

News from home

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NEWS FROM HOME.

By H. de MAY.

Should it ever happen in Switzerland that some eccentric fellow were so absurd as to want to found a political Party for the introduction of a monarchy, he would probably be put into a kind of ceremonial cage, in the finest zoological garden — that of Basle — in that country. And he would bring in a great deal of money to the Zoo! As a people, the Swiss are Republicans — they are, in fact, excessively republican. Everything that smacks to the slightest degree of any concentration of power in the hands of an individual, of any privileges to be enjoyed by a particular stratum of society, or any aristocratic ostentation, is treated officially with demonstrative mistrust.

We said — *officially!* For, in secret and very often without admitting it to himself, the average Swiss — not to mention his wife — is keenly interested in everything that is happening in the reigning and the no-longer-reigning Royal families, as well as in the aristocracy of the entire world. The more there is to be found concerning these matters in the illustrated magazines, the better their sale. It would seem as if we have here one of those quite irrational but amusing inconsequences which are to be discovered in the character of every nation. Their significance may provide interesting material for research on the part of psychologists who delve into the souls of races and peoples. Anyway, whenever a Count, a Prince, or a Maharaja pays a visit to that country, there is many a Swiss who is very willing to allow himself to be duly impressed.

Incidentally, there are crafty individuals who profit from this. For instance, quite recently there was a foreigner "operating" in Switzerland for a couple of months as the "son of the Turkish Sultan", borrowing money from innumerable people — including diplomats — living in luxury in a hotel at Montreux, by the Lake of Geneva, and then suddenly vanishing without having paid his bills. We mention

this occurrence merely as one of many, and not as a suggestion to people who are longing for a holiday in spite of their somewhat meagre purses! The Swiss Police have no sympathy with jokers of this kind. The alleged scion of an imaginary Turkish Sultan, who recently told his story out of "A Thousand and One Nights" — without any effect — to a Swiss Magistrate, learnt this to his cost.

The same experience fell to the lot of a young Swiss First Lieutenant who, as a result of becoming deeply enamoured, found himself condemned by a Military Court for the betrayal of military secrets to a Legation belonging to the Eastern Bloc. In order to get his fiancée — whose acquaintance he had made when on a holiday trip to a capital situated behind the Iron Curtain — into Switzerland, he sold himself to the Secret Service of the country in question and must now expiate his treachery by serving a prison sentence of four years.

Whilst speaking of legal cases which are now attracting public attention, here is a rather unusual one. The Finale of a somewhat discordant Violin Concerto has recently been resounding in a Bernese Court of Justice, in which an internationally renowned Bernese dealer in violins has been playing the somewhat thankless solo part, namely that of the defendant. Viewed from the standpoint of this man, the affair started with an overture "Allegro con spirito", the movement being carried out chiefly in a sharp key; for was he not able to sell to all kinds of people violins, purporting to be Stradivari and Guarneri and Heaven knows what, which — as has already been proved — in no way originated from the workshops of these masters? Our dealer in violins managed to get paid as much as 100,000 Swiss francs per instrument, so it looks as if he did some very good business. Exactly how good it was will become known later on, in the trial, to which, by the way, some eminent violin specialists have been called in to act as experts. It will depend on them, to a large extent, how long it will be before the final, more or less melancholic chord will be struck, or, in other words, before sentence is passed.

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