

The wood carvers of Brienz

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SWISS POLICE HEADQUARTERS

The late Doctor Reiss, once chief of the technical police at Lausanne, and his staff were greatly troubled some years ago by a clever house-breaker who successfully eluded arrest for a long time. Burglary after burglary was committed, and the technical police came to the conclusion that they were the work of one man. After more than a dozen of these crimes had been committed, the man was at last arrested and brought before Dr. Reiss. The Director of the technical police was interested in this elusive law-breaker and asked him how he had managed to escape the police. He made an explanation which was regarded as so remarkable that it has even been included in a text-book of police science.

"Monsieur," he said. "I have read all your books dealing with technical methods for the detection of crime. They are very interesting, and I have found them a very present help in times of difficulty!"

This curious story throws a light upon both the methods of the police and of their criminal opponents in Switzerland. Everyone knows that Switzerland is a small country. It is also prosperous and the standard of education among the bulk of the population is high. The methods of the Swiss police have sometimes been criticised as less efficient than those of other countries. This is not altogether just as Reiss's story shows. The criminal educated and intelligent enough to profit by a text book of police science is obviously a serious problem to the detective.

For no one who has seen the Swiss police at work regard their methods as inefficient. It is an irony that it was a case of housebreaking which should be a classic instance of criminal skill, for it is in the detection of housebreaking that the police have specialised. Their methods are technical without being scientific in too abstract a sense. On the scene of a breaking and entering, for example, they are to be seen taking careful casts of every kind of mark and impression which could have been made by a tool or other instrument such as housebreakers use. The object of this kind of investigation is to be able to match the marks found on the scene of the crime with those which might have been made with suspect housebreaking implements. The skill and exactitude with which these identifications can be made is remarkable.

The Swiss police are essentially practical, and like to confirm their results by the kind of experiment which does not require too elaborate a demonstration in the laboratory. In connection with tool marks in wood or other material, they proceed, if the suspected instrument is found, to test its work under as far as possible the same conditions as those in which it would have been used on the scene of the crime. They take photomicrographs of the marks and compare the photographs in such a way that the two pictures correspond if the same marks are to be found associated with the suspected impression and the experimental one. It is literally true that those who break and enter have been convicted on the evidence of a notch in their chisel, or the characteristic setting of a file. In the most favourable cases a pattern, so to call it, made by a tool on a piece of wood or metal is shown to correspond so closely with the marks experimentally made that the evidence of identity almost equals that of a fingerprint.

It is in this kind of investigation that the Swiss police have always excelled. Their photographic work is good. They look for traces in dust, blood or other stains to see if they carry impressions which can be identified. A classic instance is the blood stain on which was the imprint of something which might have been produced by some kind of textile fabric. The police took an enlarged photograph of the stain, which yielded an important clue. The impression turned out to have been made by the knee of a pair of breeches. The weave of the fabric had been clearly reproduced, and it was found possible to match it with the pattern of a pair of breeches found in the possession of a suspected man. In experiments of this kind a count is made of the number of threads per millimeter, and if the figures agree there is a strong presumption of identity between impression and material which made it.

Concentration upon investigations of this kind throw a sidelight upon the psychology of the investigators themselves. The Swiss, like the English, are a common-sense people who like to appeal to practical issues. Work of this kind entails a great deal of technical skill, but the interpretation of the results when secured does not pre-suppose a high degree of specialised knowledge.

There is another respect in which national psychology influences what goes on inside police headquarters. Switzerland is divided into twenty-two Cantons which are, for all practical purposes, self-governing States. The highly prized autonomy of small groups is part of Switzerland's tradition of freedom and liberty. They will not tolerate tyranny of any kind, and they

have guarded themselves against large and undefined powers to the police.

For this reason in Switzerland an accused person enjoys very much the same privileges that he does in England. The method of procedure in securing evidence is different, but anything which seems to interfere with the subject's right as a free citizen, even if he is accused of a serious crime, is frowned upon by the law.

There is no evidence that Swiss detective methods are not adequate to deal with the country's criminal problem. Switzerland has not made criminal investigation a highly organised science, but she has no reason to be ashamed of the number of undetected crimes committed within her borders.

(Saturday Review)

THE WOOD CARVERS OF BRIENZ

Being attracted by the many hand carved signs that I saw in the neighbourhood of Interlaken, I decided to visit the College of Carving.

The lakes between which Interlaken lies are Brienz and Thun.

Going by boat from Interlaken I arrived at Brienz, a quiet and clean town built alongside the lake. Its shops exhibit many varied and interesting pieces of carving, all of which are executed by the inhabitants of this renowned little town.

The school which was founded more than 200 years ago, is supported by the State, and continues as one of the most important academies in the country. Pupils who enter must study here three or four years in order to qualify for their diploma, which is awarded to them after an examination at Thun.

The test for the pupil is to carve from a piece of woods (walnut, lime or oak) any object, animal or figure as requested by the professor.

Economic Distress

After finishing their studies the pupils are supplied with their tools so that they may continue at their work in their homes and thereby take their place in the industry that is now so famous. Pupils from the school secured the highest award of merit at Chicago and Brussels and also the gold medal at the Exposition Universelle, Paris, 1900.

During the summer months visitors to Brienz get ample opportunity to purchase from the various shops here objects of beauty that show artistic conception and unequalled craftsmanship.

The most skilled and experienced worker cannot earn more than £3 10s. a week, and to secure this he must be an outstanding craftsman.

During the last six years Switzerland has suffered much from the wave of economic distress that has spread over Europe and the wood carvers who dispose of much of their work to visitors, suffered heavily. The distress became so acute that the Government took steps to alleviate the suffering, but the coming winter is almost dreaded by the inhabitants of this peaceful town, whose only desire is to earn enough to enable them to continue at their art, which is conspicuous even on their signposts.

Government Assistance

To the professor who conducted me over the school I must express my gratitude for his cordial welcome and his courtesy in taking me through the studios where some of the magnificent work which gained honour at various exhibitions is exhibited. As the pupils are on holiday during the month of August I was able to see their work in an unfinished state and their method of working was explained to me by the professor. I was shown the library at the college, which indicated a breadth of vision and an international outlook.

I found there a copy of "The Studio" up to date, a copy of "Die Kunst," and indeed, magazines of all nations, which the students are at liberty to study. From Mademoiselle Schwalb, who speaks good English, I also received interesting information of how the Government arranged to purchase a certain amount of unsold work which each sculptor had in his studio. All this

was placed in a central building and then distributed to the shops for sale to the public.

It is sad to think that throughout Europe to-day there is but little sympathy or money for the creator of works of art.

HERVORRAGENDE RESULTATE DES SWISSAIR SOMMERLUFTVERKEHRS

Die Resultate der ersten drei Monate des Swissair Sommerluftverkehrs zeigen im Vergleich mit den entsprechenden Zahlen des Vorjahres ein ständiges Anwachsen unserer nationalen Luftfahrt. Wenn wir die uns zur Verfügung stehenden statistischen Uebersichten genau durchsehen, so können wir erkennen, in welchem Masse sich die wirtschaftliche Wiederbelebung unseres Landes auf den Luftverkehr ausgewirkt hat.

Als empfindlichsten Gradmesser in dieser Hinsicht nennen wir den Frachverkehr, der schon seit Jahren unter der wirtschaftlichen Depression gelitten hat. Vergleichen wir heute das Resultat des Luftfrachverkehrs während der ersten Hälfte der Sommerflugaison mit dem entsprechenden Zeitraum des Vorjahres, so machen wir die erfreuliche Feststellung, dass von einer Totalmenge von 20.658 kg in 1936 ein rapider Aufstieg auf 36.992 kg für 1937 zu verzeichnen ist, also eine Mehrleistung von 16.334 kg in einem Zeitraum von 3 Monaten.

Auch die Beförderung der Post verzeichnet eine beachtenswerte Zunahme von 2.799 (1936: 22.706 kg, 1937: 25.505), ebenfalls ein untrügliches Zeichen der gesteigerten Geschäftstätigkeit. Hier in diesem Zusammenhange sei noch besonders erwähnt, dass diese Erhöhung der im Luftverkehr beförderten Postmengen fast ausschliesslich auf die intensivere Benützung der Nachtpostlinie Basel-Frankfurt der Swissair zurückzuführen ist, ein Beweis, in welchem Masse sich der Nachtpostluftverkehr im Geschäftsleben eingebürgert hat.

Die Zahl der geflogenen Kilometer liegt für die ersten drei Monate des diesjährigen Sommerluftverkehrs um 114.362 Flugkilometer höher als im Vorjahre. Diese erhöhte Verkehrsleistung ist in allererster Linie auf die Erweiterung des Swissair Streckennetzes um die Linien Zürich-St. Gallen, Zürich-St. Gallen-München und den Morgenkurs Zürich-Basel-Paris zurückzuführen. Es darf sicher auch mit Stolz festgestellt werden, dass trotz der Vergrösserung des Linienbetriebes die Regelmässigkeit nicht gelitten hat. Im Gegenteil, sie ist sogar von 93,8% auf 99,5% gestiegen für das gesamte Streckennetz der Swissair, ein neuer Beweis der international anerkannten Zuverlässigkeit und Sicherheit unseres nationalen Luftverkehrs.

Wohl das erfreulichste Bild der unter Betrachtung stehenden statistischen Erfassung der ersten Hälfte des Sommerluftverkehrs zeigt die überraschend gestiegene Passagierfrequenz. Mit einer Erhöhung der Passagierzahlen um 3.213 Fluggästen gegenüber dem entsprechenden Zeitraum des Vorjahres erreicht nun die Zahl der beförderten Passagiere das imponierende Total von 7.588 Fluggästen für die ersten drei Sommerverkehrsmonate. Entsprechende Höchstzahlen wurden auch in der Gepäckbeförderung notiert, wo eine Resultatsverbesserung von 52.201 kg verzeichnet wurde. Das Total des beförderten Gepäcks erreichte in drei Monaten die Höhe von 118.462 kg, fast 50% über den Vorjahreszahlen.

O. N. S. T.

GESUCHT:

SWITZERLAND FACHMANN für die Herstellung von KUNSTHARZ UND PRESSPULVER. Es handelt sich um die Einrichtung einer Fabrikationsanlage in der Schweiz. Offerten mit genauen Angaben über Bildungsgang und praktische Tätigkeit an

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