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HIGHLIGHTS ON BASEL

Basel was founded by the Romans in 44 B.C. and thus in 1957 was 2,000 years old.

With its 220,000 inhabitants it is the second largest town in Switzerland.

Since the World Council of 1431-48, and as the result of its geographical position in the heart of Europe, it is extremely popular as a centre for international congresses.

Medieval gates and entire streets of interesting old houses.

Oldest University in Switzerland, founded in 1460, with famous University Library.

Plenty of interesting sights.

But at the same time a centre of industry, banking and commerce, seat of the Bank for International Settlements.

Only shipping port in Switzerland, situated 500 miles inland from the North Sea. Annual turnover in the port, 4 million tons.

Seat of the Swiss Industries Fair.

Excellent performances in the Municipal Theatre (opera, light opera, ballet, plays), and in the Comedy Theatre (from September to June).

Brilliant Concerts, famous art exhibitions.

International sporting events (football stadium, artificial ice-rink, horse races, covered swimming pool).

One famous winter event in Switzerland — falling this year on 27th January — requires no snow at all to be completely successful: the ancient Basel folk-lore celebration of the “Griffin Bird” — or “Vogel Gryff” as the Baslers call it. To get in on this bit of local fun and frolic, you just need to visit Basel at the right time, particularly Klein-Basel, the part of the city north of the Rhine. Here three ancient Klein-Basel societies, “Zur Hären”, “Zum Rebhaus” and “Zum Greifen”, will be making ready, on the morning of the 27th, for their annual procession, which is well spiced with plenty of fun, beer, wine, and dancing. One of the main protagonists in this annual spectacle is the “wild man”. About eleven in the morning he proceeds up the river some distance, accompanied by drummers and flag-bearers. Soon he and his party can be seen coming down the river in a broad boat toward the middle Rhine bridge.

After disembarking and climbing up on to the bridge, he is met by the “lion” and the “griffin”. These three key characters in the annual show then refresh themselves with a first round of drinks in the nearby Café Spitz, and return to the centre of the bridge, accompanied by flags and drummers and other members of the three Klein-Basel groups. The ancient dances they do on the bridge are later repeated during their procession through Klein-Basel. Marching along with them are admiring young helpers who take up a collection for the poor from the spectators who line the streets. Festivities continue into the night.

THE MERRY MASKS OF CARNIVAL TIME

Do you think the Swiss are particularly “carnival happy” because this event occurs in Switzerland at two different times? For the Catholic population, carnival comes just before the beginning of lent, while Switzerland’s Protestant areas, following a custom set up in ancient calendars, celebrate carnival a week later. The most outstanding Protestant celebration of the season is unquestionably the famous “Basel Carnival”, taking place on 12th, 13th and 14th March.

Among Switzerland’s Catholic areas, the carnival spirit gets in an “advance” in Baden on 27th February with a grotesque carnival procession, and in Olten on 28th February with this town’s famous “Fool’s Pot”.

After this “build-up”, carnival time reaches its real zenith in Lucerne on 1st and 5th March. In Solothurn, the time from 1st to 6th March is devoted to a carnival celebration known locally as “Chesslete”. In Biel people will be celebrating carnival on 3rd and 4th March, and Baden, Olten and Kreuzlingen will all stage carnival processions on 4th March.

Swiss Industries

Fair Basle

31st March - 10th April

1962



In 21 halls and 27 groups Swiss Industry puts its quality products on view. Information, brochure, etc., obtainable from The Swiss Embassy, 18 Montagu Place, W.1, or The Swiss Consulate, Midland Bank Buildings, Spring Gardens, Manchester 2