

Taking the medicine of the mountains

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THE DREAM OF HER LIFE.

A correspondent of the "Daily Telegraph" has written the following charming story of how a poor woman spent all her savings on a trip to Switzerland, the dream of her life:

"If ever the League of Nations is to reach its desired end in a real League of Peoples, the Continental travel agencies are likely to be found the most effective instruments towards the attainment of the ideal. Those efficient clerks who arrange for the would-be traveller an itinerary covering half Europe in the matter of fact way of people who are doing this sort of thing every day; those alert and courteous young men, with their caps and badges, who smooth the path of the puzzled and somewhat apprehensive tripper from boat to train and from train to hotel; the amazingly cheap terms at which it is now possible to spend a holiday abroad; between them the three forces are combining to make us well acquainted with the countries of the Continent and the manners and customs of the people thereof.

Just how keen and tireless as travellers we English are, how thoroughly we can beat the globe-trotting American at his own game, what sacrifices we are prepared to make to see places and study peoples I never realised until I met the Little Brown Lady.

No one has ever looked less fitted to be regarded as the embodiment of the spirit of romance than she, with her cheap little costume, her shrinking ways, her obvious nightly bewilderment as to what exactly she was expected to do with the many knives and forks placed before her. I saw her first at Lucerne, took one look at her, and forgot her. And afterwards was inclined to blush at the forgetfulness, for she was easily the most notable person of us all.

It all came out in a burst of confidence, born of a momentary feeling of loneliness, at Lugano. She was the wife of an artisan, who had never in his life earned more than a few pounds a week. For twopence she had picked out of the box at a bookstall a guide to Switzerland, complete as she was particular to point out with pictures. That was ten years ago. She read the book, and re-read it. Got more travel books from the local library. Gleaned over the pictures in the illustrated journals—winter sports at St. Moritz, sunbathing at the Lido, climbing on the Jungfrau. Until one day it dawned on her that she had to see these things, or the places where they were done.

Ten years ago! A £50 trip! Quiet little heroine. She had the money saved once, all but £5, and her husband fell out of work. The £45 faded her over until he was settled in a job, and she started all over again, going out to work herself that she might not be too old before embarking on the Great Adventure.

She had seen St. Moritz, although there are no winter sports in July; she had been to Venice as the peeling condition of her nose testified; she had stood in awe before the majesty of the Rhone Glacier; the Jungfrau had yielded to her its mysteries. Stresa, Zurich, Maggiore, Interlaken—the words tripped off her eager tongue in as fine a mixed bag of sightseeing as even she could have wished. "And," as the final note in the song of joy, "I have a private bath-room for myself at the hotel I'm staying at now."

My last sight of her was in Paris, at the office of the travel agency whither we had both gone to change money. She had arrived that morning, and was bound for home at midnight. Still quietly eager, though confessedly tired, and determined not to waste an hour. "The Louvre this afternoon; the Folies Bergère to-night. I'm a happy woman. This is the first holiday of my life, and I don't suppose I'll ever have another."

Gallant Little Brown Lady. To me the pleasantest of many pleasant memories of a happy trip."

AT GENEVA.

It is fitting that Switzerland should be the centre of the League of Nations, because in Switzerland national distinctions have already been overcome. In a very real sense Switzerland is a league of nations. Not, mark you, a cosmopolitan agglomeration, but a confederation of distinct nationalities. Here in Geneva you might be in France. The customs are French, the music is usually French, the language is French—the only thing lacking is Chauvinism. Away to the other side of the country you might be in Germany. Customs, architecture, music, speech—all are Teutonic. Yet when the rest of Europe was hopelessly entangled in mutual hatred and slaughter these peoples were at peace.

Surely Switzerland is the answer to those who say that racial and national animosities are ineradicable. The animosity between Frenchman and German is I suppose, the bitterest in Christendom—not long ago the French were making plans for building a huge wall to sever them from the Germans—yet in Switzerland Frenchman and German know no rivalry save in honest toil and for the common good.

An answer, too, to those who say that it is useless to hope for peace till we have a universal tongue. There is not a universal tongue in Switzerland, but three distinct languages, three distinct nations, without a doubt. But there is no national patriotism (save of the harmless "local" variety). The human commonwealth receives the supreme loyalty.

So here it is surely fitting that members of the other nations should meet year by year; not indifferent (let us hope) to the object lesson around them.

Fitting, too, that they should meet in Geneva. In the enthusiasm generated by my first visit to this Swiss metropolis no praise of the beautiful city would seem too extravagant. Not a quarter of a million people—nowhere out of touch with God's countryside—yet with an intellectual and artistic life, a wealth of schools and museums, of parks and noble buildings that would do credit to any megalopolis. The natural situation is superb, whilst humanity has risen to the occasion, and proved that even a large town may but grace the scene. There are not nearly so many slums here as in other cities of the same size, perhaps not so many private palaces either, but many more parks and public buildings. All this is surely prophetic of Utopia. —*Inquirer.*

RICHARD WAGNER INCIDENT.

In the minutes of the Zurich Society for the Protection of Animals has been discovered a highly interesting entry under the date July 8, 1856, relating to Richard Wagner, who was then musical director in Zurich. The secretary reported that Wagner had rebuked a cruel carter for his ill-treatment of a horse, and it was resolved to recognise this "honourable behaviour" by a special letter of thanks, of which the text appears in the society's minutes.

"It having been brought to the notice of the Society Against Cruelty to Animals," they wrote, "that, seeing a weak, old horse being driven by a household goods carter in a violent and cruel manner, you administered to him a stern, but well-deserved rebuke for his brutal behaviour, and offered him the price of another horse to provide alleviation for the ill-treated beast. But as often happens, this noble offer was received in rude and deeply-insulting fashion. The society deems it a privilege in this connection to express to you its appreciation and warm thanks for the sympathy you displayed and for your noble and manly behaviour.

"The society takes this step with all the greater pleasure as it learns that you have always taken the deepest interest in the aims of the Society for the Protection of Animals, and by word and deed have helped to spread a nobler spirit in this connection and to secure the protection of the law for animals at present too often exposed to brutality.

"With best wishes for your happiness and welfare, we are," etc.

SCHWARZER HUND.

Immer treibst du noch heran,
willst mit schwarzen Wirbelkrausen
Weltenjammer überbrausen,
weil ich dich so lieb gewann.

Erde stöhnte nebelkrank,
jeder Baum lag auf den Knien,
tausend heisse Wunden schrien —
als ich deine Wölbung schrien.

Tief verschüttet hingeknickt
krümmt ich mich durch meine Grube:
schmetternd riss mich eine Tube,
feurig hatt' ich dich erblickt.

Feurig hast du dich getrotzt,
hin und her dich oft geschwungen,
hast in schwarzen Kollerungen
dich am stillen Grund gerollt.

Höher bog der Wollenschweif,
wolkig schwang die schwarze Fahne —
tiefer mit dem weissen Zahne
zogst du silberhellen Streif.

(Aus Konrad Bänninger. "Weltgarten"; Rascher & Cie.)

SWISS MURAL POETRY.

(Vom Jahre 1808.)

Drey Brüder Bertschi bauen hier zusammen
Johannes, Peter, Abraham, mit Namen.
Zwei Jakob und zwei Niklaus Pieren
Den Bau mit allem Fleiss ausführen,
Auch Cristen Engder Helfer wahr
Im tausend acht hundert und achten Jahr.

(An einem Haus bei Adelboden. 1900.)

Die Segens Hände breite,
Herr, über dieses Haus;
Und leite und begleite
Du selbst uns ein und aus.
Wir wissen, an dem Segen
Aus deiner lieben Hand
Ist's ganz allein gelegen
In jedem Amt und Stand.

(An einer Sennhütte in der Nähe des Diemtigtals.)
Gesundes Vieh und gute Weid
Gibt schwähre Käs und machet Freud.

TAKING THE MEDICINE OF THE MOUNTAINS.

This is how it began. Toying with the learned Baedeker on Switzerland, a most agreeable exercise of March nights, I came upon this paragraph:

The Purity of the Atmosphere stands in direct ratio to the height above the sea-level. Apart from accidental interruptions, caused by the presence of factories or similar sources of atmospheric impurity, the number of bacteria steadily diminishes as we ascend, until at about 6,500 feet above sea-level they entirely disappear.

Our fathers fought with dragons, runs the epigram, and we with microbes. And March, it happens, is the month when the most of us must wage the sternest battle against the minute invaders which have the locusts' power of eating the years lean. Microbes and Baedeker together, one with a gospel of fear and the other with an evangel of escape, prepared the mind in me to be good, fruitful, and hospitable soil for a seed thought which Sir Henry Lunn, passing by, let slip from his Swiss basket. "Try Maloja," said he; "it's six thousand feet high." To Herr Baedeker, librarian of loveliness, I went for confirmation, and found it even so as Sir Henry had said. From that seed-thought flowered this holiday I am now taking in Maloja, far up among the mountains of the Engadine, sun-bathed, microbe-free. From the blossoming tree of delight I pick further seed to scatter upon the breezes, as now I do.

At Boulogne the Engadine Express was proudly waiting. The alliterative rhythm of the name did somehow possess me and please me as being an expression of the very poetry of motion and destination, steam set to a song. We are in the Engadine Express and it's early morn and we swing and sing along the banks of Lake Zuerich and we are bound for Coire, quaintly, quietly nestling where the Rhine passes by among the vineyards. From Coire's snug environs, eloquent of embattled yesterdays, Coire, gate to the Grisons, climb with me in the sweetest and cleanliest of Swiss trains across ravishing ravines from zenith to zenith in laughing defiance of Sir Isaac Newton and his laws of gravity, which helpless seem this golden noon of a summer's day. And now the journey by car along the white road which mirrors in dust, as it were, these ribbons of snow resting on topmost ridges of rock, where the mountains strain to touch the bright blue sky. You are at Maloja at the head of the largest of the lakes of the Upper Engadine; get you down from the coach and stand "breathless with adoration," in the presence of mountainous majesties which have watched Europe's centuries pass by and in austere silence still do watch.

Above the microbes in this delicious demesne, where the Alps are the boundary walls guarding an emerald-string of lakes, our joys are wholesome and simple. There's tennis at the threshold of the Palace Hotel for the young and eager; and golf for the middle years among the superb scenery which set the soul of Giovanni Segantini on fire with a glory; and old and young may bathe in the lake and sun-bathe afterwards on the grassy verge. But for me the walks among the pine woods; and a listening to the tinkling melody of the bells which the brown cows carry to precipitous pastures; and the conning of Alpine ferns and flowers; and, when the sun is strong to tan and tattoo the body, a resting and lazing in hard-won meadows where grasshoppers in busy and uncounted multitude make with their shuttles a most pleasant sound to hear. And from the Kulm, when the day is coming to even-song, I will watch the lordly sun sink behind the massive walls of splendid stone, avalanche-strewn, and leave in his going a most tender twilight of regret on lake and hill, as when a people sorrows for the withdrawing of some beloved sovereign's countenance. I am exiled from the noise and clamour of cities and the tumult of market-places and the swirling dust of streets and squares and the fretful squalor of low success. I have ascended beyond the microbes, where the healing simplicities are the abiding verities.

CYCLING IN SWITZERLAND.

Switzerland! Land of eternal sunshine! . . . Of course, the warmest day we had coincided with climbing one of the stiffest passes we encountered—the Grimsel. In a few hours we were appreciably sunburnt on that day.

Talking of sunburn reminds one of the Swiss road navvies. Of excellent physique, with large rippling muscles, stripped to the waist and beautifully bronzed, they are in direct contrast to those in England. A large gang re-laying tram-lines in Zurich were particularly impressive. What an outcry there would be in England if navvies decided to dispense with their shirts on a warm day! Dress-reform extends to all classes in Switzerland; most of the people on walking tours wear but a vest, shorts, shoes and stockings. Some French cyclists we met had dispensed with even their vests; we were much too self-conscious to go so far as that. *Oxford Times.*