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LITERARY PAGE

Edited by Dr. PAUL LANG.

All letters containing criticisms, suggestions, questions, etc., with regard to this page should be addressed to the "Literary Editor."

OLD BADEN AND OLD NEUCHÂTEL.

The publishing firm, *Spes*, of Lausanne, edits a beautiful collection of booklets called "Vieille Suisse" in which the life of our forefathers is represented and depicted in a very interesting way. The latest of these booklets deals with the famous little town of Baden ("*Les Amusements des Bains de Bade*" by Henry Mercier, Frs. 4.50) and is of a character not only to instruct, but especially to amuse. It conveys an historical outline from which the learned substance naturally could not be excluded, which is, however, happily intermingled with numerous short stories and anecdotes which bring these good old people nearer to us than any solemn lecturing would do. The town of Baden is one of the oldest towns of Switzerland. It already existed before the birth of Jesus Christ and was very well known in the Roman period. In 1415 the Bernese took it away from Kaiser Sigmund; its importance grew considerably from 1424 onwards, because it had become the regular hostess of the Diets. Its greatest fame, however, was not due to the Diets, it derived it justly, from its bathing, which made it an incomparable *lieu de plaisir*. Until the beginning of the last century there was nothing more delightful an average He or She of Middle and Eastern Switzerland could think of than a "Badenfahrt," so much so that intended brides had it stipulated in their marriage contract that they were to be allowed to have such an escapade once every year—in all decency, of course. The bridegrooms, as lords and masters, naturally did not need such an express stipulation.

The hot water springs of Baden were held to be good against practically every ailment or sickness you could think of. They were supposed to cure not merely rheumatism, bad teeth and small thorax, but famous physicians recommended them also for strengthening the memory—a cruder Pelman system,—eyesight, hearing and taste. This latte: sometimes certainly with reason. A special feature of one spring, the Verenerbrunn, was that it could cure feminine sterility. In fact, it worked wonders, as innumerable babies, born some time after the "Badenfahrt," testified by their presence. It may be mentioned incidentally that the main contingent of visitors came from Zurich, where the rigid laws against too much eating, drinking and smoking frightened away people from the town as often as they could get. When they had to go back they did not forget, charitable Christians that they were, the poor relatives who had been obliged to stay behind. It was the custom to present them with "Baderkräme." The distribution of these is described as follows in a poem by a Toggenburger epigrammatist:—

"Wann der Frauen Bäder-Cur und liebe Zeit verlossen,
Dann so geht das Kramen an; freut euch, ihr Hausgenossen,
Knecht und Magd ist unvergessen, auch der nächstgegessenen Schaar;
Hat der Mann dann nichts zu hoffen? Ya, ein schönes Hörnerpaar!"

UNE AUTRE PAGE DE "CÎTES ET PAYS SUISSES."

PAR GONZAGUE DE REYNOLD.

La Suisse est au centre de l'Europe comme une forteresse à la Vauban qui dresse au milieu d'une vaste plaine des glacis gazonnés et des murailles grises. Au nord, le fossé, — le Rhin; au sud, en face, la citadelle avec ses étages de réduits, de batteries, de casernes, de casernes, ses tours blanches, sa première et sa seconde enceinte, — les Alpes; entre eux, une esplanade avec des champs d'exercices, des polygones, des allées d'arbres, des bassins et des jardins, — le plateau; puis, à l'occident, un long rempart oblique, — le Jura.

On entre dans la forteresse par trois grandes portes et trois grands ponts. Une porte et un pont à chaque bout du fossé: Schaffhouse et Bâle. Une autre porte et un autre pont entre le rempart et la citadelle: Genève.

La citadelle est sur un rocher à pente roide, que ses murailles surélevent. On y monte lentement par un haut escalier exposé toujours au soleil: six marches, le Mendrisiotto, Lugano, le Ceneri, Bellinzona, Biasca, la Léventine. Et d'autres escaliers plus étroits aboutissent à des poternes: le Saint-Bernard et le Simplon à gauche; à droite le Splügen, le val Bregaglia, la Bernina, le val Mustair.

Au milieu, juste au-dessus de l'escalier, le donjon à quatre fenêtres, vers les quatre points cardinaux: celle du Rhône, celle du Rhin, celle du Tessin, celle de la Reuss. C'est le donjon du Saint-Gothard; à son faite se déroule et claque la bannière flamme, rouge et blanche, avec sa croix et sa devise: *chacun pour tous, tous pour chacun*.

Vingt-deux familles vivent dans la forteresse. Plusieurs fois par an elles se rassemblent. Il arrive qu'elles ne soient pas d'accord. Mais dès que la sentinelle crie: "Je vois des fumées à

A particularly glorious period in the history of Baden was the time of the Peace Congress of 1714, which ended the so-called War of the Spanish Succession. An idea of the splendour displayed then will be gained when one hears that the French Ambassador, du Luc, had a suite of no less than 300 people when he entered the town. Amongst his best arguments to win his case were the everlasting banquets which he gave to all and sundry. There his master cooks, theatrical troupe and corps de ballet worked wonders *ad majorem gloriam Gallie*. The Austrian party, of course, knew also how to make friends: one of the dinners given by the Count of Seilern contained no less than thirty-six different courses!

This Congress was the greatest event in the history of Baden. The fame of this place continued throughout the 18th century, but in the 19th century it gradually decayed. The common bath rooms were then abandoned, people having become more particular and bathing more in private cabins. In 1845 the public bathing places were completely abolished. There is, however, an interesting literary document to fix the state as it was in the beginning of the century. David Hess, a Zurich writer and caricaturist, published in 1817 an entertaining booklet, "Die Badenfahrt," from which one gains an accurate insight into the way in which the citizens of Zurich behaved on such an excursion. The 38 illustrations of the publication from which we derive all this information go a long way, together with its interesting text towards making it an amusing and valuable gift.

Another publication which we have received, *Marc. V. Grellet: "Un Après-Midi chez Mme de Charrière"* (Neuchâtel, Librairie Centrale) also takes us back into the 18th century. Madame de Charrière, one knows, is the writer of different books and high-brow hostess of Colmbier, to whose fascinating personality the late Philippe Godet devoted one of his best books, if not the best. This lady, who was of Dutch origin, but had married a Neuchâtelois country gentleman, with whom she resided at Colmbier, was a very cultivated person, but rather too clever for the good folk amongst whom she moved, so that her "Lettres Neuchâtelaises," with their abundance of wit, shocked the so-called good society of Neuchâtel out of all countenance. One of the main features of the life of Madame de Charrière was her friendship with Benjamin Constant. The tragic dissolution of this friendship, which was the result of Benjamin Constant's having fallen in love with Madame de Staël, forms the centre of the one-act play with which we have to deal here. The curious thing is that this little play is in the main composed, as its author says in the foreword, of quotations from different publications and letters of the persons concerned, chiefly, therefore, by Madame de Charrière and Constant. This, if it to a certain extent encumbers the dialogue, elucidates not only with historical truth the facts as they were, but even conveys exactly the gist and style of this unique Swiss 18th century salon. Lovers of the past grace of these times will be eager to conjure them up with the help of the dainty booklet Mr. Marc. V. Grellet has so cleverly produced.

l'orient, je vois de la poussière à l'occident!" elles se taisent, prennent les armes, montent chacune à son poste de combat.

Quatre fronts à couvrir: celui du Jura, tourné vers la France; celui du Rhin, tourné vers l'Allemagne; celui de Rhétie, vers l'Autriche; celui des Alpes, vers l'Italie. Quatre taureaux autour d'un char de guerre, qui baissent leurs têtes frisées et présentent leurs cornes.

En arrière de chaque front, une grande cité où celui qui commande peut planter son étendard et d'où vers tous les points rayonnent les routes: derrière le front du Jura, Bienne ou Berne; derrière celui du Rhin, Zurich; derrière celui de Rhétie, Saint-Gall; derrière celui des Alpes, Lucerne. Quartiers généraux bien protégés par une rivière, un lac, une montagne ou des collines. Quatre villes riches et vastes, reliées entre elles par des voies larges et planes.

Le front des Alpes est le plus étendu, le moins facile à protéger. Mauvaise frontière où des saillants étrangers pénètrent dans notre territoire comme les dents d'une scie: le val di Livigno, Chiavenna, le district de Luino, — l'Ossola surtout qui sépare le Valais du Tessin, poussant le val Antigorio et le val Formazza comme une lance, hampe et fer, vers le Saint-Gothard. Et puis ces vallées pareilles à des couloirs sans issue; et puis ces Alpes énormes, pareilles à des murs hérissés de tessons. Aussi le front des Alpes est-il naturellement partagé en trois secteurs distincts: les Grisons, le Tessin, le Valais. Une voie pourtant le traverse dans sa longueur: la vieille voie romaine du Rhône au Rhin, de Martigny à Coire par l'Urseren. Au milieu, boucle de fer dans cette ceinture de roche, le Saint-Gothard.

Le Saint-Gothard, donjon central, "Bergfried." Les deux routes: celle du Nord au Sud, d'Italie en Germanie, du Tessin dans les Waldstaetten; celle d'Orient en Occident, des sources du Rhin

NELLO TICINO.

SILVIO.

Silvio si chiamava il casaro, il migliore amico di quel tempo. Era un omone alto, nerboruto, meglio vestito degli altri. Emergeva su tutti per la sua statura e per la sua forza tranquilla. Aveva gli occhi chiari e il viso aperto: coi baffi lunghi e un bel pizzo sul mento. Quando il babbo andava via, faceva lui da padrone, e gli altri servi gli obbedivano in tutto.

Non avendo figliuoli suoi, voleva a me molto bene. Quand' eravamo al Piatto o alla Campagna, lui scendeva ogni giorno sin quaggiù per governare il formaggio, e mi portava sempre con sé. Io lo seguivo da vicino coi miei passettini di bimbo. Ero poco più alto dell'erba e gli arrivavo appena ai ginocchi. Il suo negro cane ci precedeva sempre di alcuni metri e ogni tanto si soffermava ad annusar la terra.

Quando s'era arrivati, lui scendeva in cantina a voltar le forme, a raschiarle, a spargerle di finissimo sale. Io salivo a riposare sul fieno del giaciglio. Quando aveva finito, ci veniva anche lui. Non c'era lì che un sacco solo: e, per ripararci dalle mosche, c'entravano, io non so come, tutti e due.

VENTO.

Come soffia il vento quassù!

Se stai lì impalato, è capace di buttarti a terra.

Una volta, proprio su questa bella cima, mi parve di non poter reggere più al formidabile urto. Mi gettai bocconi in una conca piccola che il terreno faceva ai miei piedi. Mi appiattii fortemente contro il suolo. Stetti ad ascoltare l'urlo della terra e del cielo.

Le mie povere gambine non eran potute entrare al riparo e mettevano la pelle d'oca.

La camicia mi tremava fredda, fredda, sulle spalle. I capelli, soprattutto sulla nuca, rabbrivivano, rabbrivivano come l'erba fina ch'era intorno.

CAPRE.

I due ragazzi hanno finito il lor lavoro. Uno aiuta gli uomini a mungere. L'altro, il capraio, brandisce la bolgetta bruna del sale, se la butta ad armacollo, esce a chiamare la capre.

— Cìà, cìà, cìà, cìà . . .

La sua voce è stridula e sonora.

Rispondono i belati da tutte le parti.

Rispondono gli echi dei monti.

I mungitori alzanò il capo, contro il ventre delle mucche insonnolite, a guardare.

— Cìà, cìà, cìà . . .

Su ogni cocuzzolo spuntano le capre. Vengono di corsa, facendo di gran salti fra l'erba e i sassi. Le più pazzarelle si soffermano di tanto in tanto, si voltano di scatto, incrociano la corna con quelle che son dietro. Tic, tac, tac. E via di nuovo. I capretti schizzano in aria come demoni scherzosi.

In breve il povero capraio è come al centro d'una nuvola temporalesca. Le bestie ingorde gli s'avventano contro, gli balzano addosso, gli puntano sul petto le ferree zampe, lo rovesciano quasi.

Lui lascia fare. E' abituato. Porge a ciascuna, con polso fermo, il suo pizzico di sale. Bada di non lasciarsi mordere le dita. Sorride, rosso e felice, in mezzo al branco saltellante.

aux sources de l'Aar et du Rhône, — les deux routes qui se coupent au carrefour d'Andermatt, dessinent en vérité la croix de notre bannière. Qui tient le Saint-Gothard nous tient par la tête; qui tient le Saint-Gothard peut descendre vers les quatre points cardinaux: vers Bellinzona et Milan par la Léventine; vers Lucerne et Zurich, vers les Allemagnes par la Reuss; vers le Léman, la Savoie et les Gaules par la Furka et le Rhône; vers Berne et la Nuithonie par le Grimsel et l'Aar; vers Coire, la Rhétie, le Tyrol par l'Oberalp. Voilà pourquoi à l'Oberalp, la Furka, Andermatt, Airola, nous avons construit des forteresses.

La vallée de la Reuss s'abaisse d'étage en étage, du Saint-Gothard au lac des Waldstaetten. De tous les côtés des montagnes rondes, comme le Rigi, ou pyramidales, comme les Mythen. Cette vallée close, c'est notre grenier de guerre.

Lucerne, capitale stratégique de la Suisse. Entre la montagne et la plaine, elle est la porte, avec Zurich, de la route qui, le long de la Reuss, monte vers le Saint-Gothard. Elle est à égale distance de Zurich et de Berne, de Saint-Gall et de Genève, de Bâle et de Bellinzona. C'est là, quand la guerre menace, où on se hâte de ramener les armes, les outils, les harnais, les voitures des arsenaux: c'est là où l'on s'apprette à concentrer les dépôts et les réserves; c'est là sans doute où, si la guerre entrainait, se réfugierait les magistrats avec les archives et le trésor.

Berne: la grande tente royale au centre du camp retranché où la décisive bataille jouerait au sort notre pays. Et des limites du camp retranché, — fossés, remparts, — sont l'Oberland, la Sarine, les forêts nuithoniennes, le mont Vully entre les lacs de Morat et de Neuchâtel, le Jolimont entre ceux de Neuchâtel et de Bienne, la crête du Jura jusqu'au dessus d'Oltén, puis l'Aar, et les collines argoviennes, et les préalpes lucernoises.

(Tiré de la *Ilième Scérie*. Lausanne. Payot & Cie. Cir. No. 86.)