

# A scenic expert on Switzerland

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not a poor boob, that I have been trying all along to "get your goat," to use a colloquialism. I want to make you wild, goad you into rushing into print to abuse Kyburg. Urge you on to tell the Editor just and precisely what you think of me and my efforts in your paper. I want you to attack me, because in doing so, you may—I say may, because the possibility is remote!—stumble on a sound idea and thereby help us. So, put this in your pipe—if you are man enough to smoke a pipe—and smoke it. See? Get me?

As I have mentioned "Hyspa" above, I will now let you into the secret and tell you what it is all about:

#### How the Swiss Exercise in the Open Air:

"HYSIPA," a happy compound name, will become historic in the annals of Switzerland at Berne between 24th July and 20th September, when an exhibition, the first of its kind in Switzerland, will be held.

The charming capital, situated in the very heart of the Mountain Republic, lies upon the high fertile plateau extending from the Alps to the Jura. It is the gateway to the Bernese Oberland, one of the favourite resorts of the British tourist.

Berne is eloquent of Swiss national life and custom. The closely built houses stand in massive rows, like a great fortress, on high peninsula on the green waters of the Aar, which surrounds it on three sides. The quaint arcades, which shelter the pavements on either side of the streets in which play the famous and historic fountains, run under the first storey of all the houses, giving to the town an unusual aspect which is one of its chief charms.

#### Ancient and Modern.

The striking feature of the town is that but a few steps take one from old streets that have not changed since the Middle Ages to broad, new thoroughfares, lined with buildings, which are the very last word in modern luxury. The vivid contrast is more interesting because the old and new have been kept in perfect condition, an example of town planning.

The town is set in the midst of unforgettable beauties. The sinuous line of the Aar, the blue and purple tints of the far-reaching pine forests, the tender green of the beech and other woods, and beyond and above all the glimmering white peaks of the snow mountains. Berne is the gateway to these highlands, the portal which opens up the valleys of the Grindelwald, lying at the very foot of the glacier beneath the towering Jungfrau; and those of Interlaken with its twin lakes, of Kandersteg and Lauterbrunnen.

A stroll through the streets of the old town forces the stranger to stop every few minutes charmed by an artistic, brightly coloured coat-of-arms over a doorway, by the dainty rococo scrolls of a window grill or round bay window quaintly hung, painted and carved.

#### Sport on the Green.

The Kesslergasse, with its buttressed medieval buildings and Gothic fountains bearing figures of warriors carrying floating banners, will hold one for an hour. These strolls round the old part of Berne carry the visitors far away from the rush and bustle of the present, and seem to bring back again the tranquil sedateness of a long vanished age.

But during all the years in which I have known this beautiful capital city, compact, almost insignificant compared with Paris, Berlin and London, I have found always the Kirchenfeld Bridge its chief centre of attraction. From the mighty arches which span the high shores which overhang the green-blue glacier waters of the Aar all day long, one may observe not only the busy and idle throng crossing and recrossing the river, but below on a great greensward hundreds of youths and maidens engaged in exercise.

It is as if one were peeping into the old Sparta. For the lads are stripped to the waist, barefooted, running, throwing the javelin and the discus, leaping, and every once in a while hurling themselves into the river, diving and swimming. Their skin is bronzed, and as they emerge from the water and play in their games their skin glistens like sculptured bronze.

#### Mass Exercise.

For me, at least, compared with the manner in which we have been content in this country to take our pleasure and organise our sports, there has been a perpetual "Hyspa" in Berne. When it is announced, therefore, that a gymnastic festival and exhibition, lasting for two months, will be held in Berne, I am eager in expectation. We in this country have been educated to community singing, but we have yet to learn the value of community gymnasia.

In Vienna, Prague, Berne, and in many other Continental cities, massed gymnasia has been practised for many years, but mostly since the war. I know of no sight more inspiring than that of hundreds, even thousands, of young men, well led, engaged in massed exercise.

With 2,000,000 and more unemployed, with a large part of our national youth running

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waste, I have considered often that under the auspices of the B.B.C., or by making civilian use of our military bands, in each area of depression there might readily be organised, with immense advantage to citizenship, massed gymnasia of the kind to which students of the efforts of our Continental neighbours are familiar. Those who think with me that there should be some immediate arrest of our national degradation would be well advised to visit "Hyspa."

#### Historic Wrestling.

The gymnastic festival in Berne will be held on 1st and 2nd August, and again on the 22nd and 23rd of the month. There will be cycle races, international football matches, boxing, horse mastership, fencing and athletics of all kinds.

Not least in interest will be the wrestling matches and displays. In all the history of Swiss sport wrestling has been a favourite pastime. Each village and every valley has produced for countless years its wrestling tournaments. Hardy mountaineers, and lusty peasants vie with each other in the winning of the championship of the valley, which leads, not unoften, to the hand of the most desirable village maiden.

Berne has already given to the visitor the medieval wonders of itself, its glistening Minster and the Click Tower before which hundreds gather every day at noon to witness the act played by king and courtiers, mechanical, yet so true to life, while the great clock peals its hours.

Berne, too, in its setting has given to the world the fairest gem among its capital cities. And Berne provides entertainment of every kind for the visitor, so that he who goes for two or three days may remain for all his holiday.

#### A Charming City.

So when Berne sets out to organise an exhibition of sport and hygiene, I, who know this city of athleticism, and love its atmosphere and its people, declare in all sincerity, that such a festival will be a feast for all those devoted to the open-air and to manly exercise, and who desire to refresh themselves in one of the world's most charming little cities.

Berne possesses this attraction, too. It has no endless suburbs, streets and lamp-posts. Half an hour from the centre of the city on foot, brings the traveller into the heart of a countryside deeply wooded with its valleys and glades, and a bare hour by train brings him to the very foot of snow-capped peaks, towering 10,000 and 14,000 feet into the unattainable blue of the skies.

This is a fair city, offering this year especially rare attractions to its visitors. Who goes to "Hyspa?"

The old Romans used to have a tag, which I remember learning at school "Mens sana in corpore sano" or, roughly translated: "a head-ache early in the morning, is generally due to the corpses of the previous night." In other words, the Old Romans had learnt by bitter experience that it paid them to look not only after the welfare of their body, but that this, in turn, would induce their head to be well. Well and wise being synonymous for the purpose of my argument.

#### A SCENIC EXPERT ON SWITZERLAND.

*Dr. Vaughan Cornish, who is such a keen advocate for the preservation of the countryside, is, in addition, a recognised expert on scenery. His plea that certain districts should be definitely reserved for the benefit of future generations, will, doubtless, receive more earnest consideration as time goes by. In his latest book, "The Poetic Impression of Natural Scenery" (Sifton Praed, 6s. net), he takes a practical line and he describes much that the tourist may see if he has the proper vision.*

*This section of a chapter on Switzerland is typical of what he writes about other beauty spots.*

"The train from Interlaken to Grindelwald," writes Dr. Cornish, "left the open valley on passing Wilderswyl and entered a shadowed gorge, the solemn portal to the great mountains of the Oberland. A river, glacier fed, brawled below

in its rocky channel. Above the belt of pasture, cliffs rose sheer for fifteen feet, with ribs of rock twisted, folded, bent and buckled in the making of the mountains.

"A slender waterfall leaping from the brow of a crag broke into foam as it fell, and was wafted away in mist by a draught of air drawing down the valley. Grey clouds slowly eddied among the upper crags; and the fir forest, disclosed from time to time, was ennobled by its lofty isolation. Beyond the defile of Orweid the broad, high-lying valley of Grindelwald lay before us in the lengthening shadows of declining day.

"It was now high summer, and the massive Wetterhorn, rising nearly nine thousand feet above the valley at a distance of four miles from the village, stood directly in the way of the rising sun. The weather at first was fine, and throughout the night the rising constellations took station in turn above the mountain until the coming of the dawn.

"Auriga had already risen above the Scheidegg saddle to the left of the Wetterhorn, when, at three in the morning, the sky began to brighten. By four o'clock the stars were fading rapidly and a saffron band showed above the Scheidegg. During the brightening of the north-eastern sky the bold peak of the Schwarzhorn, on the left of the Scheidegg saddle, darkened, and detail of surface, visible in the dimness of early twilight, disappeared. The mountain, now smooth as marble and blacker than night, stood silhouetted on the flush of dawn, in contrast so intense that there were moments when the outline flickered as the bright sky lapped the barrier.

"An hour elapsed before, at five a.m., the sun touched the Schwarzhorn's peak. Grindelwald lay until seven o'clock in the shadows of the Wetterhorn. This great mountain which hid the sun, stood higher than the Schwarzhorn in the field of view, rising more than twenty degrees of arc as compared with fourteen degrees, the measure of the latter mountain. Thus it was backed only by the sober blue of twilight.

"Yet, although standing in quiet harmony of tone and colour against the sky, the serrated summit provided a startling spectacle of another kind. The eastern face of the mountain was now bathed in the light of the rising sun, which it hid, and from each rocky 'horn' of the crest a dusky ray shot high into the air, a shaft of deeper twilight or the pale sky.

"For two hours, from five to seven, as the sun climbed towards the mountain's crest the sheaf of dusky rays spread more divergent to the right and left, and each ray became so sharply pointed, that the mountain seemed to wear a spiked or stellate crown as pictured on coins of Roman Emperors. But although each ray of the mountain's crown rose from a horn of rock, the wedge was shaped in the air itself, the spike always on the side nearer to the sun, not conforming to the shape of the pinnacle. As the sun neared the summit of the mountain, the rays flared out almost flat on either hand, a dazzling disc suddenly appeared, flooding the valley with the full light of day, and the strange meteors of the dawn vanished from the scene.

"At first the whole face of the Wetterhorn lay in the uniform shadow cast from the crest of gneiss rock, which caps the great limestone cliff, but in half an hour the sun shone from an angle steeper than the batter of the capping rock, and broad, bright beams poured down between the projecting turrets of the long line of cliff, a Niagara of descending light.

"The wind changed in the night and blew across the Wetterhorn towards Grindelwald. A great streamer of cloud formed by the mountain stretched overhead, and the mountain no longer wore the brown of dusky rays. Roused from a short sleep and disappointed in the view, I gazed in weariness upon the scene; but dull fatigue was banished in a moment by a startling apparition in the air, a phantom peak, shaped as the culminating peak of the Wetterhorn, but twice as large, and seeming twenty thousand feet in height.

"It was an image cast, apparently upwards, upon the nebulous cloud that eddied in the lee of the mountain. As the sun climbed, the image moved downwards and to the left, the breadth of the shadow peak narrowing and broadening again as the cloud-screen shifted to and fro between the observer and the mountain."

*Public Opinion, April number.*