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MONTAGNE TICINESI.

"Una lontana linea di monti
rosei, chiari, lievi come d'aria,
chiuder pareva d'un'immaginaria
siepe di rose gli ultimi orizzonti."
F. CHIESA.

... Un primo fremito d'alba che passa nell'aria, un primo raggio di sole che indora la vetta... la montagna si desta. Superba si erge tra il luccicchio delle sue nevi, l'azzurro venato dei suoi ghiacci, il silenzio solenne che sembra attendere il compiersi di un rito. Io non proverò mai nessuna dolcezza che possa superare quella gustata lassù, quando tra i capelli passa folleggiante il primo sospiro del giorno, mentre un raggio dorato scende lieve lieve in basso, diffondendosi come una carezza su tutte le cose, spegnendo nel cielo le ultime luci della notte... è un sentimento che non si può esprimere a parole, ma che resta nel cuore per sempre come un'armonia. Sotto i ghiacci mormorano le sorgenti misteriose, la loro voce sale come una preghiera di vergini, dai crepacci d'azzurro venato. Andiamo in alto, dove non giunge il rumore della nostra vita febbrile, lassù dove il male sembra un brutto sogno, dove prima scende la benedizione del sole, dove tutto si santifica mentre l'anima attinge dalle cose, nuove energie!

In alto andiamo, sempre più in alto, dove l'amore per tutto ciò che è bello, grande, buono, freme nel cuore. Vorrei venire ancora oggi a te, o montagna, per tuffare le mani e i piedi nella neve pura, soffice, bianca che solo l'aquila sfiora col suo volo obliquo e il camoscio agile segna delle sue piccole orme. Mie vette, superbi picchi belli come un sogno di poeta quando v'accende il primo raggio dell'alba, solenni come un altare quando s'avvolge il primo velo della notte, miei monti, miei timidi, umili fiorellini di neve, fiorellini d'azzurro, a voi chiederò come un bene supremo di cantarmi l'inno della pace, l'inno dell'amore, l'inno della preghiera... Ancora ritornerò a vedervi miei camosci agili, snelli, veloci come un pensiero, re delle montagne, che con la piccola, graziosa testa eretta, state ritti sulle rocce, forse per dirci che il vostro regno è di macigno e di ghiaccio, che la vostra vita è di sole e si nutre di sole o per ripeterci ancora che nessuno può domare la vostra fierezza; quando il cacciatore, dopo averci colpito da lontano, s'avvicina a voi per togliervi l'ultimo soffio di vita, stringendo nel pugno il ferro crudele, voi, superbi, morite senza un lamento, abbandonati sulla morbida coltre nevosa, vinti ma non domi! A voi voglio ritornare mentre nell'aria passa una promessa, una benedizione di sole, a voi umili fiori delle nevi, delle rocce scoscese, a voi superbi ghiacciai belli, bianchi, puri.

ELENA LUNGI.

THE ALCOHOL QUESTION IN SWITZERLAND.

A National, Hygienic and Economic Problem—
Not a Political or Party Question.

(Communicated by the Nouvelle Société Helvétique).

As winter approaches, social and political activities in Switzerland, as everywhere else, begin to revive. After a season of particularly heavy toil for the peasantry and of healthy pre-occupation with sports and holidays for the townspeople, other interests of life, more suited to the long evenings, begin to play a more important part in the spare time of everybody. These new interests of life vary, of course, very widely according to age, temperament, taste and intelligence. Young people will go dancing and flirting and possibly try to improve their station in life by visiting evening schools and learning new things. Neither will the mature man and woman scorn the pleasures of more or less gay social intercourse. But a much heavier and more serious note also prevails. Life's responsibilities have begun to form men's characters and tastes. Vast differences in personal interests are noticeable. Those who feel the divine impulse towards a better world concern themselves with the bigger questions of existence. Their most important and most valuable pre-occupation is, as it always was and will be, with their families. But the care of the family immediately leads to the wider interests of the whole nation and its different classes and economic units. National, social and industrial politics become as important to the thinking man as is his family. He becomes a member of a political party and of his particular trade association where, according to his temperament, he plays an active or a more passive part. But over and above those party and trade interests, he thinks and feels as a member of the bigger family, which is the nation. He realises the true meaning of patriotism, which is a full sense of responsibility for the State over and above all other interests.

There is, unfortunately, another sort of mentality. It is chiefly to be witnessed in dreary, dingy public-houses. It is the mentality of excessive alcohol drinking. It is an apathy and indifference

towards the family as well as towards public affairs and is most commonly coupled, if not produced, by a habit of spirit drinking, not just for an occasional piquant taste, but for the sheer inability to get any other stimulation and interest out of life. This sort of person forms perhaps the saddest and most dangerous aspect of our national life. He not only does not contribute anything to the nation's assets, but he brings harm and endless suffering to his family, he weakens the health and vigour of our country and fills workhouses, prisons and lunatic asylums at the expense of his local communities. We do not say that all the misery, pauperism and crime existing to an all too large extent in the Swiss towns, and particularly in some peasant districts, are due to alcoholism. But, according to reliable statistics, fully a quarter of all the cases in which society has to intervene for reasons of self-protection or humanitarianism are directly attributable to the effects of alcohol. But probably a much larger proportion again must indirectly be assigned to that same original cause. The children of drunkards are usually saddled with a sick mind as well as a sick body from the beginning of their lives, which are almost invariably pre-destined to be utterly miserable if not something worse. They lack vitality, balance of judgment, the power for steady work; they not infrequently have an excess of passion unguarded by the civic and moral sense which distinguishes man from the beast. It is a well-known fact that tuberculosis afflicts principally those who have a weak physical constitution, and alcoholism, harming the health not only of the drunkard himself, but of his children and grandchildren as well, probably produces the majority of the tuberculosis recruits. There are other causes, of course, and chief amongst them are poverty and indifference to hygiene. But poverty never becomes so degrading as when coupled with alcoholism, and the indifference to hygiene; for example, the abominable habit of many of our country people of never airing their stuffy homes, is the result of that lack of mental agility and enterprise most commonly produced by the alcoholic drug.

Are we painting the picture too black, are we over-emphasising the shadows in our national life? It may be, and let us hope that the vitality of our people is strong enough to make of the ravages of alcoholism but a black blot which does not seriously affect the white splendour of our beloved democracy. We do have sufficient belief in the essential soundness of our home country, but this problem of alcoholism is a hideous blot on her fair shield and it is no use shutting one's eyes to the fact that it does affect the beauty and potentialities of our national development. Can you live happily beside a neighbour who fills his miserable house with the ugliness of alcoholism? Do you not shudder at the thought that your children are bound to come into contact with that neighbouring house and, who knows, may imbibe poison emanating from it? And, even if alcoholism in Switzerland has its refuge only in one out of twenty houses, does that alter its hideousness?

By the courtesy of the SWISS OBSERVER, we have been privileged to speak to those circles of the Swiss in England who, though far from home, have got that sense of civic responsibility called patriotism. We hope, through our series of articles, to have made them alive to the gravity and urgency of the question of a reform of our alcohol régime. Many of our readers must have been shocked to hear of a state of affairs which, as all responsible circles in Switzerland recognise, must be put an end to. Many of them may have been filled with a certain incredulity. Some, we hope, have made their holiday in Switzerland an occasion to investigate for themselves. What have they found? Thank God, they have in most cases not come across the most ugly cases which, nevertheless, do exist. The few real drunkards to be seen in our public-houses are the exception. Alcoholism in Switzerland is secretive because it is based on home distilled spirits which are cheapest bought in quantities of a few pints and which are consumed at home in those unfortunate homes, which are not fit to live in. A litre of schnaps costs less than a litre of ordinary wine! What a temptation! And what a terrible indictment on our alcohol legislation.

It is clearly directly responsible for that alcoholism. Think of the thousand and one things which are taxed in Switzerland when imported, not excluding some important foodstuffs! Think of the grinding direct taxation imposed on our countrymen! Think of the urgent need for further revenue for the social reform schemes on foot and yet to come! And yet there is this unfettered freedom to produce and sell distilled spirits, which in no other civilised country in the world remain untaxed. But what is more important, by controlling and taxing the spirit trade in Switzerland the fiscal aspect would play a much inferior rôle to the moral, hygienic and economic one. Surely we all must give support to the new bill which, by consent of the Government and all parties, will come before the electorate in a few months' time. This cannot be and is not a question of politics and party. It is our moral duty, our patriotic duty, it is in the clear interest of our economic and spiritual welfare. The sound farmer knows no less than the industrialist and the business man how deeply the "schnaps-

pest" affects a man's working power which, after all, forms the basis of individual and national existence.

The last attempt to effect the necessary reform was rejected by the referendum of 1923, because it was too airily assumed that it would not fail. This time the ground has been prepared more carefully. At the risk of endangering the efficacy of the new law—it forms part of our constitution—all justifiable objections, emanating from the home distillers and the innkeepers, have been met. But no risks must be taken and we feel it our duty to try to contribute what we can to the cause which must not be allowed to fail a second time. The only way we can do this is to address a resolution to the Swiss electorate most warmly expressing our support of the reform. Will every reader help us by attending the lecture, which has been arranged for Friday, October 29th, when Dr. H. W. Egli, correspondent of the "Bund," will give a lecture on this problem at 8 p.m., in the Ashburton Hall, 28, Red Lion Square, W.C. 1, and when a resolution will be proposed.

PERSONAL.

We wish to express on behalf of our readers, our sincere sympathy with our distinguished compatriot, Monsieur F. J. Borsinger, First Secretary at our Legation, whose father, the late Josef Borsinger-Beck was buried in Baden last Friday, October 15th.

The following obituary notice is reprinted by courtesy of the *Aargauer Volksblatt* :—

Die Jugend von Josef Borsinger fiel in eine parteipolitisch äusserst bewegte Zeit, umso mehr, da sich seine Familie traditions-gemäss ganz auf Seiten der damals im Aargau verfolgten kathol.-kons. Sache stellte. Mit Rücksicht darauf besuchten weder er noch seine Geschwister die Volksschulen, sondern wurden privat erzogen. In der Folge absolvierte er Gymnasium und Philosophie am Jesuitenkolleg Stella Matutina in Feldkirch. Seine weitere Bildung genoss er in der welschen Schweiz und in England.

1882 vermählte er sich mit Hedwig Beck, der Tochter des Nationalrates Franz Xaver Beck-Leu auf Beckenhof Sursee, Grosstochter mütterlicherseits des 1848 im Kampf um die kath. Sache ermordeten Grossrat Josef Leu von Ebersol. Der Ehe entsprossen 6 Kinder, drei Söhne und drei Töchter, wovon fünf noch am Leben sind.

Ursprünglich für die politische Laufbahn bestimmt, führte ihn die Krankheit und der frühe Tod seines einzigen Bruders ins Geschäftsleben. Die grosszügige Entwicklung des Kurorts Baden um die Jahrhundertwende ist hauptsächlich seiner Initiative und Tatkraft zu verdanken, da er diese letzteren nicht nur auf seine eigenen Interessen im Verena-Hof-Limmathof beschränkte, sondern gleichzeitig auch die Hebung des Badeortes als Ganzem nicht aus den Augen verlor.

Sein wärmstes Interesse aber galt jederzeit der Borsinger-Rohnschen Familienstiftung, dem bekannten Klosterli "Maria Krönung" in Baden. Als Nachfolger seines Vaters präsidierte er die Stiftungskommission dieser gemeinnützigen Anstalt bis zu seinem Tode und ermöglichte durch deren Um- und Neubau im Jahre 1910, der den modernsten Anforderungen der Säuglings- und Kinderfürsorge gerecht wird, dass die Zahl der Pflegelinge von zirka 40 im Jahre 1909 heute auf über 130 gestiegen ist; dem entsprechend hat sich auch die Zahl der Erziehungs- und Aufsichtskräfte welche das Lehrschwester-Institut Menzingen in so verdankenswerter Weise zur Verfügung stellt, von 4 Schwestern auf 20 vermehrt.

Treu der Borsinger-Rohnschen Tradition, die im 70er Krieg einer Unzahl kriegsgeschädigter Franzosenkinder im Klosterli ein Heim geboten hatte, beherbergte auch er während des Weltkriegs dort 30 Belgierkinder. Der Elisabethenorden, welchen die belgische Königin seiner Gemahlin und seinen Töchtern verlieh, war der Dank der belgischen Regierung auch an ihn.

In freien Stunden widmete er sich mit Vorliebe geschichtlichen und philosophischen Studien. Er verfolgte mit regem Interesse die neuzeitlichen Strömungen auf dem Gebiete der Politik, der Religion und der sozialen Frage. Über auch hier stellte er seine finanziellen und organisatorischen Kräfte in selbstlosester Weise einer weiteren Öffentlichkeit zur Verfügung, wo immer diese notwendig schien. So war er unter anderem Mitbegründer des kathol. Vereinshauses zum "Roten Turm" und des Gesellenhauses. Die Pfarrikirche veranlagt ihm, als Exekutor der Erbschaft Borsinger-Rohn, die von Fachleuten hochgeschätzte neue Orgel. Auch als Mitglied der kath. Synode des Kantons Aargau und der Badener Kirchenpflege leistete er Mitbürgern und Kirche mannigfache Dienste. Im Vorstand der kathol.-konservat. Volkspartei der Stadt Baden war er immer ein eifriges Mitglied. Seine Liebe zur Partei und seine hohe Auffassung von der Politik zeigten in allen seinen Voten den Mann des Weitblickes, der Erfahrung und der kernigen Vaterlandsliebe.

Seine vielseitigen Interessen erhielten ununterbrochen Anregung und Nahrung durch die Freundschaft, welche ihn mit zahlreichen Männern verschiedener Kreise und Nationen verband, die im heutigen Kampfe der Geister bahnbrechend sind.

Please reserve FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 26th,
for the BANQUET and BALL of the
CITY SWISS CLUB.