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The Swiss seen by a Swiss. . .

“DOLCE FAR NIENTE.”

Somehow our compatriots on the other side of the Gotthard-Pass have always been a little misunderstood by us who live north of the Alps. We look upon them as keen followers of the famous meridional maxim, but how wrong we are! They work just as hard and achieve just as much, but in a different way. Sometimes I feel that theirs is the true philosophy of life, and that there is more behind “Chi va piano, va sano e lontano” than it actually says.

Ticino, a land of dazzling sunshine, where richness and splendour contrasts with poverty and struggle, where joyful songs mingle with bitter tears! Your sons are happy and yet unhappy, and the fruit of your soil is excellent, but inadequate!

But let us not be melancholic, for the “Ticinesi” are far too realistic to feel sorry for themselves. They are born “débrouillards” and “Lebenskünstler”, which accounts for their exceptional adaptability, skill and tolerance. I, personally, have always got on very well with them, perhaps because I was interested in their language and their problems, but more likely because I was an enthusiastic supporter of F.C. Lugano in defiance of all regional considerations.

Yes, they are all great sports fans, as much in picturesque “Sopraceneri” as in cosmopolitan “Sottoceneri”, and it is in sport that their excitable southern temperament becomes dangerously evident. Referees must have a rough time down there, and if you want a really good example of Ticinese vocal capacity, then listen to a cup final with Vico Rigassi reporting!

Ticino is one of the last cantons to join the Swiss Confederation, and the fidelity with which they have kept their oath has gained them the friendship and respect of those beyond the snowy mountains. In times of war their patriotism was a lesson to many, and I can still see the face of an American traveller after having asked a lady from Chiasso whether she considered herself an Italian or a Swiss.

You can look at the Ticino from many different view points, but to me it will always be the happy hunting-ground for those in quest of sunshine, melody and romance.

Helveticus.

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