

Zeitschrift: The Swiss observer : the journal of the Federation of Swiss Societies in the UK

Herausgeber: Federation of Swiss Societies in the United Kingdom

Band: - (1940)

Heft: 950

Rubrik: Swiss Mercantile Society

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As Foreign Minister he watched over Switzerland's neutrality unceasingly. The last years of his life saw his path beset with many difficulties, he had to tread warily in a world full of pitfalls. No wonder that his heart began to fail, but after the briefest of respites he always returned to his office, to resume his burden. He died almost in harness.

How well do I remember him in his office. The central seat of Switzerland's Government is a simple, sunny building — no guns in front, nor smart soldiers standing to attention. In Berne flowerpots grace the window-sills, and a few feet from the entrance door a vegetable market is held. It does not spoil the Government's dignity, for they need not fear each other, Government and people in Switzerland, since they share the same virtues of solidarity and simplicity.

To the last Giuseppe Motta retained his youthful vigour. His forehead was almost classically Roman in an otherwise robust and square peasant face, engraved with countless little lines. Parent of ten children, he looked eminently the jolly father — yet not to be tampered with.

He was very simple in his taste. In his study, overlooking the snowcapped peaks of the Bernese Oberland, hung only one painting of Tessin women kneeling at a wayside chapel. Once when he had been talking of his increasing political burdens, he suddenly, gazing at it intently, said simply: "... then I have to go back to my native Tessin, and walk hatless in the silence and purity of the mountains of my youth. As the years mount I feel my communion with nature grow deeper . . ."

A man of peace has now gone to his reward, the Eternal Peace which is God.

CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEAR TRAFFIC.

(*"Railway Gazette,"* 26.1.40.)

The almost total lack of foreign visitors on account of European conditions resulted, as was to be expected, in a marked decrease in holiday traffic as compared with 1938-39 figures. During Christmas week (December 20th to 26th) the Federal Railways ran 217 special trains, as against 625 the previous year, and passenger receipts amounted to fr. 3,013,300, or a decrease of about fr. 200,000; this figure does not, however, include receipts from military traffic originating at a number of small stations from which soldiers returned home on leave. Conditions were better during the New Year week (December 27th to January 2nd), when 253 specials were run on the Federal lines (as against 490), and receipts were some fr. 345,000 above those of the previous year and amounted to about fr. 3,100,000. Most of the winter sport resorts reported excellent numbers of Swiss visitors.

Generous facilities are now granted by the Federal Railways and most of the private companies for conducted winter excursions of parties of pupils from public and private schools, with a view to attracting traffic from points some distance from suitable resorts. The lowest existing rates, namely, those for parties of children under 12, with reductions between 65 and 75 per cent., are applied in such cases, irrespective of the childrens' actual ages.

SWISS MERCANTILE SOCIETY.

Following the Monthly Meeting on Saturday, January 13th, Mr. B. St. Regensburger, a member of the Society, delivered a very interesting lecture entitled "*On Horseback Through Ireland.*"

Mr. Regensburger intended to spend last year's holiday on horseback in Hungary but owing to the political situation altered his plans and made Ireland the venue of his ride. The latter country was already known to him for the fame of its horses, for he rode Irish horses in the Swiss army. In all the 26 counties of Ireland horse-breeding is prevalent. Poetry helped the lecturer to choose the County of Wicklow for his purpose and he quoted Ruth Duffin's impression of that county in rhyme:

"When you have left us, keep in mind
The things that you have left behind ...
The "purple spears" when twilight's veil
Turns Wicklow to a fairy tale."

Wicklow is a county of mighty, yet gentle mountains, of loughs buried among the mountains, wild valleys, brown moors, black and emerald forests. Wicklow has, as its own special attribute, many waters, streams, torrents and lakes. It was the very county where the fighters for Irish freedom were able to resist the English invasion the longest, because the wild mountains and vales were inaccessible to anybody who did not know the country.

The lecturer went to Ireland via Liverpool and reached Dublin by steamer. On arrival he was greeted by beautiful sunshine and did not fail to visit Phœnix Park — the Hyde Park of Dublin.

The County of Wicklow is south of Dublin, along the East Coast, about 30 miles down. Mr. Regensburger spent the night half-way between Wicklow and Dublin with an old friend of his, who on the following day, helped him to find a suitable mount. After driving by car from farm to farm he was eventually successful in finding the horse he was looking for at a mansion-like farm in a lonely bay — called Brittas Bay. It was a small, typically Irish horse. In the evening he sat down to fix an approximate route for his tour which was rather difficult since that part of the country was entirely unknown to him.

On the following morning, a Monday in early July, he left Brittas Bay on the tour proper. He rode along the so-called "Silver Strand" with its smooth white sands and marvellous rock formations. He then turned inland where the country is rather sparsely populated, and due to its mountainous nature there are few farms. Some old people told him about castles

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and houses which were haunted by the old Irish fighters and he was advised not to go up to the ruins of Dunganstown Castle, which was his first encounter inland. From Dunganstown the lecturer came to the first large village, called Rathdrum. He decided to spend the evening there, having already covered about 25 miles. Rathdrum, on the steep banks of the Avonmore River, which runs through a picturesque ravine, looked to him like a Tyrolian village. It is the halting place for the two famous Vales — the Vale of Avoca and the Vale of Glenmalure.

After a short rest he jumped back into the saddle and went along the beautiful Avonmore River in the direction of the Vale of Avoca. Along this Vale he saw the old gold mines with the yellow earth piled up in high hills, out of which they sifted gold. Riding on along the bend of a road he had lying before him "The Meeting of the Waters" — the place where the Avonbeg River from the Valley of Glenmalure meets the Avonmore River from the Vale of Clara. The scenery there reminded him of Switzerland, and it was there that Thomas Moore wrote the beautiful poem:

"There is not in this wide world a valley so sweet,
As the vale in whose bosom the bright waters meet,
Oh! the last rays of feeling and life must depart
Ere the bloom of that valley should fade from my
heart."

The lecturer then went back to a little place called Ballinaclesh where he spent the remainder of the evening in trout fishing and passed the first night of his eventful ride. He was surprised at the hospitality extended to him and his horse.

The next morning Mr. Regensburger decided to ride into the Valley of Glenmalure, well-known in Irish history. Glenmalure is not accessible for any cars and surpasses in solitude and roughness many of the Swiss mountain valleys. It took the lecturer about an hour to get up to the end of the valley, where his horse could not climb any more. There he had a well deserved rest. He was not able to leave that valley by any other way than the one by which he had come and therefore was forced to turn back. On and on he rode until he reached the Valley of Glendalough.

The mountain pass leading to this valley can only be traversed on foot or by horse. He arrived at the top of the pass towards the evening. There for the first time he saw again a village, not having met a human being since early morning. He went down to

Laragh where he found suitable accommodation at the Castle where a Country Club has its residence. Being a good horseman he first attended to the needs of the animal before seeing to his personal comforts. Having spent a strenuous day both rider and horse had their well-earned rest.

On the following day Mr. Regensburger decided to take things more leisurely. The lecturer here reflected on how beautiful it was to ride through country when one had time to look around, a horse as a companion, the latter taking the physical strain and leaving one with the chance of dwelling entirely on the beauties of the scenery through which one passed. Mr. Regensburger spoke of his horse as having revealed touches of human sense, for when the animal sighted a farm in the far distance it put on a spurt, thinking it was going to get a rest. The lecturer planned to spend the third night in a nearby village called Round Wood. At the little inn where he stayed there was in progress a "bal champêtre," where the Irish lads and lasses from all the different valleys came together to enjoy themselves in their simple manner. He heard all the famous Irish songs and even went to the extent of attempting to dance the Irish Jig.

On Thursday, when he was about 70 miles away from where he had started, he had to think of returning. He rode through valleys and over mountains and passes and was able to pick out his way by the map which had been his guide during the entire tour. He passed the famous Carrick Mountains which looked to him like the peaks he had seen in the Dolomites. He was approaching the coast and passed the village of Hollywood, from which the famous American film city took its name. Horse sense showed itself here again for the animal seemed to take the right road for the return journey through country which could not easily be managed by means of a map. After 4½ days of riding through beautiful country, steeped in old Irish history to which the lecturer referred over and over again, the Silver Strand and the lovely Brittas Bay were once more in sight. All in Brittas Bay who witnessed the lecturer's departure were surprised to find him none the worse for what was expected to be a most tiring journey.

Mr. Regensburger concluded his most interesting lecture with the piece of poetry quoted in his opening sentences, and which gave him the incentive of visiting the County of Wicklow.

The lecture was followed by a number of lantern slides, showing many of the places visited and depicting some of the beautiful scenery through which the lecturer had travelled. A hearty ovation was accorded to Mr. Regensburger for his most interesting and instructive account of his ride through Ireland. Messrs. L. W. Krucker and Theo Becker then related personal reminiscences and impressions of Ireland and this concluded a happy afternoon spent at Swiss House.

W.B.

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