Suisses revenus de l'étranger

Autor(en): **[s.n.]**

Objekttyp: **Article**

Zeitschrift: **The Swiss observer : the journal of the Federation of Swiss Societies in the UK**

Band (Jahr): **- (1939)**

Heft 927

PDF erstellt am: **19.03.2024**

Persistenter Link: https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-695305

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THE PICTURESQUE TICINESE.

By HILDA HUGHES.

The Tessin is undoubtedly the most romantic part of Switzerland, and the Ticinese people contribute to its charms as do the natural beauties of blue lakes, mountains, and waterfalls. They are a picturesque people — the men and the children among the most handsome in the world. The older peasant women, exposed to the elements and taking no care of their skins, become exceedingly aged in appearance; yet they do not lose their fascination, for their lined faces are of the type which to the artist and photographer suggest personality and character. The men and the babies, however, have claims to exceptional good looks — both dark-eyed with strong white teeth which flash in one of their sudden smiles.

These people are noted for their clan feeling, and when night falls they will sit for hours with some of their children on a low wall at the roadside, talking and laughing and perfectly content after the day's work is done.

Or the men will crowd round open-air cafés at the lakeside, watching the tourists drink their coffee and the native red wine and listening to the band with the unaffected pleasure of children. They are very romantic and they have quick eyes for a pretty lady. The German-Swiss, who are not particularly devoted to them, accuse them of too much interest in sex and dress and not sufficient stability.

Their artistry, however, is seen on every side. Their Roman Catholic faith is not only reflected in wayside shrines on the mountains or at street corners but in mural decorations which give their old grey stone Italian villas a fascinating individuality.

Pictures of virgins and saints are to be seen not only on the houses but even on the walls of village inns. It is, however, not only religious subjects that have been depicted. Some of these paintings have figures in period costumes; others have a frieze of a grape-vine just beneath the roof. Balconies, Venetian blinds, and shutters are in evidence everywhere; the neat little wooden châlets to be seen in other parts of Switzerland would not be suitable for the summer sun.

Narrow streets — mere alleyways — also provide shade. Lugano has a network of such lanes, opening out of the squares near the railway station. The colonnades, with their stalls of coloured silks, cottons, and cashmere, are quaint and picturesque. The fringed shawls are brilliant in colour, some with an orange ground splashed with vivid blue, ruby red, a rich green, others black with floral designs in warm pinks and blues, for the people love colour. There are fanciful examples of the clogs worn by many of the natives, but these ornate and colourful copies are intended to be bought by tourists as souvenirs. Fine jewellers' shops may be found in the colonnades, behind the open stalls, and there are wine shops and eating houses with bizarre drawings on the bill of fare to entice customers inside.

Climbing up the Via Cattedrale, Lugano, a street of steps which gives a magnificent view before the cathedral is reached, one may meet bevies of bare-footed children, and in the narrow lanes behind the funicular station it is not surprising to see a woman carrying milk or water pails from a yoke.

Here, as in Brissago and Ascona (two enchanting villages on the Lake Maggiore), one may meet a peasant woman with unfamiliar vegetables in a long, deep wicker basket affixed to her back—a basket which is wide and open-mouthed at the shoulders, but which narrows off to a point a foot or two above the ground. They walk quite tirelessly with these great baskets, just as the men, stripped to the waist, their bodies the colour of mahogany, work energetically out of doors in the heat of the sun.

Grape vines, planted in terraces, add to the beauty of the country and provide the livelihood of many people, whose enterprise is obvious, since they have managed to plant vineyards on the steepest of slopes and in the most unexpected places.

Women bring vegetables, fruit, and other produce to the open-air market in Locarno, an attractive little place on the Lake Maggiore, and they sit beneath huge sunshades to sell them.

Priests carry their sunshades too, but these take the form of a converted umbrella; for the summer months the bulging black gamp has been fitted with a white cover.

At all hours of the day there is the sound of church bells, which have a significance for the villagers. The tourist will find that their tone adds to the charm of town or village, though perhaps not in the early-morning hours when sleep is desirable.

In seeing their churches, it is interesting to visit the cemeteries. The Ticinese have a profound respect for their dead. Some tombstones have mosaic pictures as well as huge and elaborate carvings; others have photographs of the departed. Sentiment for the dead and the living appeals to them.

Even their business tactics are sometimes unusual — as, for example, the advertisement methods of a certain boatman at Locarno, who sings operatic airs with passion as he casts an eye on possible customers resting on the seats at the lakeside. The boats are a type of gondola with supports for an awning when the glare of the sun is strong; at night many carry a light.

Photographers also sometimes have an eye for effect, and many a customer will have to wait for photographic prints while the proprietor of the shop, possibly smelling strongly of garlic, cuts the edges to give a notched effect and provide a finish to the picture.

The tourist on the St. Gotthard railway realises how great is the difference between the Tessin and the German-speaking cantons of Switzerland before the St. Gotthard tunnel is reached. Skies are bluer on the southern side; even climatic conditions change. Sun may be brilliant in the Tessin, but rain or leaden skies may threaten above awe-inspiring stark mountain crags around the tunnel; the impression made by the people has changed too.

The network of alleys full of grey stone villas, some with courtyards, most with balconies, has given place to neat wooden châlets, widely spaced from each other, some of the outlying ones having logs neatly stacked in an adjoining shed, which is an integral part of the châlet, the wood visible to every passer-by, yet by no means unsightly.

On this journey back to central Switzerland, in place of the dark-eyed, handsome people, there are flaxen-haired and light-brown German-Swiss, heavier in build, their heads rounder instead of long, their eyes blue or grey for the most part. The very character of place and people has changed.

SUISSES REVENUS DE L'ETRANGER.

Nous lisons dans la "Tribune de Genève":

Il n'est point rare que, dans un cercle d'amis, l'un des participants évoque la brillante carrière de celui du groupe qui est parti "pour" l'étranger. Et de surgir devant les yeux des commensaux, villa cossue, auto de luxe, serviteurs et plaisirs raffinés. Mais pour cent de nos compatriotes qui percent et qui, à force d'un travail dont souvent nous n'avons pas idée, réussissent et finissent par s'imposer aux yeux des indigènes, que d'échecs, que de souffrances, que d'amertume!

Et voici qu'aujourd'hui, un problème nouveau se pose à l'attention des pouvoirs publics: celui des "Suisses revenus de l'étranger." Ce n'est un secret pour personne: le nationalisme sévit partout, là, avec dureté, ici, avec douceur; les étrangers doivent céder le pas aux nationaux. Vous devinez sans peine les tristes conséquences: le foyer que l'on abandonne, les meubles que l'on doit vendre à vil prix, le retour au pays... où tous les amis de jeunesse vous ont depuis longtemps oublié. Mettant en pratique la devise "l'Union fait la force," ceux de nos concitoyens qui ont regagné leur patrie viennent de créer des associations cantonales; mieux, ils ont organisé dans nos principales villes des Services sociaux.

Nous avons rencontré l'un de ces "Suisses de retour de l'étranger." Sa doléance nous a fait peine. Nous essayerons de la transcrire. "Voici, d'abord, la nouvelle brutale: dans quinze jours, il faut abandonner tout ce qui était devenu votre vie... Alors certains souvenirs d'enfance et d'adolescence se précipitent. Ils vous font espérer que le sort qui vous attend ne sera tout de même pas la misère pour vous et les vôtres.

"N'est-ce point chez nous, qu'à l'annonce d'une guerre, d'une persécution, d'une catastrophe, les comités naissent comme champignons après l'orage! Notre peuple est connu pour être au premier rang lorsqu'il s'agit de soulager les misères, celles des grands blessés aussi bien que celles des enfants abandonnés et des nations martyres: des fonds se trouvent; les portes s'ouvrent, toutes grandes, à l'infortune.

"Une fois arrivé au pays, après des tribulations sans nom et la perte, par le seul effet du change, des quelques économies mises de côté, le désenchantement commence: les amis de l'enfance sont placés; ils vous disent, avec une tiédeur qui fait mal, qu' "ils feront quelque chose pour vous, si c'est possible." Alors se succèdent les essais de place où l'on investit le petit capital pour le perdre sitôt après, puis les représentations, les assurances, pour lesquelles vous manquez de métier et de relations. On perd quinze jours ici, un mois là sans autre résultat que de s'enfoncer toujours plus, de perdre tout courage... mûrs pour toutes les tentations.

"Le peuple suisse ne sait pas que des centaines de compatriotes revenus de l'étranger sont aujourd'hui sans travail régulier. Eux qui, hors de nos frontières, représentaient une élite dont nous étions fiers, ils sont devenus des pauvres honteux. Aucune loi, aucun décret ne sauvegarde leur existence, leurs droits, leurs intérêts. Les prescriptions en matière de chômage les écartent automatiquement.

"Ce que les Suisses de retour de l'étranger demandent c'est ni la charité, ni la place des autres; ils demandent à leurs concitoyens, à leurs Confédérés, de venir à leur aide, à leur secours: que ceux qui possèdent un emploi disponible pensent à ces Suisses. Il ne faut pas que notre devise soit une formule que l'on évoque les veilles d'élections ou dans les banquets des tirs fédéraux."



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