

"Our fatherland" [continued]

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weather. The lessons he learned were passed on to Colonel Sir John Hunt, leader of the British team.

First Prize in Window Dressing Competition Held in Rome Won by Swiss National Tourist Office

First prize in a window dressing competition held in Rome on behalf of the International Help the Children Fund went to the Swiss National Tourist Office. The window of the SNTO's Rome office depicted the facilities offered to families and school children by the Swiss Railways, and the centrepiece was a poster by Pierre Monnerat. Also on view was a working model of a Swiss electric railway. In addition to the first prize the SNTO was awarded a silver medal.

Schiller's "William Tell" Played by Local Company

The first performance of Schiller's "William Tell," which is given every year in Altdorf, centre of Switzerland's authentic William Tell country, has taken place with great success. The five-act play is being performed by a local company under the direction of W. J. Ammann. The cost of seats is very moderate, and there are special rates for schools and other groups. Full details can be obtained on application to the Tellspielbureau, Altdorf, Switzerland.

NOTICE

Concerning the Swiss Insurance Law of 1947.

The Swiss Federal Old-Age, Widows' and Orphans' Insurance, which has been in force since January 1st, 1948, and which is compulsory for the inhabitants of Switzerland, is also available, under certain circumstances, to Swiss living abroad who wish to participate.

Those Swiss nationals who have been insured in Switzerland, but who have moved to New Zealand and who want to join the voluntary insurance are at liberty to enrol, provided they are properly registered with the Swiss Consulate and that they sign a formal Application "Beitrittserklärung" within six months from the date of their release in Switzerland from the compulsory insurance.

Those Swiss citizens, including dual nationals, who reside in New Zealand and who have reached, or will reach, the age of 30 years on or before December 31st, 1953, and who wish to enrol for the Swiss Old-Age, Widows' and Orphans' Insurance, must sign the application form by the end of this year. Naturally their registration (matriculation) with the Consulate has to be in order or taken care of first.

The annual premiums are payable until the age of 65 years. Persons gainfully occupied are liable to contribute 4 per cent. of their income in cash and in kind. The Old-Age pensions are paid out to single persons from the age of 65 years onwards, and in cases of married couples, to the husband from the age of 65 years, and to the wife from 60 years.

Persons interested in this matter should contact the Consulate, whereupon a pamphlet (at their request either in German, French, or English) giving further detail in this matter, as well as an application form, will be furnished them.

Consulate of Switzerland,
P.O. Box 386,
Wellington, C.I.

OUR FATHERLAND (Continued)

CENTRAL SWITZERLAND AND LUCERNE

The cradle of the Confederation, the three original Cantons, the founders of Switzerland, undoubtedly take pride of place in the hearts of all Swiss. During the last fifty years, Switzerland's heavy defences were built around the Gotthard and its approaches. And it was here that throughout the long centuries, Switzerland's history was centred and built up to what it is today. Here in the very centre of our Fatherland is the peaceful meadow known as the Rutli, where, history proves beyond doubt the verbal agreement took place between the "forest cantons" of Uri, Schwyz and Unterwalden, which led to the league of August 1st, 1291, against the rule of the Habsburgs and finally to the formation of the Swiss Confederation.

Ours is a land of mixed sternness and beauty, but in no part of it has nature bestowed her gifts with a more varied and unsparing hand than in Central Switzerland, the country round the famous lake of Lucerne, the lovely valleys, the mountains which crowd along the Gotthard line as far as Andermatt. A traveller passing through today will find it hard to realise the bitter and long struggles which once raged round these peaceful scenes with their sunny hills, rich pastures and flower-strewn meadows. Yet in these central cantons lived those stout clans of hardy peasants who again and again successfully defied the greatest powers in Europe, maintained in the name of freedom and democracy their independence, and so laid the foundation of a peaceful Confederation which forms the Switzerland of today. This is indeed the real heart of Switzerland—the cradle of an ancient race.

The bulk of our readers are immigrants from the four or five central cantons and who of you cannot remember with a heart-throb the countless cherry trees in full blossom in spring with a soft south wind breathing gently through their branches. And as summer advances the fruit fulfils the promise of the flower, for no cherry seems so sweet and juicy as those of Schwyz and Zug.

Or as a contrast, take the climber in the vast upland solitudes, where all the beauties of this lovely land will be fully revealed and where fresh surprises continually appear. Many of you may know a rocky wilderness such as the slopes of the Melchtal Alp, the Madaraner Valley, or many other places where you think yourself alone with nature. There you may happen to see a herd of chamois—the buck running ahead, with all the followers on the look-out—a rare sight indeed for a lover of nature. It seems to us, and we say so with pride, that all men who come to Central Switzerland feel its scenic charm and fall under the spell of its romance and beauty.

Let us take a few excursions through these picturesque districts, perhaps on one of those clean, comfortable steamboats across the Lake. The variation and charm of this lovely lake are unique; along the shores you see soft flower-strewn meadows, green and pine-clad hills, or threatening cliffs—and above them all, the fine mountains, their peaks clothed in everlasting snow. From Lucerne it takes only half an hour to Weggis (you remember the famous song?) renowned for its mild climate. It is a fact that Weggis supplies Lucerne with fresh lettuce almost during the whole of the winter. Three miles further on is Vitznau, also a sheltered and sunny spot. From Vitznau the famous electric railway used by the majority of tourists ascends the mountain. The Rigi is served by a second railway from Goldau at the other side of the great rock. There are several popular hotels on top of the long ridge, high above the lake and commanding extremely beautiful views. An average of 400,000 people visit the Rigi every year.

After passing Brunnen, another delightful summer resort with the twin—"Mythen" as a rugged background, the celebrated Axenstrasse begins. This is one of the most famous examples of highway construction, with a number of tunnels and galleries cut out of the vertical cliffs, with openings overlooking the lake. An obligatory stop is made by everybody at the Tell's Chapel, where our hero William Tell sprung ashore from the boat in which Gessler was taking him to prison. And so the panorama unfolds to Fluelen and the return trip along the opposite shore past the Rutli, the imposing Burgenstock and back to Lucerne.

Engelberg has achieved popularity as a winter and summer sport resort. It is the starting point for several well-known mountains, such as the Titlis, the Spannort or the Urirotstock. Few

of our compatriots will know the origin of Engelberg: until the beginning of the twelfth century the surroundings were a complete wilderness, until a certain Conrad von Seldenburen came to the valley seeking a secluded spot to establish a monastery of retirement from the world. When resting at night, he heard distinctly several times from the mountains, some beautiful songs of angels. To the pious man this was a sign from heaven that he was to build here the cloister which he had planned. Thus the Monastery of Mount of Angels was established in 1120 A.D.

And to conclude this article we must not overlook the St. Gotthard Railway, a triumph of engineering and great international highway, and also one of the most picturesque in Switzerland. You have all heard of the famous spiral tunnels at Wassen. First the track passes way below the village and you might catch a quick glance of the church tower high above; then the line reverses its direction by a sharp curve, disappearing into the mountain tunnel. Then the train repasses the village on the level, and the church is just a few yards away from you. Finally, turning again, into a tunnel in the opposite direction the hide-and-seek church appears a third time, but now way down in the valley.

—E.M.

(To be continued)

OBITUARY

MR. JOHN SCHUPFER

On October 12th, 1953, Mr. John Schupfer died suddenly at his home in Lowgarth, Eltham. With his passing away the Swiss community of Taranaki lost one of its most respected and beloved members. His easy-going straightforward manner made him very popular with the Swiss and English people alike. The unusually large procession and the countless wreaths at his funeral in Kaponga bore witness to this.

John came to this country from the Canton of Zug, 32 years ago. He proved himself a careful and good farmer. In Miss Pauline Steiner he found a perfect partner in life, and together they owned their own farm in a comparatively short time. The very happy marriage was blessed with two daughters, the elder of whom was crowned the proud Queen of Kaponga last winter.

To go back to his beloved Zug in the near future for a well-earned holiday was John's one ambition but Providence decided otherwise.

John Schupfer is the first member of the Swiss Social Club to die since its foundation. He was a member of the Executive, a keen supporter and helper whenever there was something to do. His wise counsel was always appreciated and taken notice of. Sure enough, his absence will be felt very hard.

—W.R.