

# Dickens in Switzerland

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take place in June 1975, will be held in Interlaken, the major city of the Bernese Oberland. Fans can profit from an 8-day all-inclusive stay in Interlaken.

Reservations can be made through every Swissair office abroad or through the O.K. World Championships in Archery, P.O. Box, CH-3800 Interlaken.

high-rise buildings near important squares, such as Buerkli and Bellevueplatz, and in the Old Town. The streets of the latter are reserved for pedestrians. Churches have been cleaned and old towers renovated for posterity. But the restraint on large buildings was not imposed on the outer areas, some of which, such as the 11th District, have some beautiful estates. Hirzenbach, for example, has become a well-known example of modern town planning.

# SHORT HISTORY OF ZURICH

(Adapted from the "Echo" of last March)

The rapid growth of Zurich during the past hundred years has left definite traces on its urban planning. Towards the second half of the 19th century, the people of Zurich, proud of their economic achievements, felt the need to radically redesign the layout of their town. Work started in 1860 and many parts of Old Zurich were sacrificed to the requirements of progress. This search for grandeur found expression in an ambitious urban programme providing for vast avenues cutting through the inner town. Only some of these plans, such as

the Uraniastrasse and the Zaehringersstrasse, have materialised.

It was not until the middle of the present century that concern for the safeguard of the Old Town was firmly established. Those areas which the leaders of the town were once so eager to destroy were now classed as historical sites. A commission for the maintenance of monuments was created in 1955. 1958 saw the creation of an office for the protection of old monuments, and the people were called five years later to vote on a new law preserving the monument of the old town. This concern has since been translated in real terms by a ban on

## A cultural centre

No one can deny Zurich's intense cultural life. The City has become a natural forum of intellectual exchange and confrontation. The Press is an obvious example, since the three most important papers of the country are published in Zurich. Although the *Neue Zuercher Zeitung* is only in third rank in circulation, it enjoys a solid reputation at home and abroad for its scrupulous and complete information on matters of foreign policy. Zurich's University and an Institute of Technology count over 15,000 professors and students. This and an open university, a private school-club, a catholic institute for adult education, are among the foundations of its diversified cultural life. Zurich has for a long time been the scene of more conferences than anywhere else in Switzerland. The town council spends 15 million francs a year on its opera, on the Schauspielhaus and the fine arts museum. It has many other private theatres offering a kaleidoscope of artistic expression. Zurich's Chamber Orchestra, with its unquestioned international renown, is an example of the energy of this private artistic initiative.

## An economic centre

Zurich owes its economic fortune in the 19th century to Alfred Escher, who contributed to the building of the town's railway links, to the foundation of the Swiss Credit Bank and the first large insurance companies. He also strived to establish lasting economic ties between Zurich and abroad. That period saw the growth of the Escher-Wyss company, the foundation of the machinery factory in Oerlikon. True to its international tradition, Zurich is now enlarging its airport and strives to preserve its economic drive by appropriate measures to sustain the economic mechanisms. In the banking sector, the three main undertakings are the Swiss Credit Bank, the Union Bank of Switzerland and the Swiss Bank Corporation. In industry, some of the main employers are the Oerlikon Machine Factory (part of Brown Boveri), Oerlikon-Buehrle, Albiswerk (Electronics), Standard Telephone and Radio, Amag (electric engines), Maag (gear wheels), Robert Aebi (building equipment) and Precisa, not to mention Swissair. IBM, Dow Chemicals and Philips count among the main foreign firms established in Zurich.

# DICKENS IN SWITZERLAND

Switzerland has attracted as many writers, poets, artists and historians from Britain than from any other country. From Gibbons to Byron and Whimper, the list of British creators, who found a special appeal in the wild sceneries of the Alps or the quiet organisation of the inhabitants, is a long one. Charles Dickens (1812-1870) was among English writers who left Switzerland with the strongest impressions. His fascination for the country is described in a recent brochure by the Swiss National Tourist Office.

Dickens set foot in Switzerland for the first time in November, 1844. Coming from Milan, he had climbed the Simplon by coach and sledge and reached Fribourg in three days. He journeyed on to Basle on his way back to England. The following year saw him enter Switzerland again from the south, taking the Gothard stage coach in summer. This second encounter with Switzerland inspired one of the most beautiful pages of "David Copperfield". Dickens left London in May 1846 for Lausanne, where he rented a villa with his family. There he began to write another novel, "Dombey and Son", in which he distilled the grandiose atmosphere surrounding him. The setting of the novel was quite some distance away from the grime and misery of Victorian London. At Lausanne, Dickens also wrote on the "Battle of Life" a tale on war which he dedicated to his "English friends in Switzerland".

He met several leading personalities of the time during his stay in the city and took an interest in the treatment of the sick, blind and incapacitated people and

of prisoners. From a trip to Great St. Bernard he came back with the impressions used ten years later in the detailed descriptions of "Little Dorit".

In October 1846, Dickens visited Geneva. A revolutionary ferment had taken over the town. Dickens was in admiration for this revolution because it has been launched by "free, noble, generous and moderate minds sustained by their splendid popular education."

Dickens returned to London in November 1846. It was seven years before his next and last trip to Switzerland. Accompanied by his friend, W. Collins, Dickens entered Switzerland at Basle; in October 1853 he moved on to Berne and Lausanne where he saw many of his old friends before leaving the country that same month. It is interesting to note that the specific Swiss sceneries and characters are depicted in his novel "No Thoroughfare", which was ultimately set on the stage. Dickens also published the English version of Henri Dunant's "Memories of Solferino".

The impressions which Dickens derived from these three visits to Switzerland never left him and it was in a prefabricated Swiss chalet in London, a gift from a friend, that he collapsed after a day's work on June 8th, 1870 and died the following day.

For Dickens, Switzerland not only represented, with its majestic sceneries, a break from the urban universe and an opening to the beauties of nature, but a country with traditions of freedom and heroic devotion.

(Pro Helvetia)