

Geneva : a tale of two cities

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Failure to recognize these differences leads critics of the League to spatter Geneva — and sometimes the Genesève — with misguided pens. Such quips have hardly made their way into print, in some instances, before most of the persons criticized have climbed on to trains bound for various nations. This transitory population of the “Geneva without a country” owes divided allegiances. Even the permanent League community — despite numerous links with the old city — cannot be mistaken for Geneva of the Genesève.

Somewhat this people has preserved an intellectual and social flavor all its own. Genevese speak French and are surrounded by France within a few miles on all sides except the lake front, yet have not lost their individuality. A handful of people — the entire canton numbers only some 173,000, most of them in the city — have clung to their hill through centuries of struggle for political, religious and cultural independence.

Solidarity among such a people is natural, but Geneva's traditions go beyond solidarity. They include sturdy self-reliance and an open door into which refugees have poured from many lands.

Genuine Genevese — the type is clearly marked — combine conservative and progressive ideas in a rare way. Their faces are cast in strong lines. Like many peoples of stern fiber and introspection, they are sometimes dubbed "cold, unsympathetic," by those who fail to see beneath the surface.

More than casual acquaintance is required to understand the Genevese. Their existence is hardly sensed by many who come to see international organizations in action. Geneva in full blast of an arms conference or League Assembly obscures the Geneva of narrow, steep streets on the old hill at night, with fountains always "ker-chunking" into their basins, cathedral bells sounding the hour, and an occasional troupe of singing students on their way home from a soirée.

Summer visitors to the Wall of the Reformation come close to something fundamental in the original Geneva. After most tourists have gone, Geneva itself comes out of a Sunday morning in November to celebrate the Fête of the Reformation.

That night, Protestants without regard to denomination gather in the cathedral. Zwinglians, Lutherans, Calvinists — many sects from many nations — put aside differences of creed in a common service. The Reformation lives again. Calvin's strict, even harsh, rule of the first Protestant religious state seems less hard to understand. It is remembered that he underwent extreme provocation before resorting to extreme measures. Libertines insulted him in public, plotted for more than a decade to ruin plans he regarded as God-given, and finally raised an armed insurrection against his authority. His stern repression comes into perspective in a cathedral that changed hands during a major battle of the Reformation.

Geneva's hill — still the city's geographical centre — wears its age easily. Streets and buildings have been kept in repair. They are clean. Unlike ancient quarters in many cities, this one has no incrustations of soot. Crumbling stones are less frequent than might be expected. Walls are uniformly mellowed. Buildings bear sixteenth century dates as if that were yesterday. Streets twist, rise — break into flights of steps. Eaves project at rakish angles over courtyards. Cobblers bend over their work in half-basements. Their lamps light interiors that hint rude arched passageways leading back into the hill. Barred doors shut off steep flights of steps. Other evidences remain of days when the whole hill was a walled defense.

Everywhere, fountains splash. Many are white marble, with chiseled designs that have taken on the wear of use. For these fountains represent kitchen faucets to many residents of the old hill. A boy dips his pail between flowers that grow at the centre of a large fountain. It is at the terraced junction of two streets. With dripping pail, the boy disappears into an arched corridor.

At a plainer trough, (attached to another fountain, a woman with red hands sloshes linen white. No central heating softens the cold of these public watering places. Nor can anything in the way of public fountains exceed the clarity and color of this water, fresh from the lake, and only shortly from the Alps. Within the depth of an ordinary fountain, its liquid prisms break into pale blues and turquoise. In winter, ice forms fantastic patterns around the spouts.

Modern Geneva has expanded from the hill, but has in no sense deserted it. Every building is in use. Cantonal and city government is still centered there in the picturesque "Hotel de la Ville" and annexes. The cathedral is surrounded by headquarters of religious societies. Stores, homes and workshops fill the old city's queer corners. The ancient atmosphere is disturbed only in rare cases. One shop recently superimposed a modernistic front on a medieval interior. The more usual practice is to mark such a word as "garage" on a doorway that could not possibly accommodate a medium-sized car.

Within the narrow limits of the old hill, Geneva of history more than holds its own against waves of post-war architecture. Off the hill, modernism — even futurism — makes sweeping incursions. Apartment buildings — many of extreme design — multiply. These belong to the new Geneva. Journalists and others attracted to the city by international activities occupy them. If these modern buildings draw sufficient residents from houses of the older city, those may be de-

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molished. This process has begun in some sections of the city, but the hill could only be remade by tearing it down. Fortunately for Geneva's picturesqueness, that is not a probability.

Geneva of the Genevese and Geneva of internationalism have many links, despite their differences. The city has given several officials to the League and International Labor Office. A lively interest is taken locally in doings of these organizations. Their coming has given new impetus to the teaching of international subjects in the university. This means much, because Geneva sets store by the institution which has grown from Calvin's Academy.

With characteristic independence, however, Genevese never lose sight of something generally overlooked by the world — that Geneva enjoyed a satisfying culture centuries before the city became a seat of organized internationalism. That culture goes on, a stabilizing influence for both Genevas during ups and downs of international hopes, fears, disappointments — and gains.

R. H. S. Christ, Sc. Mon.

E PAAR ALBUMSPRUECH. von Alfred Hugenberg.

's hät mänge Freud am Tadle,
Stoht's Hüüsi fertig do;
Und hett er selber's Pläni g'macht,
Wär's tümmer neseho.
So isch es bim Regiere,
's verrysst au mänge's Mul,
Und wenn de säb a's Rueder chunt,
So goht d'Sach erst recht ful.

Vom alte Wy hät mänge scho
Viell neu Gedanke-n-übercho;
En andre hät's mit allne Liste
Nid witer 'procht, als zu-n-ere Chiste.

So lang's no Milch und Anke git
Und Chäs und Ziger, vill dass d'witt
Cha d'Schwitz sich durebringe.
's hät mänge fäi, sechs Bierli truckt,
d'Chind händ diheim 's leer Kafi geschluckt,
d'Milch sei jo nid z'erschwinge.
Me meint, 's ist all' de glichig Märt,
Was nid vill chost, sei nid vill wert.

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HERE AND THERE IN THE ALPS.

Miniature Sketches by Barbara Scott.

ST. MAURICE.

When the Christians of the era of the Crusades conquered the Holy Land, Pope Paschalis II founded the bishopric of Bethlehem in Palestine in 1109 A.D. However, in 1223 the Mohamedans returned to power and the Bishop of Bethlehem fled to Clamecy in France where he was enabled to establish a temporary ecclesiastical residence in the suburb of Panténor. Since Roman Catholic Church law does not accept the dissolution of a diocese by a worldly power, the bishopric of Bethlehem, in an honorary capacity, never ceased to exist. Panténor became each honorary bishop's seat up to the days of the French Revolution.

At that time Bishop Durant de Lironcourt was requested to abdicate. Upon his refusal to do so, the little diocese of Panténor was dissolved and the bishop barely escaped with his life. After his death the honorary bishopric of Bethlehem remained an unoccupied office until 1840, when Pope Gregory XVI ordered in his own handwriting that the abbot of the Monastery of St. Maurice should henceforth assume the honorary office of Bishop of Bethlehem, and the abbot of St. Maurice is generally a Swiss.

St. Maurice is a town of very ancient origin. Excavations carried on here are continually unearthing old tombstones, inscriptions and archaeological fragments of all kinds. St. Maurice was at first the small fortified market-town of the Nantuates, a Celtic people, which inhabited the lower Valais. Later it became a Roman fortification under the name of Agaunum.

In 302 A.D. St. Maurice, commander of the Theban legion, suffered martyrdom here with his companions, and pious pilgrims erected soon afterwards a small monastery on the spot where these men had given up their lives for the principles of Christianity. This modest house of prayer was inaugurated by Bishop Theodore I of Octodurum, the present Martigny, between 381 and 390. One hundred years later King Sigismund of Burgundy journeyed to St. Maurice to do penance, and upon his departure he presented the foundation with such a handsome gift that it was able to build a large new church. Some 500 monks then became stationed at St. Maurice, as the place now was called.

The present church of this Augustinian Abbey was erected in 1611-27, but excavations made in the interior of this large ecclesiastical settlement have exposed to view the remains of foundations and catacombs of various epochs. Priceless manuscripts and works of art are contained in the library and treasury.

Wherever one turns there are vivid reminders of a hallowed past. On their way from their dwellings to the Abbey church the brethren have to walk daily over the last resting place of the Theban legion, and the famous bells of St. Maurice send their stirring messages from a Romanesque tower, which dates back to the days of Charlemagne, mighty protector of the church.

CONCERT NEWS.

We are informed that M. Edwin Fischer, the Swiss pianist of world-wide renown, is giving Concerts in London during the next week. M. Fischer would be especially delighted to see as many of his compatriots as possible among his audience. Particulars as to date and Hall can be obtained from the Daily Press.