

Ibex restored to Swiss Alps

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middle of rough and unfriendly nature, has an ancient civilisation all its own. It dates back to the time when monks settled there toward the beginning of the sixteenth century. The monasteries have now disappeared, but at Romainmotier, a fascinating ancient town, there is one of the finest Romanesque churches in Switzerland.

West of Neuchatel the rail brings you to Chaux-de-Fonds, the world centre of watchmaking. This is the largest town in the Jura, is very modern, and often has been compared with American cities of similar size. The climate is very dry and healthy, but severe. The people, known for jovial spirit, claim that they have "six months winter and six months taxes!" Lower down the valley, clustering around an old church, lies the town of Le Locle, where watches and chocolates are made. The population of Le Locle is supposed to be very temperamental. A story goes that, in the fifteenth century, a woman known as Marianne due Cre Vaillant, put a whole party of Burgundians to flight by letting loose the village bull.

North of Neuchatel along the placid lake of Biemme, is the picturesque little town of Neuveville, with its old towers and famous schools. This is a fine countryside for hiking among the lower ranges of the Jura, and plenty of opportunities for sailing, fishing and swimming. At the end of the lake lies Biemme, quite a modern town of over 50,000 industrious people making watches, machines, automobiles, pianos, soap, etc. The town is just on the language frontier of French and German speaking Switzerland, and it is often amusing to hear children mixing their languages.

GASTRONOMY:

From Geneva right through to the end of the Bernese Jura, you find a tradition of excellent cooking, much influenced by the cooking of the neighbouring French.

The lake of Neuchatel is famous for its fish, such as the bondelle, which is found only in this lake and which is served deliciously in the inns at Auvernier. Here, in these inns, with their lovely flower-decked terraces, you can enjoy the "brochet" as well as the trout, usually served "au bleu," which are more abundant in the mountain streams. Neuchatel is also famous for its "fondue," the recipe of which you find in the June issue of this paper.

In the whole of the canton of Neuchatel, it is customary for bakeries to prepare a delicious type of small cheese tarts each Monday. And in all the villages of the Jura, the housewives take their large tarts of rhubarb, plums or apricots, each whilst in season, and which they have prepared at home, to the village bakeshop to be baked. Often the people of these districts make their evening meal entirely from a cup of coffee and a large piece of one of these truly delicious and nourishing tarts.

The "Vacherin du Jura," a white creamy and soft cheese, is very popular throughout our country. The Bernese Jura also produces a tasty round cheese called the "monk's head," originally fabricated by the monks of Bellclay.

(To be continued.)

IBEX RESTORED TO SWISS ALPS

One of the most remarkable achievements in the revival of a disappearing animal species is the resettlement of ibex in the Swiss Alps.

Ibex or bouquetins were numerous until the sixteenth century, but their number dwindled rapidly, owing probably to the development of portable firearms which enabled hunters to shoot them more easily. Records show that there was none left in 1550 in Glarus, in 1553 in Canton Uri, in 1770 in Canton Berne, and the last were seen in 1750 in the Grisons and in 1770 in the Bernese mountains, while some still existed just after 1800 in Canton Valais. After that the only reminder was the ibex on the coat of arms of Canton Grisons and of Entremont, in the Valais.

Two attempts at reintroducing ibex in the Alps were made in the Grisons, one in 1879 when 13 animals imported from Austria were released on the Arosa Rothhorn, the other in 1886 when four from the Basle Zoo were let loose on Piz d'Aela, above Filisur, in Canton Grison. Both attempts failed and all the animals died from disease.

In 1914, a new attempt was made to settle some ibex bought from the Aosta National Park, but before being released they were kept some time on special breeding grounds near St. Gallen and later on the Harder, near Interlaken. Some were released in the mountains but they disappeared after a few years. (To be continued.)

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