

A peak with Alexander Burgener

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A SUGGESTION.*By an Englishman.*

How little known to-day is Switzerland to the large mass of the British people. The average Englishman is aware of Switzerland and its people as the country, where the rich and moderately well-to-do go for various kinds of holidays, populated by peasants, guides, and makers of clocks and watches, and who surely must at one time or other have made a piece of confectionery which the whole of England knows as Swiss Roll.

No doubt the average Englishman seems to the ordinary Swiss very much as he did to that Dutch Professor of ethnology who said that after many years of intensive study, he had come to the conclusion that on the whole, the world was peopled by human beings. But he excepted England from this statement — he had not yet come to a conclusion as to the nature of the peoples of England but he was certain of this, that whatever they might be, they were not human. This nascent appreciation of the English character is not common in Switzerland.

These two communities who resemble each other so closely in their attitude to life at large, in their tolerance, love of political liberty, innate sense of fair play and uncommon taciturnity, would get on very well together if each only knew a little more of how the other lived.

What is the best way of getting these two people to know each other more intimately, so that with knowledge may come liking, the discovery of common interests and the creation of common wealth?

There is very little doubt that there is insufficient intercourse in the affairs of life between the two nations, in the sense that it exists between Great Britain and France, or the United States. It would not be of any use at this time to examine carefully the cause of this disconnection, but it is of the highest importance to the two countries that some means should quickly be found, and when found, put into immediate use, which will bind both countries closely together in a common interest. Profitable commerce is a substantial bond. It seems that this interest would be most easily promoted by the despatch from Switzerland to England, and from England to Switzerland of Trade Delegations, which should promote commercial activity between the two countries. It is true that many Swiss firms have Branches or Agents in England, but they subserve individual and not national interests.

No one can effectively contradict the proposition that commerce between two countries is the best means of generating acquaintance and developing friendship. It is, of course, true that in the past centuries it has been easier for Switzerland to trade with German speaking than it has been to deal with Western Nations. Circumstances which it is unnecessary to particularise at the moment seem to prescribe a "Drang Nach Westen" and a development of Anglo-Swiss trade is likely to foster more profitable relations than the temporary residence of a horde of tourists, bent only on amusing themselves, and not concerned in any way with the manner in which their hosts live and have their being.

We have in mind the permanent presence of Trade Delegations. The Delegations by their respective Governments, and their function should be to put on the market to which they are accredited as many national products as they can. The question may be asked as to whether this is not a redundant function since it is already

adequately performed by the Chambers of Commerce, but the answer must be in the negative in view not only of the proposition contained in the first paragraphs of this article, but because it is evident that one looks in vain in the shop windows of Switzerland for British products of whatever kind, and so far as England is concerned, watches and chocolate constitute almost the whole of displayed and identifiable Swiss commodities.

The method here advocated for bringing the two countries together has already been tried with success by the British Dominions and Crown Colonies. Some of them have shop windows with attractive displays in London, and arrange with many of the large shops to display their goods from time to time in a varied and attractive manner.

If Swiss firms have a Mission in London to whom they can address themselves when they desire to trade here, and receive initial guidance in the manner in which it is easiest to do business, when they have a place in which they can display their goods and a staff, who will describe and market them, then perhaps there may be a mutual recognition.

The cost of maintaining an adequate Swiss Trade Agency or Commission with a High Commissioner in London, should be well within the power of the Swiss people, since South Africa with a white population of two million, or half that of Switzerland, is able to keep South Africa House going, while Australia with a population of 50% in excess of Switzerland has established the magnificent and stately Australia House, and both these Institutions are without question profitable to their owners. If the Federal Government were carefully to consider the proposition here tentatively and respectfully set forth, and then to decide to cultivate a commercial association with Great Britain, there would unquestionably ensue a relationship of great and enduring benefit to both countries.

SUMMER COURSE COLLEGE OF SWISS MERCANTILE SOCIETY.

On Saturday, July 16th, the Swiss Minister to Great Britain, M. Paravicini, visited Swiss House, Fitzroy Square, in order to give an official welcome on behalf of the Swiss Mercantile Society, London, to the students taking part in the Summer Holiday Course organised annually by the Society.

In his address of welcome, the Minister, who was introduced to a large assembly by Mr. Pfändler, humorously pointed out that the first person the students met on arriving in London was a Swiss. The Minister then outlined the history and scope of the Holiday Course, which was inaugurated in 1936, with sixteen students. In 1937 the number was the same, and in the present year the number was fifteen, which, considering the troubled times in which we are living, was a very encouraging total. He was always pleased to meet his compatriots in England, in fact, he was inclined to think that the present meeting was arranged for his pleasure. He extended a hearty welcome to the students, and hoped that when the Course was ended they would take home happy memories of England. Lastly, he asked the students to believe that the teachers were anxious to be not only their instructors, but their friends.

The Minister, whose speech was heartily applauded, was followed by Mr. A. Levy, Principal of the College, who began by saying that

the Minister's presence gave them all great pleasure, was an inspiration to both the staff and the students to put forward even greater efforts than heretofore. All concerned in any way in the Holiday Course were grateful to the Minister for his warm and kindly interest in their work.

Mr. Levy went on to say that the teaching staff endeavoured to be the guides, philosophers, and friends of the students, and not merely dry-as-dust pedagogues. This was only the third year of the Course, but already many former students had written to express their pleasure and satisfaction with the work done. In the words of the English proverb, "all work and no play makes Jack a dull boy." Pleasure and work should go together, hand in hand. It was never an easy matter to learn a foreign language, but a knowledge of the customs, institutions, and ways of life of the people was always of great assistance. The excursions to such celebrated English institutions as Westminster Abbey, the Houses of Parliament, Cambridge University, Windsor Castle and Eton College were designed to give students some insight into the historical bases of English life.

Mr. Levy then described the lectures of the Course in detail. They comprise a study of the English Constitution, English commercial and educational systems, grammar, literature, geography, composition, translation, vocabulary, and pronunciation.

In conclusion, the Principal said that he was always ready and willing to receive constructive criticism on any point connected with the Course. He hoped that the students would have a happy time during their stay in London, and would carry away many pleasant memories.

At the close of the formal proceedings, a short conversation, in which the Swiss Minister took part, was held, after which the company dispersed, under the happiest auguries, and with the confident hope that "well begun is half done."

There were also present Messrs. H. H. Baumann (Vice-Chairman Education Committee), R. Weist (Member Education Committee), A. C. Stahelin (late Chairman S.M.S.), J. J. Schneider (Secretary S.M.S.), and A. Stauffer (Swiss Observer).

A PEAK WITH ALEXANDER BURGNER.

One of our readers has sent us a description of a climb, which he undertook some 38 years ago, with the then famous alpine guide, Alexander Burgner, which we are sure will be of interest to all those, who at one time or other have "indulged" in mountaineering.

(Alexander Burgner, whose name will always be remembered in connection with Mr. Mummery's triumphal conquests in the Alps, lost his life in an avalanche when proceeding to the Bergli Hut (Jungfrau) in the year 1908.) Ed.

I had engaged Alexander Burgner for the 27th of June, 1900, and we were to meet at Saas-im-Grund. Originally I had wished to make Saas-Fee my centre but Burgner prevailed upon me to select "Grund" instead. His arguments for "Grund" were not quite convincing, and after a stay there of ten days, striking a balance between the two spots, I am inclined to vote for Fee in preference. (I wish, however, to say at once that my wife and I were extremely comfortable at the only hotel at Grund, and that we regretted very much, for the proprietor's sake, the small number of visitors. On one Sunday there was a congregation of three in the English church, and twice, on rest days, I had lunch in solitary state. Of course, the season was young, but somehow everybody predicted a dearth of visitors on account of the war and/or the Paris exhibition and/or the offence given in England by the attitude of some Swiss papers and of a large portion of the Swiss themselves in connection with the war.) (Boer War. Ed.).

After a day spent at Geneva, which included a lovely walk on the Savoy side of the lake to the last Swiss village my wife and I arrived at Stalden on the 25th of June. On the platform, among several Swiss, sat a burly, somewhat forbidding-looking man, who on our alighting from the train rose and introduced himself as Alexander Burgner.

He immediately disclosed what had brought him down the valley to intercept me, a plan for a new ascent of the Balfrinhorn. My axe and my boots were already in Saas, moreover I was not really fit for a big expedition, having caught a chill on the journey and I ought to have said no, but

Consequently, I sent another pair of boots to the expert in nails, Alexander borrowed a "bergstock" for me, and I eagerly read up the history of the Balfrinhorn, in Studer's "Ueber Eis und Schnee," which confirmed that the mountain had not yet been done by the proposed route,

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In the afternoon of the 26th of June we left Stalden for Hutegge, where we laid in a stock of provisions and hired rugs and cooking utensils; my wife went on to Saas and I with Alexander and his third son Salomon as porter, quitted Hutegge at 4.30 p.m. Our path led up somewhat steeply to the huts or village of Schweiben, which we reached in quick time, keeping together very well, though I fancy that our young porter found the pace and his load just a little trying. At Schweiben we unexpectedly met with pleasant hospitality, which in the Valais at that time was somewhat scarce; a drink of milk was ready for us in a trice, and my offer of payment was emphatically rejected; the reason for this becoming plain when in our Lady Bountiful I discovered young Salomon's sweetheart. After this call we pushed on through splendid meadows and "Alpen" and later through "Alpenrosen" in their first freshness to Ferrihen (corruption of Pferch, i.e., place to collect and keep cattle in), two hours from Hutegge. After a good deal of scouting we secured a fairly cosy bivouac. Alexander prepared a capital bed for me allotting the whole load of rugs to his "Herr," he and Salomon regardless of rheumatism, contenting themselves with the hard ground for a pillow. There was an abundance of wood about and we camped round a beautiful fire, first enjoying our supper and then an improvised concert. Alexander played several pieces on a mouth-organ (the Garibaldi march being one of them), and I sang all the Swiss Volkslieder that I was able to recall. The night, only moderately cold, was beautifully clear, and the legions of stars fascinated me so long that in the end there was not much time for sleep, especially as Alexander roused me at 1.30 a.m. in order to borrow my knife!

An excellent cup of chocolate having been served, we took leave of Salomon and started at 2.30 a.m. by the light of the lantern, following the Schweibach and thereafter mounting up the steep moraine of the Balfrin glacier, to the accompaniment of the call of the "Röthelvogel," the earliest bird of the morning.

Our plan was to follow the north-west arête in its entirety, and since we did not know how long our climb would be, nor indeed what were its difficulties, we kept up a good pace; to a certain extent Alexander had surveyed the ascent during his chamois-hunting expeditions, but taken as a whole it was new ground even to him.

Our route carried us next over snow between a huge mass of stone-débris (Bergsturz) and the left or western moraine of the Balfrin glacier, and later, after traversing this moraine, to our first stopping place in the rocks. The moraine was somewhat troublesome on account of sea-saw-stones, but Alexander in spite of being a heavy weight negotiated them extremely well. His method seemed to me unorthodox, and indeed he is unconventional in many things; he is taciturn en route, does not trouble to assist in the less difficult places — my wife on a subsequent occasion did not consider that he was attentive enough in this respect — he does not wear snow glasses and disdains both drinking cup and gaiters or putties. Sometimes there is traceable in his work and manner a certain want of enthusiasm, but then he is a guide who has made history and who now reckons himself among the "old uns;" he even apologized for his slowness, and set me wondering what his speed may have been twenty years ago!

However "revenons à nos moutons!" At 5.40 a.m. we roped and the actual climbing began. We found the arête for the most part consisting of safe and not too sharp rocks, but there were several bold-looking "gendarmes," which we were obliged to circumnavigate on the Eastern side, either in the rocks or by traversing snow patches at steep angles. Once or twice we encountered the bugbear of the climber smooth slabs, and there was one ticklish place which provoked Burgener to remark "this climb is more difficult than the Matterhorn." At another spot he handed me his axe to hold on to, and he enjoined me earnestly not to let go of it on pain of meeting with disaster. I was not conscious of any greater danger than there had been elsewhere on the arête, and I was certainly climbing very carefully, but may be Alexander saw what I did not. That was the only time when I noticed Alexander throwing off his grim reserve.

A propos of the Matterhorn it is worth recording that Burgener has ascended it no less than 54 times, with all sorts and conditions of climbers, some as good as himself, others who had to be assisted to an unusual extent: ten times he had carried tourists down from the hut. No doubt insufficient training was the cause of these failures, or is it that the Matterhorn being a fashionable peak, is attempted by people who are not really mountaineers? Certainly of late it is attracting to itself a remarkably large number of climbers: in 1898 there were 132 ascents, and in 1899 we have 112, whereas previous to 1898 the highest number in any one year appears to have been 78. (These figures are taken from an interesting statistical report published in No. 9 of the "Alpina," 1900.)

Returning to our arête: the progress was rather slow because we could not work together, and in several places the entire length of the rope had to be used; on the other hand, however, there was never much doubt about the route to be followed.

At last we had done with the arête, and after a tedious hour on snow we reached the snow-covered peak, at 11.30 a.m., or nine hard hours from the bivouac; we did not push on to the twin peak with the Steinmann, the height of which is given as 3,802m., (the snow-covered twin may be slightly higher.)

Already on the arête we had had a beautiful view and on the top we were rewarded with a grand panorama, the Bernese giants and the Weisshorn standing out prominently. After a short rest we descended eastwards over snow into the rocks overlooking the Bider glacier, where we "dined." At 12.40 we turned our faces homewards and scrambled down the steep rocks on to the glacier. My Alpenstock was greatly in the way, as it had been on the ascent, and the advantages of a piolet were more than ever before made manifest to me. By the time we had the glacier behind us and the Saaser Visp in sight I began to feel the effects of a long day and of the strong mountain air, and getting very drowsy. I got also terribly slow. Under ordinary circumstances the descent into the valley by this route, which is the one generally followed, must be rapid, but we did not reach Saas until about 5 p.m.

Next day my wife raced up and down the Mittaghorn with Alexander, whilst I rested. Later on we three and Salomon Burgener did the Fletschhorn, and to finish a short campaign Alexander led me up the Portjengrat (traversed), which is a most interesting climb and affords no doubt excellent training for some of the higher and more difficult Zermatter mountains.

My article should have been called "three peaks with Alexander Burgener," but a detailed description of the three expeditions would have assumed unwieldy dimensions, and I therefore picked out the new ascent of the Balfrin as being possibly of some interest to climbers.

FOOTBALL SEASON 1937-1938.

CUP-WINNERS: Grasshoppers Club, Zurich.

After a drawn game at 2 all, Grasshoppers defeated F. C. Servette in the replay by 5:1, at Bern.

NATIONAL LEAGUE.

CHAMPIONS: F. C. Lugano.

RUNNERS-UP: Grasshoppers.

Relegated: F. C. Bern.

	P.	W.	D.	L.	F.	A.	Pts.
Lugano	22	12	6	4	46	28	30
Grasshoppers	22	13	3	6	50	26	29
Young Boys	22	11	6	5	39	29	28
Basel	22	12	3	7	48	31	27
Nordstern	22	11	4	7	32	29	26
Lausanne	22	10	5	7	46	39	25
Servette	22	9	7	6	39	34	25
Young Fellows	22	9	6	7	46	32	24
Biel	22	6	4	12	23	36	16
Grenchen	22	4	7	11	31	51	15
Luzern	22	5	3	14	37	55	13
Bern	22	0	6	16	18	65	6

FIRST LEAGUE.

CHAMPIONS: F. C. Chaux-de-Fonds, promoted to National League.

RUNNERS-UP: F. C. St. Gall, having lost to Chaux-de-Fonds by 1:2 at home and drawn 2:2 away.

(To be continued.)

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BAPTEME.

Le 10 juillet 1938, Denise-Madeleine Hoerler, fille de Jacques et de Madeleine-Emma née Delessert, de Teufen, née le 8 janvier 1938.

Pour l'instruction religieuse et les actes pastoraux, prière de s'adresser au pasteur, M. Marcel Pradervand, 65, Mount View Road, N.4 (Téléphone Mountview 5003). Heure de réception à l'église le mercredi de 11 — 12h.30.

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Sonntag, den Juli 23. 1938.

Predigt: Pfarrer Rud. Kägi aus Rothrist. Während der Monate Juli und August finden keine Abendgottesdienste statt.

Anfragen wegen Amtshandlungen und Besuchen sind zu richten — an Herrn Pfarrer Rud. Kägi, c/o Foyer Suisse, 12, Upper Bedford Way, Russell Square, W.C.1. — Tel.: MUSEum 2982.