

In the Land of William Tell

Written for The Western Home Monthly by Edith G. Bayne

THE Playground of Europe—that was its erstwhile name. What term to-day would most fittingly, in an epigrammatic sense, apply to this amazingly tranquil little republic which has succeeded thus far in preserving its neutrality though surrounded on all sides by the belligerent nations? Tourist travel has ceased and Alpine guides have gone into small farming or entered the factories, while most of the hotels, excepting those in the larger cities have been, long since, closed up. Switzerland is no longer a playground. Yet in the capital city of Berne the population has increased by nearly ten thousand since the outbreak of the war. The reason? Will Irwin says:

"Here dwell citizens and diplomats of all the powers on both sides of the war, in peace if not in harmony. At the height of the past season one of the employees of the chief hotel counted twenty-three nationalities in the dining-room and lobbies. Try as you will you cannot help rubbing elbows with the enemy. Last night I beheld in chairs almost adjacent, a lean, well-tubbed Englishman reading the Times with the aid of a monocle, and a portly German with a mustache that aspired to a place in the sun, reading the Tageblatt through another monocle. This city with its thousands of diplomats, agents open and secret, propagandists, and charity workers, is the one place in all this world to gain a proportionate view of the war, provided you are content to wait long enough to sift out the true from the false."

During the shifting phases of the great struggle popular interest swings alternately from one country to another, but at probably no period in all the kaleidoscopic upheaval has this federation of cantons known as the Swiss Republic been so interesting to the student at large as the present time. With two great, predatory empires lying directly to north and east, here is a small nation, neutral and withdrawn, scarcely sixteen thousand square miles in size, no part of which is within one hundred miles of the sea, a land that is, at least to all outward seeming, as calm and unruffled as one of its own wonderful lakes. Its sympathies may be as varied as its climate but its deportment has been admirably circumspect, and it has looked well to its own interests withal. The Bundesarmee or federal army was long ago mobilized—"for emergencies." There are likewise a Landsturm and a Landwehr but these are called out only in time of actual war.

Switzerland is the anglicised form of Schweiz, the name given to the three original forest cantons which at an early period in history were under the rule of the Hapsburg counts. Before this, the earliest mention of the inhabitants of this country is the account of the subjugation of the Helvetians by the Romans sometime between 58 B.C. and 10 A.D. Under the successors of Charlemagne, Helvetia was divided between France and Germany, ultimately falling to the latter empire, but it was determined to throw off the yoke and led by Furst of Uri, Tell, Stauffer and Arnold, it succeeded in deposing and expelling the Austrian governors. But not for long. The cantons were soon invaded by the Hapsburgs and war followed war. Victory was achieved at last at the memorable Pass of Morgarten and the cantons were joined by others and by the cities of Lucerne, Zurich and Berne. Invasion again, and more struggle for independence. Finally Austria was defeated definitely at Sempach and Nafels, and the federated cantons entered upon an era of great prosperity, which in the year 1841 was so high that all the neighboring courts sought their friendship and alliance, and more and more territory was added. France in 1516 giving to Switzerland the whole of the present canton of Ticino. For about two hundred years this federation of mixed races was torn by internal dissensions, religious and political, but in 1712 the Protestant element gained the ascendancy and for another century there was steady, peace-

ful progress with the number of cantons brought up to twenty-two. Finally the Congress of Vienna proclaimed the perpetual neutrality and inviolability of Switzerland, and the little state was truly independent with a federal government that possessed the exclusive right of concluding treaties of alliance with other countries and of declaring war, sanctioning cantonal constitutions, and taking measures for regulating neutrality and intervention. The federal assembly to-day is divided into the two chambers, viz: the state council and the national council, and in these bodies is vested supreme legislative and executive authority, and the principle of the referendum and of the initiative are in force. The cantons retain individual independence in matters of internal administration, however.

Three different tongues are spoken—German, French and Roumansch, which is a corruption of old Latin, but in spite of this and of the diversity of the population as a whole, Switzerland has acquired a definite and decided national character and has become a separate people. It possesses the most varied climate in the world, and although nearly thirty percent of its area remains unproductive, the industry and enterprise of the people living on the rest of it more than adjusts a balance. The land is cultivated chiefly by small holders, and these peasant proprietors raise stock, grain and vegetables, and, in the more

pinnacles before he even essays the mountain-climbing proper. The Jungfrau peak dominates the whole of the Bernese Oberland, is 13,670 feet high and was first ascended in 1811. It is the loftiest calcareous mountain. The Matterhorn, which is 14,837 feet in height, is composed of gneiss or felspar slate, and is sharply conical in appearance, making its ascent a matter of great difficulty and danger. It belongs to the Pennine Alps, rising abruptly from an immense glacier that occupies a vast and desolate table-land. The peak was first ascended by a party of four British travellers and three guides, in the month of July 1865, but three of the party and one guide perished in the descent. In this connection it is interesting to note that our own Mount Robson, 13,700 feet high, has already been conquered, and more than once.

The wonders of Switzerland are endless. Well known to the continental tourist must be these peaks and many lesser ones, and well known the magnificent lakes lying placidly, like half-hidden jewels, amid the rugged mountain fastnesses, Geneva, Constance, Lucerne, the Maggiore, the Riffelsee, Brienz, Thun and countless others whose borders lap great cities and yet retain that element of mystic and lonely grandeur that the immediate neighborhood of mighty forests gives. Familiar too must be the beryl-colored turbulent rivers (unnavigable for the most part), the enormous glacier fields, the mineral springs, the cascades and falls, like those of the Rhine at Schaffhausen, St. Moritz, the gay winter resort of a very recent past,

dazzling blue-white rays proving somewhat trying to the eyes at times. We Canadians are quite at home in the way of atmosphere for the winter is much like our own and the pines tower above all about straight as sentinels and massed in close formation; they remind us forcibly, at times, of the way the jack-pines climb up the slopes of the Rockies. We are well treated and almost contented except of course that we have had too little share in the big doings to satisfy us. There are not enough of us to make two baseball teams—which is a real hardship, for the English take no real interest in the only game—preferring their cricket and football. At that we are lucky to find a sufficiently flat acre or so on which to disport ourselves, for this town is reminiscent of that one in the old school reader which started to climb starward and sat down half-way to rest, forgetting to complete the journey. We have been watching a party of school children climbing a peak nearby—nearby in the sense of seeming so, for I daresay they are at least three miles away. They are roped together and are led by two guides and a couple of teachers, one of whom brings up the rear, and the chain resembles nothing so much as a string of jet beads, the bigger figures at the ends being like the clasps of the necklace. I have seen some beautiful wood-carving done by the children and the old people, and ere we take final leave of this land we hope to visit the watchmaking establishments of Geneva of which there are said to be three hundred. A large amount of raw material is imported into Switzerland of necessity, and so manufactures are an important industry. There is abundant water power of course. Zurich, St. Gallen, Basel and the east specialize in weaving (silk and wool chiefly) and the western cantons are almost wholly given up to watch and clock making and similar manufactures. This is a wonderful country. The citizens possess all that boasted efficiency and application to work which is said to be a German monopoly but with this difference, they are under the heel of no autocracy. They have not sold their birthright to mammon. Interlaken is just below us; a truly lovely spot but now as silent as a deserted banquet hall. There are five universities in the Republic, Basel having been the seat of the first, founded in 1460. Education is of course compulsory in the schools of the lower grades."

According to a war correspondent of some note, Switzerland, the neutral nation, presents pleasing and comfortable contrasts to the war-weary France. Its citizens look well-fed. The towns are spick-and-span. There is speculation but no worry. And why not? Fortunate Switzerland that can with honor remain "out of it!"

Eminent Swiss whose names will readily occur to the mind are the historian Sismondi, Pestalozzi, the educational reformer, Lefort and Necker in the realms of diplomacy and finance, Berenull and De Saussure, Lavater, De Muller and Bodmer, Dr. Scartazzini (Dante's Commentator), Cognard and Monnier and Tissot, distinguished in letters, but these are only a few, past or contemporary, who have helped to make famous the land of Tell among the nations of the world. One must not forget to include the incomparable Madame De Staël in this galaxy, for although born in Paris, she was the daughter of Jacques Necker, Swiss banker and minister of finance to Louis the sixteenth, and became the wife of the Swedish ambassador to the French court, living in many countries, including Italy, Germany and France, but always retaining her love for, and allegiance to, the land of her fathers.

In this connection one naturally recalls the heroic act of that company of Swiss Guards—"true born sons of the men of Sempach and Murten," to quote Carlyle—who defended the Tuilleries against the Paris mobs during the Revolution, and at the sacrifice of their lives—"these gallant gentlemen in black in the service of a foreign king"—fought a fight that has passed down to history.

Revised Version

Be sure you are wrong, retain the best legal talent available, then go ahead.



The types of French infantry which are holding the front lines on the Western front in France. From left to right, the machine gunner, grenade thrower, complete assault equipment. These men fight from the front lines and they form a line of steel that will withstand any German attempt to break through. They are truly the spirit of 1918.

southerly cantons, tobacco and grapes. Winter lasts but three months in these cantons, but on the St. Gotthard it continues for eight, and on the St. Bernard nine, while it is perennial winter on the Ste. Theodule. The Engadine winter season is about equal in duration to that of western Canada. It may be said that Switzerland is divided into seven regions of vegetation: first the vine-growing area up to 1800 feet above sea level, second the hilly tract which rises to 2800 feet and has luxuriant meadows and walnut trees for its characteristic features, third the upper mountain region producing timber and grain, the extent upward of which is about 4000 feet above sea level, fourth the sub-Alpine, up to 5500 feet, where the wonderful Swiss pine trees grow, and above this the lower-Alpine tract, the home of chamois and goat, and also of the renowned Alpine pastures. The sixth is the upper-Alpine, a region of stunted vegetation where the variation of the seasons is lost. Lastly there is the region of perpetual snow.

Mount St. Gotthard unites the chief watersheds of Europe. It belongs to the Lepontine Alps which with the Pennine and the Rhaetian range stretch east and north-east across the Canton of Grisons into the Tyrol. Everybody has heard of its famous tunnel; in fact there are numerous tunnels of the kind throughout Switzerland, and the railway system is one of the most highly efficient in the world. Sections of it reaching to incredible elevations and enabling the traveller to attain quite dizzy

the spas, the deep valleys and chasms, and the cliffs where picturesque little chalets hang perched, and the climbing pine forests of the sub-Alpine strata. The Jura range of mountains lying along the border of France is the first to be seen by the incoming traveller from Britain or America, and while these peaks are breath-taking in their immensity they give only a small idea of what lies beyond.

When an exchange of seriously wounded was agreed upon, Switzerland placed her splendidly-equipped hospital trains at the disposal of her belligerent neighbors and agreed to provide internment for thirty thousand prisoners of war. Murren, where the British and some Canadians also have been accommodated, is now virtually a British centre, and in point of fact the whole of Switzerland now carries triplicate signposts (in English, French and German), and the hotels print menus in the three languages. It would be safe to say that not in a good many centuries has the little republic been obliged to cater to such cosmopolitan habits and tastes; not in fact since she herself grew out of the melting-pot stage.

"Murren hangs jauntily on the edge of a deep gorge, across which towers the great Jungfrau," writes a Canadian, who has been domiciled in the tiny Swiss town ever since an early period of the war. "We live at an elevation of five thousand feet, in what is probably the most picturesque spot in the Bernese Oberland, and the view is entirely sum-