A stroll through three cantons [continued]

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Prague. Those two lines from East to West and North to South cross there. If war comes within the next year or two it will be fought out over the isolated position of Czechoslovakia which has six hundred miles of common frontier with Germany, far too long, far too expensive and far too hilly and mountainous to fortify. I know that frontier. It runs along the crest of Saxon mountains. You have often to ask on which side of the frontier am I. You cannot fortify that frontier, the enormous German-Bohemian frontier. In the north of Czechoslovakia live 3,500,000 Germans. 2,500,000 at the last election voted for *Henlein*?, for the German minority in the Prague Government last February. The Prague Government with a Czechoslovakian majority made certain concessions which should have been made long before. How crazy it was not to give in to them before *Henlein* (*Hähnlein*) emerged and won two thirds of the German vote! How crazy it was not to satisfy the two and a half million who had lost faith in the Czechoslovak Majority Government, before *Hähnlein*? had to look to Berlin as their salvation, before they had begun, as their critics say, to take money from Germany for their propaganda. A great opportunity was lost when a large part, more than half, was allowed to get more and more discontented, not so much for political reasons as for a fair share of governmental assistance for the terrible economic suffering from unemployment, which, as we all know, tormented Europe and particularly Central Europe, ever since the American blizzard burst upon us in 1930. Well now there is Prague. Keep your eyes on Prague. When last I spoke I said keep your eyes on Danzig. Now I say keep your eyes on Prague, at the hub of the London-Paris-Moscow axis and the Berlin-Rome axis.

(*To be continued*).

A STROLL THROUGH THREE CANTONS.

(Continued).

Below the Croix de Cœur the path winds down through the delicate green of larch forests, flecked with white and mauve hepaticas, and fragrant with wintergreen. Down, down you plunge, slaking your thirst with heady yellow wine at La Tschuma, until you cross a bridge and climb up to the curious little village of Isérables. There is no accommodation of any sort here for the traveller, so you can only linger in the narrow street which leads so unexpectedly under the church, wondering how the huddled chalets manage to stand on each others' shoulders on the perpendicular side of the mountain.

A mule-track cut in the rock round the Bec de Nendaz, 3,000 feet above the Rhône, takes you to Haute Nendaz, one of the most primitive of Valaisan villages. It is as well to sleep here, for the tiny hotel is clean and comfortable. The postal car goes down to Sion, and the train will take you to Ardon, and then your feet lead you into totally new country, changing in character every mile, from the burning vineyards above Ardon until you penetrate deep into the unutterably wild Val de Triquent.

You will need a stout heart and comfortable boots as you skirt round the foot of the soaring Haut de Cry. For the narrow path grows narrower as it leads up into the gorge. Sometimes it sideslips a little towards the milky waters of the Lizerne churning over the boulders below; sometimes it disappears altogether, and a hair-raising corner is simply spanned by a few planks.

A full rucksack is a necessity, for there is no inn in all the length of the valley, hardly a habitation, only sighing pines, and rocks — more rocks than you have ever seen, too many to be true, lying about everywhere, all shapes and all sizes. The path threads its way between them until you emerge at last on to the amphitheatre of Derborence, frowned upon by the great massif of the Diablerets, with the Zanfleuron Glacier hanging like lace round the battlements of St. Martin's Tower. For grandeur and desolation, Derborence is hard to beat.

Two hundred years ago, Derborence was a fertile pasture, dotted with chalets and musical with cow-bells. In June of 1749 the demons of Les Diablerets fought a pitched battle on the heights, so runs the legend, one faction struggling to push the mountain over on the Valais side, the other fighting to topple it on to Berne. After terrible detonations and convulsions, millions of tons of rock split off the cliffs of the Diablerets, and crashed on to the pasture, burying chalets, cowmen and cattle in a gigantic cemetery. The Lizerne was dammed by great blocks of stone, and a deep blue lake now fills the lower pasture. There is a tiny inn on the edge of the lake, kept by a very old lady and her daughter. They will invite you to sit with them round the kitchen fire, and will tell you eerie tales of the old days when the devils played battledore and shuttlecock with the mountains, until you are thankful to burrow into a snug nest in the hayloft, and pull the blankets up about your ears.

The most interesting of the surrounding peaks are inaccessible from Derborence, so if you want to climb you must push on over the Pas de Cheville into the canton of Vaud, as far as Anzeindaz, and engage a guide. Several very pleasant days can be spent at Anzeindaz, scrambling over the Diablerets (when the devils are in a quiet mood!), the Roc d'Enfer, and the Oldenhorn.

When you have exhausted the possibilities of this lovely district, the way into the canton of Berne lies over the Zanfleuron Glacier on to the Sanetsch Pass. Zanfleuron is patois for Flowery Field, and, as soon as the snow ends, the curious volcanic rock, which seems to have been poured down the slope, is studden with countless violas and brilliant with crimson houseleek.

The Sanetsch is the Pass which links Valais with Berne, and you must follow its lonely windings for four hours, until you zigzag down at last to the hearty welcome of Gsteig.

Here everything is utterly different, smug almost, in contrast to the lovely desolation you have come through. The famous Bernese chalets are decked out in all their summer finery of geraniums, and the fountain in the village square wears a hat of Reckitt's blue lobelias. A broad highroad leads to Gstaad and civilisation, and the Spitzhorn suns his huge shoulders behind you.

After Gsteig, cross the beautiful verdant Krinnen Pass to Lauenen. Do not stop here too long, fascinating as this little doll's house village is. For you must sleep the night at the Gelenhütte, if you want the Wildhorn to shine as yet another jewel in your climber's crown. It is a four and a half hours' walk past the Lauenen Lake, and the "ladders" are uncomfortable after nightfall. Your guide, and the cow-bells, will wake you at three o-clock in the morning, and three hours afterwards, the worst of the glacier work over, you will be sunning yourself on that wonderful Col du Brotzé, with its great rocky window giving on to the giants of Valais. Two hours up a snow slope brings you to the summit.

You are on the last lap now, after a night spent at the Wildhorn Hütte, dropping down from your eagle's eyrie to the lovely Iffigenthal, with its romantic lake. You can take the Iffigenhorn in your stride, and sleep at Iffigen. There are many walks from here, to Zufluchthütte, the Mittaghorn, Rothorn, and the five lovely lakes of the Rawil Pass.

If your holiday is over now, you can sleep at Siebenbrunnen, near Lenk and the Montreux-Oberland-Bernois Railway, but if you still have time to spare, the Wildstrubel will surely tempt you with its hanging glaciers, or the Fluhseeli, which mirrors the Laufboden Horn in its ice-cold depths.

Jocelyn Saunders Davies.

(In "The Lady.)

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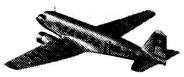
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