Group parties to Switzerland

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The " Railway Gazette " (13.10.39) singles out as a feat of engineering the 34 year-old motor coach which still runs on the light railway of the Birsigtalbahn (Basle). It is a double-bogie coach equipped with four Brown-Boveri 750 volt Motors and has so far covered well over a million miles.

* * *

The death has taken place at Zurich of Dr. Robert Haab. He was born in 1865 in Wädenswil, studied and practised law; early in life he interested himself in cantonal politics and was elected member of several administrative councils both in the town and canton of Zurich. From 1911 to 1917 he held a seat on the board of the Swiss Federal Railways; during the last war he was for a short time Swiss Minister in Berlin and on his return in 1918 he was elected Federal Councillor, taking charge of the post and railway department. Dr. Haab was twice president of the Swiss Confederation. He retired in 1930 owing to bad health.

* * *

Life in St. Gingolph as seen by a reporter of the " *Daily Express* " (17.10.39): I went to-day to the town hall at the village of St. Gingolph. The town hall is in Switzerland. The mayor is French.

When he talks to councillors who are Swiss he does so over a barbed wire fence. Because part of this odd spot is in France, part in Switzerland. Some of the St. Gingolph boys are fighting for France; some sit drinking to Swiss neutrality.

And they have black-outs in the French part of St. Gingolph — which must make it difficult for the mayor to hold a council at night.

* * *

In consequence of petrol rationing cycling has gained an unheard-of popularity. In Geneva, it is estimated, there is at present one cycle to every three inhabitants.

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Snow has made its appearance in many districts; this is exceptionally early and under ordinary conditions it would have been welcomed. There are not likely to be winter sports to any extent as the would-be visitors are otherwise employed.

GROUP PARTIES TO SWITZERLAND.

In view of the numerous difficulties arising out of the present emergency the Swiss Legation has come to the rescue of all those wishing to return home. Particulars and detailed instructions have been posted to all compatriots who have registered for this purpose at the Legation since the outbreak of war. These organised groups are leaving this country between October 23rd and 28th, and all formalities, such as visé, through ticket, reservation, etc., are attended to by our Legation as long as the holder is in possession of a valid Swiss passport.

This, of course, should not be interpreted as meaning that it will be impossible to return individually whenever this recommends itself. Own arrangements will have to be made and the granting of the English and French visés may be delayed for a few weeks.

A MEMORABLE SCAMPER ABROAD.

In these tragic days when we know not what the morrow will bring our thoughts often turn back to the past.

We pick out memorable days albeit some of these were equally sad and disturbing as the present time.

After the war we Swiss were all anxious to know how our relations in Switzerland had fared, we wished to see them and exchange views and experiences.

Thus on the 9th July, 1920, my wife and I travelled via Ostend to Swizterland.

In Ostend we chartered a motor-car to go to Ypres and to Vlamertinge, the British War Cemetery, where one of our sons was buried. —

Our journey through Flanders was eventful because the roads were still bad and the countryside desolated and the car was old and giving trouble: three times we had to cool our heels while a burst tyre had to be mended. We lunched at Ypres, and we found the grave of our son; the cemetery was beautifully kept and our hearts were as glad as they could be under the circumstances of this sad pilgrimage.

Later we travelled from Brussels to Basel where we were met by my sister. We put up at the 3 Koenig Hotel and among the high lights of Basel for us were the evenings on the balcony of the hotel overlooking the Rhine in all its majesty.

From Basel we travelled to Brigue and thence by an Einspänner to Simplon Kulm where my brother and his wife were awaiting us.

Thereafter we had a glorious time, enjoying ourselves like children, playing pranks and allotria and forgetting for a while the past, as we thought, horrors of war.

We made several small climbing expeditions, called upon the Prior of the Simplon Hospiz and and motored down to the interesting gorge of Gondo.

July 29th we left Simplon, my brother and his wife accompanying us as far as the well-known Galleries (now mined) and this is the last glimpse I had of my brother. A few days later he ascended a small peak and never came back.

Diligent search was made by the natives and friends of his from the Alpine Club, but in vain.

We visited relations and friends at Zürich and on the 31st July left via Basel, Rheims, Laon and Calais. We had perforce to pass through the devastated areas and these are a few of the thumbnail sketches that my wife left on record:

" Coray Les Bains détruit." " Frenoncourt damaged." " Ferguier crowds of new huts. Worst trees cut down." " Cambrai church new roof." " Luguy bridge gone." " Armentières only ruins." " Bailleul nought." " Hazebroeck bad. Wrecked forest." " St. Omer. Poilus on guard."

Nothing could have exemplified to us more the horrors of war than these sights along the railway and the acres of grim gravestones.

At 10.45 p.m. on the Sunday following we reached home and recommenced our daily round on the 3rd August, the day after Bank Holiday.

J. J. EBERLI.