

Last year practically half as many foreigners visited Switzerland as there are adult inhabitants in the country. They came from all parts of the world, but chiefly from Germany, England, America and France.

Some travellers came on business, others to attend international conferences, and a few to study. But most of them came to look, to rest and to play, because during the four seasons of the year Switzerland abounds in beautiful sights and offers endless opportunities for games, sports and touring.

There are nearly 100 mountain resorts with abundant snow and ice well adapted to skating, sledding and skiing. Nearly 80,000 Swiss people make a living caring for the 1,200,000 guests who annually visit their land. Of that number 477,000 are from Germany, 160,000 from England and 160,000 from America. It is to accommodate these 320,000 English-speaking visitors that the Swiss put up many public signs in English, thus adding another to the three "official" languages of the Swiss people.

French Housewives Best:

Evening Standard, 27th Feb.:

An attempt has been made by an international committee in Vienna to decide which nation possesses the best housewives.

Domestic virtues only, especially cooking, nursing of children and husband, cleanliness and economy were the paramount considerations.

This is the result:—

1.—French; 2.—German; 3.—Scotch; 4.—Dutch; 5.—Norwegian, Finnish, Danish; 6.—Austrian, Czech, Hungarian; 7.—Swedish, Swiss; 8.—American; 9.—Northern Italians; 10.—Southern Italians; 11.—English; 12.—Polish, Roumanian, Turkish, Yugoslavian; 13.—Irish; 14.—Greek; 15.—Spanish; 16.—Russian and Bulgarian.

The final decision to give the "championship" to France was influenced by the unanimously accepted qualities of cooking and thrift which distinguish the French housewife.

Her cooking secured her the first place. The high place of Dutch wives is due to their leading in marks for "domestic cleanliness," and the following Scandinavian group also scored high in this respect.

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Sixth place is given to a Central European group which can boast of excellent cooking, while the Swedish and Swiss housewives are clean and thrifty, devote much attention to their children, but lost marks on their cooking.

Knowing that their list was bound to arouse a storm of indignation, in whichever order the ranking was arranged, the members of the committee preferred to remain anonymous, except to a few editors and doctors in Vienna, and they have done well in assuming such cover.

You will notice that in the context No. 7, which concerns the Swedish and Swiss, is not even mentioned! They probably are thought to be above praise in their own, seventh class! As seven is considered a lucky number by many, we will leave it at that!

St. Gotthard Jubilee:

In these days of *Speed Records* we very seldom think back to the days, not very far off really, when engineering feats which hardly excite us now, were completed in the face of terrible difficulties. True, those of us who remember travelling through the great Tunnel between Goeschenen and Airolo when steam was the motive power like to reminisce a wee bit when we experience the same journey now that electricity moves the fast trains through the same tunnel and we compare the comforts of to-day with the utter discomfort of the older days. But, how very seldom do we think of those master minds which made these really wonderful engineering feats possible. The Gotthard Tunnel is now fifty years old and celebrated its own jubilee on the 2nd inst. I quote from the *Observer* of 2nd March:

To-day it is fifty years since the Gotthard tunnel became a tunnel in the sense that the perforation was complete, an achievement proudly remembered in Switzerland. In 1880 it was a feat of engineering in which many people refused to believe till it had become a fact. On every lip there was the burning question: Will the two ends meet? They did.

On February 28, at seven p.m., the drill of a boring-machine broke through the last rock screen, and the first greetings and cigars were exchanged through the narrow opening between the southern and northern parties. Then there followed a short and solemn ceremony. Enclosed in a tin case, the portrait of Louis Favre was passed through the hole, in order to do homage to the bold engineer who had conceived the great plan and overcome all the numerous obstacles, physical and moral, in his way, but who was not to see the final success.

The last blastings took place on Sunday morning, February 29—it being a leap year—in the presence of two hundred and fifty invited guests, among whom were federal and cantonal delegations and the correspondents of all the leading European newspapers.

The tunnel measures 14,998 metres, and was by far the longest existing. For years to come, it was every tourist's ambition to pass through the "great hole," though that was no pleasure in the days before electrification, when the smoke penetrated into the carriages during the passage of forty minutes. It was slow work then for the powerful mountain engines to drag their trainloads up the stiff climb from Erstfeld or Biasca, and the passengers had ample time to admire the little church of Wassen, seen three times, first high above, then on the same level, and finally deep below the train.

For twenty-five years the tunnel retained the honour of being the longest, then it had to yield it to the Simplon, which, curiously enough, could celebrate the twenty-fifth anniversary of its "through-cut" this week too. It happened on February, 1905. With its 19,803 metres it beats its rival by nearly five kilometres.

Since those days railway travelling has become much more comfortable in many respects and the latest specialised addition to such comfort again comes from Switzerland. I read in *Modern Transport*, March 1930:

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Railway Carriages for Invalids:

The Swiss Federal Railways have in service a number of special saloon carriages for the conveyance of invalids. These include, for first-class passengers, bogie carriages equipped for operation in all through international services. For second and third class passengers four and six-wheeled carriages are available, these being practically limited to use in Switzerland, although, by the consent of foreign railway administrations, they are sometimes attached to certain slow trains. On the Swiss Federal Railways the four and six-wheeled vehicles, with some exceptions in the case of the former, are run either in fast or slow trains. For a journey within Switzerland 24 hours' notice is necessary to obtain the use of an invalid carriage; for journeys outside Switzerland a minimum of four days' notice is usually required. Application must be made to a stationmaster or district operating superintendent. The invalid carriages are particularly well sprung, and the accommodation, although in line with hospital practice offers every normal comfort and convenience.

Each of the first class carriages has a corridor extending its full length. In the centre is the largest compartment, that for the invalid, having a capacity of 30 cu. yd. This contains an iron bedstead with a metal spring mattress, a leather armchair, a divan bed, a night commode, and an invalid table. The equipment includes an electric warming-pan, a portable bedside lamp, an electric bell, and a special ventilator. The compartment may be entered from the outside through wide doors allowing of easy movement of the invalid either on an invalid chair or stretcher. A lavatory with hot and cold running water is in direct communication with this compartment. Another compartment, fitted with a folding table and a small cupboard for medicines and instruments, is provided for the doctor and nurse. In addition to a compartment for an official of the Swiss Federal Railways, there are two compartments, with seats convertible into sleeping berths, one accommodating two passengers and the other four. There is a kitchen at one end of the carriage which contains an electric cooking apparatus, an icebox, a china cupboard, and a marble table and basin. A linen cupboard and a lavatory for those accompanying the invalid are also provided. The coaches are equipped so that heating may be either by steam, hot water, or electricity, as required by circumstances. A few of them are also fitted with a system of warm-air heating. Lighting is by 20 electric lamps having a total candle power of 620. Usually an attendant employed by the railway travels in the carriages and attends to the equipment, the making-up of the beds, and the general cleanliness of the coach, and there is an extra charge for this service.

Both the six and the four-wheeled second class carriages are similar in general fittings to the first. The invalid's compartment is in the centre, and may be entered from either side through folding doors. The furniture consists of an iron bedstead and necessary linen, an invalid table, an armchair and a night commode. There is also in a corner an ice-chest which can do duty as a table, and nearby an electric cooking apparatus. A lavatory leads directly out of the invalid's compartment. There are two compartments for those accompanying the invalid, fitted out in the usual manner of second class carriages. The second class vehicles have a full-length corridor, but in the third class carriages there is a central gangway. A lavatory for those accompanying the invalid is provided in each carriage, and there are systems of heating by steam, warm air and electricity; they are to a great extent lighted by electricity.

The third class four-wheeled carriages, although they do not afford quite so much comfort as those having eight or six wheels, contain practically all that is necessary for the transport of the sick, viz., an invalid's compartment, lavatory and w.c., a cupboard containing a change of bed linen, heating by steam, warm air, electricity or by stoves, and electric lighting.

In order to obtain the use of an invalid carriage in Switzerland, it is necessary to purchase 14 tickets of the corresponding class for a bogie saloon, 11 for a six-wheeled saloon, and eight for a four-wheeled saloon. These tickets cover the invalid and two companions. Each additional person must have one ticket of the corresponding class. In addition to the price of the tickets, there is a charge for the use of the equipment of the carriages. In certain cases there are also a few extra charges (for example, insurance against delay).

Off it is said that modern comforts make us flabby and weak. Such statements are palpably untrue. Witness for one thing the hardships borne in the late war, hardships which were unparalleled by any known before and which taxed the vitality of modern men to the utmost. Witness

also the fifty or so Swiss workmen who are being dealt with by the next article:

Shut off from the World:

Morning Post, 1st March:

Within a few weeks thirty-five Swiss workmen, who have been spending the whole of the winter in the heart of the Alps and shut off from all communication with other parts of their country, expect to descend once more into the civilised world.

They are engaged upon building a subterranean gallery for the Federal Railways at a height of 7,300ft. destined to divert a certain volume of the Rhine waters into Lake Ritom. Since the work could not be interrupted during the winter months, the contractors took special measures for the support and comfort of the workmen, who would be shut off from the world until the heavy snows had somewhat cleared.

The men and all materials had to be conveyed to the spot by aerial transport. A large stone hut was built before the winter set in to house the men, and several tons of provisions were laid in, besides some pigs, sheep, goats, and a cow to ensure supplies of fresh meat, milk, butter, &c.

A special line for the transmission of electric current from the valley was constructed to serve heating, lighting, and cooking purposes. In case this line should be destroyed by an avalanche or a heavy snowfall, an internal combustion engine was also installed. For their leisure moments the men have a wireless set, a gramophone, and a library.

Lake Ritom, above Airolo, feeds the power station at Ambri-Piotta, in the Ticino Valley, down which the St. Gotthard Railway runs.

And what could testify to the stamina of modern man better than the following:

I Survive the Winter Sports:

Daily Chronicle, 3rd March:

I must tell you about my winter sports holiday with George.

Winter sports really means breaking your legs and arms, spraining your ankles, and cutting your face about. When you go to Switzerland you enjoy that sort of thing, because that's what people go there for.

Of course, it would be quite easy to break your arm by falling off a 'bus in Shaftesbury-avenue, and a really determined man could get quite a lot of nice injuries by drinking someone else's beer in the Red Cow in Whitechapel. But that wouldn't be winter sports—not even if the temperature was below freezing, which it wouldn't be in the Red Cow, anyway. You quite see that, don't you?

Winter sports means climbing up to the top of very steep places very slowly, and then, when you get to the top, coming down very quickly, and hurting yourself—that's why it's sport.

Of course, you quite see why there couldn't be any summer sport, because, with no snow or ice about you couldn't come down fast enough to hurt yourself.

The best winter sport is skating, because you don't have to climb up any steep places, and you can come down very quickly just the same.

When you go for a walk in Switzerland you clamp your feet on to two long boards, and call it ski-ing. The ends of your skis are nice and sharp, and turn up. This is done in case you fall in soft snow and don't hurt yourself. With a little practice a good skier can cut his face open almost every time he falls.

You are also given two sticks with sharp ends. You can always throw these at anyone who doesn't look hurt enough.

When you go out ski-ing you always go uphill, and when you have got to the top of the hill you turn round and come back again.

Sometimes, if you are lucky, you can catch a train that will take you somewhere that you can come back from.

In Switzerland you never take trains to places you want to go to, because the only place you ever really want to go to is the hotel you're staying at. Only you can't properly go to the hotel you're staying at unless you have got away from it; so that's why you catch a train in Switzerland.

Another very good winter sport is to lie or sit in most uncomfortable positions on hard iron, or wooden, things, and slip down very steep icy places at dreadful speeds. This is called tobogganning. When you are going fastest the place you are going down turns a very sharp corner.

The people in Switzerland build high banks round these corners to keep you in Switzerland.

You can go down on a luge, or a skeleton—which is like a luge, only more dangerous—or a bobsleigh. I suppose when I "bobsled" I was unlucky, because nobody was killed.

From what I have told you, you will see what great fun my winter sports holiday with George must have been. I'm afraid you haven't heard very much about George, but, as a matter of fact, he slipped on the ballroom floor the night we arrived and has been in bed ever since with a sprained ankle.

P.C.

FROM THE TICINO.

Recently a conference took place at the Federal Palace between three of the members of the Cantonal Government and the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Federal Council, composed of Messrs. Motta, Musy and Haeblerlin, the main point of discussion being the relations at the Italo-Ticinese frontier. The "*Popolo e Libertà*" sums up the position as follows:—

"From what transpires the discussion was restricted mainly to our relations with Italy, with particular regard to the position of the Ticino. This exchange of views was undoubtedly advisable, even essential, in order to clear up various questions which were likely to create disagreement between our Cantonal Government and the Federal authorities. It will be remembered that on a number of occasions (the famous Salvemini case is still fresh in our minds) a substantial section of the population of the Ticino disagreed with the attitude of the Federal Council. As none of the members of the Government of the Ticino are at the same time members of the Federal Assembly, it is necessary, now and again, to smooth over the relations between Berne and Bellinzona. Happily, full accord never failed on fundamental points but there are always lesser questions which need clearing up."

The "*Dovere*" and the "*Avanguardia*" are somewhat more outspoken. The latter, particularly, after referring to the measures recently adopted by the Italian authorities, in order to prevent Ticinese citizens from entering Italy, and to the activities of political spies in the Ticino, praises the firm attitude taken up by Councillor of State Cattori. It expresses the hope that the Ticinese delegation adopted in Berne, an equally firm and dignified attitude and that it was able to convince the Federal Council that it is essential for them to show greater energy in the defence of the interests and the rights of the Ticinesi. It then goes on to say:

"Another question which was dragging on for nearly a year, and which seems to have been settled, is that concerning Gaetano Salvemini. On the basis of a decision which, for a thousand reasons, must be considered unjustified and anti-democratic, the Chief of the Federal Political Department, Mr. Motta, let it be known at the time that the esteemed Italian historian could not be permitted to enter our territory in order to give a scientific lecture. It would appear that, on this point also, the representatives of the people of the Ticino have obtained full satisfaction." O.B.

THE REFERENDUM IN SWITZERLAND.

In the discussion on the merits of the *Referendum* that has been started in this country by Mr. Baldwin's proposal to introduce it in connection with the proposed food stuffs duties, Sir Henry Lunn, the great English friend of our country, has contributed an enthusiastic account of the working of the *Referendum* in Switzerland. From his letter in the *Times* of the 10th of March we quote the most telling passages:

It has been my privilege for more than a generation to watch the effect of the *Referendum* on the life of the Swiss nation. That wonderfully efficient republic has enjoyed a stable Government without change since 1849. Kingdoms fall all around; the middle classes are crushed down by inflation and war taxation, and the wealthier classes are living in constant fear of revolution; Switzerland goes on effecting important political changes with no serious changes in the national life, but with an ever-increasing education of the masses of the people in political affairs and a growing sense of the dignity that comes from self-government. Much more important than the measures carried by the *Referendum* are those which have been rejected by the *Referendum*. In 1923 the Swiss people were asked to approve or reject the principle of the capital levy. The reply was emphatically in the negative, and the question has been settled in Switzerland for a lifetime. What happened in our own country? In 1923 the General Election was fought mainly on the issue of tariff reform. The question of the capital levy was also introduced by the Labour Party. There is scarcely a voter to-day who will recall the fact, and at each forthcoming election our millions will vote on a dozen different issues, and the gamble of the election may return to power, as well as to office, a Labour Party who will assert that their majority gives them the right to enforce a capital levy, surtax, or any other financial nostrum which has formed one of the many planks of their party platform.

Sir Herbert Samuel in his letter in the *Times* says: "The Swiss practice is not a precedent for us." Why not? His argument that the Constitutions differ is altogether inconclusive. If the *Referendum* is good for a nation of 5,000,000, there is no valid reason why it should not be a gain to a nation of 50,000,000.