

The romantic canton of the Gray Leagues

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LA CAMPAGNE CONTRE L'INITIATIVE

A mesure qu'approche la date fatidique du 2 juin, jour où le peuple suisse sera appelé à se prononcer sur l'initiative de crise, il semble que l'opinion publique devienne de plus en plus consciente du danger qui menace notre pays.

Signe de bon augure: la campagne s'est engagée sur le terrain même où il convenait de livrer bataille. Les citoyens auront à choisir, en effet, entre le maintien de nos institutions — qui n'exclut pas certains redressements, devenus nécessaires, de notre politique économique, — et l'étatisme socialiste, allant de pair avec la dictature du parlement. Il faut poser franchement la question et arracher aux auteurs du funeste projet leur masque humanitaire pour découvrir leur vrai visage: celui de politiciens désireux de conquérir le pouvoir à la faveur d'un bouleversement total de notre vie publique et privée. Les manœuvres de ces habiles tacticiens tendaient à tromper le peuple sur leurs véritables intentions: de plus en plus, on a l'impression que les masses commencent à se rendre compte de la supercherie, ainsi que des conséquences terribles de l'initiative, si elle passait.

Mais on n'a point encore suffisamment éclairé l'opinion sur ces réalités. Il importe donc qu'au cours des deux dernières semaines qui précéderont le scrutin, on dise avec clarté et précision, dans les assemblées, que l'initiative de crise est un mouvement révolutionnaire, que l'on montre à quel désastre financier elle aboutirait, qu'on ne laisse subsister aucun doute, enfin, sur les effets de la dévaluation du franc, qui enrichirait peut-être quelques spéculateurs, mais consommerait la ruine générale et réduirait à la misère en particulier les salariés, les petits épargnants, etc.

Seule une campagne très bien conduite et faisant appel à la raison et à la réflexion des électeurs pourra triompher des sollicitations démagogiques auxquelles notre peuple se trouve en butte.

L'attitude des partis nationaux, à cet égard, est certes réconfortante. Le parti conservateur a pris position avec une extrême netteté et une unanimité réjouissante. Les élections cantonales de dimanche, à Lucerne, ont été triomphales pour la droite et cette victoire contribuera à lui donner de l'élan pour le 2 juin. Le parti radical, dont l'aile gauche, encline à se rapprocher des socialistes, compte quelques partisans, plus ou moins avérés, de l'initiative banqueroutière, a eu, le 12 mai également, son congrès à Olten et s'est prononcé, à une majorité considérable — 235 voix contre 8 — contre le funeste projet. Les agrariens, comme nous l'avons dit déjà, ont manifesté leur ferme volonté de barrer la route à la révolution camouflée; et c'est d'autant plus heureux qu'il y a pas mal de dissidents dans leurs rangs, sous la conduite du dangereux prophète de Grosshochstetten.

Mais n'oublions pas que les partis s'expriment par la bouche de leurs délégués, qui sont, le plus souvent, des hommes relativement pondérés, au jugement mûr. Il peut arriver que ces mandataires ne soient pas suivis par les masses; ce sont les masses qu'il faut renseigner et convaincre, sans recourir à aucun des procédés tortueux dont les protagonistes de l'initiative, comme on le sait, ne font pas fi, mais en exposant tout simplement la vérité. C'est ainsi que les bonnes causes veulent être défendues.

Ici ou là, des défections seront inévitables. Le vote du canton de Berne apparaît d'ores et déjà comme douteux, pour ne rien dire de plus. On y a vu — entre autre fâcheux symptômes — l'association des instituteurs primaires donner son adhésion à la démagogie. Motif de plus pour que la Suisse romande se dressse le 2 juin pour la défense de notre constitution démocratique et contre les naufrageurs du franc suisse!

Léon Savary.
(Tribune de Genève).

THE "KRISINITIATIVE."

In our last issue of May the 18th, we published an article which recently appeared in the "Statist" entitled "A Dangerous Experiment."

The article contained an obviously erroneous statement, namely the one that the Federal Council was responsible for putting the referendum before the Swiss people on the 2nd of June next, whilst, of course, a specially formed "Initiative Komitee" has collected the necessary signatures and thus forced a referendum.

The statement was so obviously erroneous that no commentary on our part was necessary, as far as our readers are concerned, but steps have been taken to have this misleading article corrected in the columns of our English contemporary.

THE ROMANTIC CANTON OF THE GRAY LEAGUES.

By SYDNEY A. CLARK.

Of Switzerland's twenty-two cantons the largest, the loftiest and the most "different" in background is the Grisons, whose German name is Graubünden. This is the canton of the Lia Grischia (Gray League), which was pluralized in name in 1471 when the League of the House of God and the League of the Ten Jurisdictions in lower valleys joined with the Gray League in "perpetual union." Jürg Jenatsch was the Gray Hero and he so fired the spirit of these remote valleys that the people maintained themselves as an independent nation actually until 1803, which is only "yesterday" in European history.

There is nothing gray about this glorious Swiss canton to-day except its name and the Graues Haus (Gray House) of government in lovely Chur, the cantonal capital. The colors of the Grisons are the lustrous greens of Engadine firs, the blues of lake and sky, the dazzling white of virgin snow fields.

In sheer variety no other canton in Switzerland can match this largest one. It contains one hundred and fifty Alpine valleys and in some of them life is almost as primitive as anywhere in Europe. Yet it also contains St. Moritz, a leading world centre of fashionable sport, besides numerous other resorts of hardly less fame, such as Pontresina, Arosa and Davos. Its climate is quite as varied, for it includes a great part of the lofty Swiss-Italian watershed and hundreds of sky-piercing peaks, and yet in the region about Chur peaches are grown and even grapes and figs. The religion of the Grisons is strangely assorted, as though the different villages had chosen their faith by lot. It is almost evenly divided between Catholic and Protestant, but one often finds Catholic straying in Protestant valleys and Protestant villages in Catholic valleys. Occasionally, and very sensibly, the same church serves both congregations at different hours and the same pulpit welcomes priest and Zwinglian pastor.

In language the Gray Leagues canton is delightfully scrambled. German is predominant and yet fifteen per cent. of the inhabitants speak Italian and over thirty per cent. still speak that curious "village Latin" called Romansch. It is, in fact, the last stronghold of the dying tongue and I have seen public notices in remote valleys posted only in Romansch. A conspicuous sample of the tongue is seen in the words painted on the façade of the town hall of St. Moritz:

IL SEGNER BENDESCHA LA PRUMA
CUORSA DELLA VITA DA NOSS
CHERS INFANTS.

Another sample which I noted on a labourer's dwelling in St. Moritz exhibits the same odd mixture: LAVUR DEL HOM AIS L'ORNAMAIN PU BUN.

A "Rhaeto Romansch Society" exists in the Grisons for the preservation of this ancient tongue. Cantonal and Federal authorities give it their protection and Romansch literature and song have actually taken a new lease of life to-day.

The Grisons, and especially its upper portion, the Engadine, has won its immense popularity not by any fluke of chance, but by its beauty, its crisp air and the intelligent development which man has given it. I always grow belligerent, not to say wrathful, when I hear tourists deplore the "civilization" of Switzerland. There is enough pristine savagery left in the world, even in the Swiss world, to satisfy the lustiest vagabond. Let him walk to Saas-Fee in the Valais and beyond. Let him climb to the glacier lake of Oeschinen in the Bernese Oberland. Not every peak has been tamed by the funicular nor every valley by the motor road, but it is very wonderful to see how much of their superb country the Swiss people have brought within reach of everybody.

The Engadine would be a sealed book to almost all of us were it not for Swiss enterprise and skill, and we would thereby miss one of the grandest parts of this planet. As it is we may visit in comfort such scenes as dreams are made of and we may live in comfort amid our dreams. The express railway curves its way gently up to grandeur: the cog-wheel railway and funicular climb still higher "hand over hand;" the great yellow post buses, sounding their musical hallali, cork-screw up-over-and-down through glorious forests, beside sky-lakes of cobalt blue, past grim glaciers whose ice was formed before Caesar's day. As if this were a decade of experiment, a true snow-bus which makes even the upper Engadine resorts available in winter. Preceded by a giant rotary plow to chew a path through twenty-foot drifts, the snow-bus passes on its way with utmost assurance. It has six giant wheels two of which may be lifted and tucked under steel petticoats when the going is good.

To come from the general to the specific and personal, I think of certain very special occasions in my own Grisons experience when Swiss enter-

prise has made actuality greater than my dreams. I remember a breakfast on the terrace of the station restaurant at Alp Grüm on the Bernina railway. This is the only railway which has the temerity to climb over the Alps instead of burrowing through them. At the top of the pass it skirts two little lakes, one called Lej Nair (Romansch for Black Lake) and the other Lago Bianco (Italian for White Lake). They are on the ridge-pole of the world. The Black Lake's waters tumble north and east many hundreds of miles to reach at last the Black Sea. The White Lake spills its waters southward to reach Lake Como, the Po and finally the Adriatic. If a dam were built to raise the Black Lake a mere sixty feet it would lose interest in Germany, Austria, the Danube and the Black Sea and would join its white colleague in trying to raise the level of the Adriatic.

Breakfast on the Alp Grüm terrace was made possible for me by the wonderful Bernina railway, and what a spot for coffee and Hörnchen and honey! It hangs in mid-air opposite the clean blue Palü Glacier, a mile or so above the luscious Poschiavo Valley, which is still Switzerland, though it looks like Italy, and a mile below the shimmering glory of the peak called Piz Palü.

The sturdy post buses of the Grisons made possible for me two sights whose loveliness and grandeur my imagination could never have pictured. One was the Lenzerheide Pass from Chur to Tiefencastel, a station on the Rhaetian Railway. The last three miles of this ride, the descent to the "deep Castle," unfolded a vision of lake- and pine-perfections hardly to be equalled elsewhere even in the glamorous canton of the Lia Grischia. The other special sight was the Viamala Gorge of the pass which leads through the Hinterrhein valley, one of the most exciting spectacles in all Switzerland. Viamala means, of course, Bad Road, that is Viscious Road, but its fangs have been drawn by Swiss highway engineers. The pass which was once the terror of the boldest muleteers is now traversed by comfortably upholstered post buses. Below the formerly Vicious Road, in fact one hundred and sixty feet below it, the young "Hinter Rhine" boils through a very deep slit in the rock which it has carved. They say the river is five feet wide and eighty feet deep. In some places the rock walls all but touch.

At a bridge called Zweite Brücke occurred a strange and ghastly tragedy in 1917. A company of Swiss cavalry was posting over this bridge when one of the mounts grew skittish and whimsically leaped the parapet. In less time than it takes to put it into words horse and rider plunged to oblivion and no trace of either was ever found. The Young Rhine swallowed them as an unexpected little tidbit and gaily raced on. It may be remarked in this connection that Swiss buses, equipped with every known brake, never grow skittish. Nor do Swiss railways and funiculars, Dizzy gorges, corkscrew tunnels, lofty bridges, forty-five degree gradients are everyday affairs to them and they take them in their stride.

The canton of the Gray Leagues is something which gets into one's system and becomes chronic. One visits St. Moritz and is lured on to Silvaplana and Maloja. One visits Davos and is lured to Schuls, Tarasp and Vulpera. A stay in Chur is unthinkable without a side trip by the little blue electric train to glorious Arosa. These names with many others that spring into the mind, Bevers, Samaden, Filisur and Klosters, Pontresina, Celerina, Thusis, Flims and Disentis, have the promise of magic in them and they richly fulfill their promise. The villages that bear them, whether simple or sophisticated, whether clad in sport garments or robed in luxurious satin, nestle in their lofty valleys in perfect confidence that as long as mankind continues to seek beauty and romance they will never be forgotten.

PROFESSOR DR. ADOLF KELLER'S LECTURE.

Dr. Keller is no stranger in the Swiss Colony. He has preached already years ago from the pulpit of our Churches and spoken to certain groups of our compatriots.

None is more *au fait*, as to the religious situation of the world at the present time, travelling, as he does, from one country to another and probing everywhere the spiritual pulse of the nations.

His impression of England as compared to that of the Continent was one of happy surprise, he said, in his lecture at the Foyer Suisse on Saturday 18th inst. — England seems still to enjoy the old security which existed elsewhere formerly. On the Continent, on the contrary, that sense of security is gone. Gigantic forces, demoniacal forces seem to be leading towards a terrific crash. There is the famine and the persecution in Russia. Only those who do not know or do not wish to know, can say the contrary. And in Germany, the octopus of totalitarianism is crushing the souls of many who want to give to Caesar's what is Caesar's but reserve to God what should be His.