

Swiss Hotels as a Field for Trust Operations



"AT EVERY STEP YOU MEET A PRETTY SWISS GIRL IN A WHITE CAP."

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LUCERNE, Nov. 19.—(Special Correspondence of The Bee.)—I heard a striking American invasion proposition the other day. Its enunciator was Adolph Frankenthal, our consul at Berne. He made it in jest, but it might lead to matters of earnest. It is that our trust magnates should monopolize Switzerland for money-making purposes. Frankenthal says they could turn the country into a sightseeing park and drain the pockets of the world's traveling public. They could buy the water powers and thus concentrate its industries, and by the addition of electricity multiply their output a hundred fold.

Indeed, the tourist business might easily be controlled by a trust, and with it this enormous hotel industry, which now annually brings in many millions. All that would be necessary would be to buy the best of the hotels which control the most beautiful views and then to organize a system by which cut-and-dried coupon tickets could be furnished, taking the traveler from his home in Europe or the United States and returning him there after his tour at a fixed price. He could thus know to a cent what his trip was to cost. The tips, which now amount to about 35 per cent of one's expenses, could be cut off and the increase in comfort would be enormous.

This is the gist of Consul Frankenthal's proposition. Since then I have looked further into the matter and can give you some facts as to the vast sum Switzerland is making out of the foreigners. The hotel business in this country is enormous. Switzerland is just twice the size of Massachusetts, but its hotels and boarding houses are crowded into a compass of less than half its area. Nevertheless it has 1,900 hotels, and it is estimated that there is \$120,000,000 in the business. The hotels now take in about \$30,000,000 a year and a large percentage of this is profit. About half of them are open all the year round, and during the summer all are crowded. Travelers to the number of almost 3,000,000 swarm into Switzerland from all parts of the world. They wander about from hotel to hotel and from one view to another, dropping their money at every turn. Indeed, the receipts of the hotels during good years are more than the receipts of the government, and their army of employes is larger than our standing army was at the beginning of the Spanish-American war. There are about 25,000 men and women employed in them, and of these 12,000 are females.

A trust could materially cut down the cost of running these hotels, for it would buy things in quantities. As it is now it is estimated that more than \$15,000,000 a year is spent for provisions and help. About \$8,000,000 goes into the kitchens, which in one season consume \$70,000 worth of cheese, \$25,000 worth of tea, \$500,000 worth of coffee and more than \$100,000 worth of sugar. It costs the hotels every season at least \$3,000,000 for bread, \$400,000 for butter and \$3,500,000 for vegetables and jams. All these things are bought in dribbles, each hotel paying for its own. The trust could run a central supply station and make dividends out of its savings in purchases alone.

A general impression prevails in the United States that traveling in Switzer-

land is cheap. I do not find it so. The rates at the better class hotels are not far from the rates at similar hotels in the United States. None of the 1,900 hotels I have referred to charge less than \$1 a day, and the ordinary traveler finds that his expenses run up to over \$5. You pay so much for your room, and then, like as not, something more for light and attendance. If you breakfast in your bed room an extra charge is made, and the best table d'hôte-dinner now costs a dollar and upward. Everything extra must be paid for, and some of the hosts are little more than highway robbers whose victims are traveling foreigners.

I do not know that the railroads of Switzerland could be acquired by any trust, but they are certainly profitable. In 1900 they paid a net profit of over \$11,000,000, and their travel is increasing every year. Only four years ago the government decided to buy them, and the transfer of the lines from private parties to the state is now under way. The roads, including the tramway, have a length of about 2,500 miles, and there are so many rack and cable lines running up the sides of the mountains to give access to the beautiful views that Mark Twain says, "Every Alp has now a ladder up its back like a pair of suspenders."

One of the nicest things of the government railway system is its general season tickets or passes, which include all Switzerland. The railroad companies will sell you a ticket for two weeks, a month, a quarter or a year which you can use for that time on all the railroads and steamboats of Switzerland. These tickets are sold at fixed prices, and they have to be ordered at least two hours before leaving time. You must furnish an unmounted photograph of yourself, which is pasted on the ticket.

A two weeks' ticket over all the Swiss roads costs, according to class, from \$7.50 to \$12, and a monthly ticket from \$10 to \$20. If you travel third-class the price is \$10; second-class, \$14, or first-class, \$20. For three months the rates are \$24, \$34 and \$48, and for the year, \$60, \$84 and \$120. This means that for \$120 you could start in on January 1 and keep traveling day and night on Swiss trains and steamboats, with the very best accommodations, until December 31, without extra charge. Such tickets are sold to anyone who asks for them.

I like the Swiss railroads. The cars are about the same as ours. There is a passageway through the center, with doors at each end. The seats of the second-class are upholstered in velvet; they are clean and comfortable. The windows are in brass frames, and they can be dropped down out of sight when you wish to look out. The express trains have dining cars, called "wagon restaurants," and the dining car porter comes through and calls out that dinner is ready in French, English and German. The Swiss roads are well ballasted and well kept. The tracks are watched for avalanches and landslides, and at every crossing stands a bareheaded girl, with a red flag, to warn all that the train is coming. At every station you find from a dozen to a score of hotel porters, in livery, each bearing the name of his hotel on his cap.

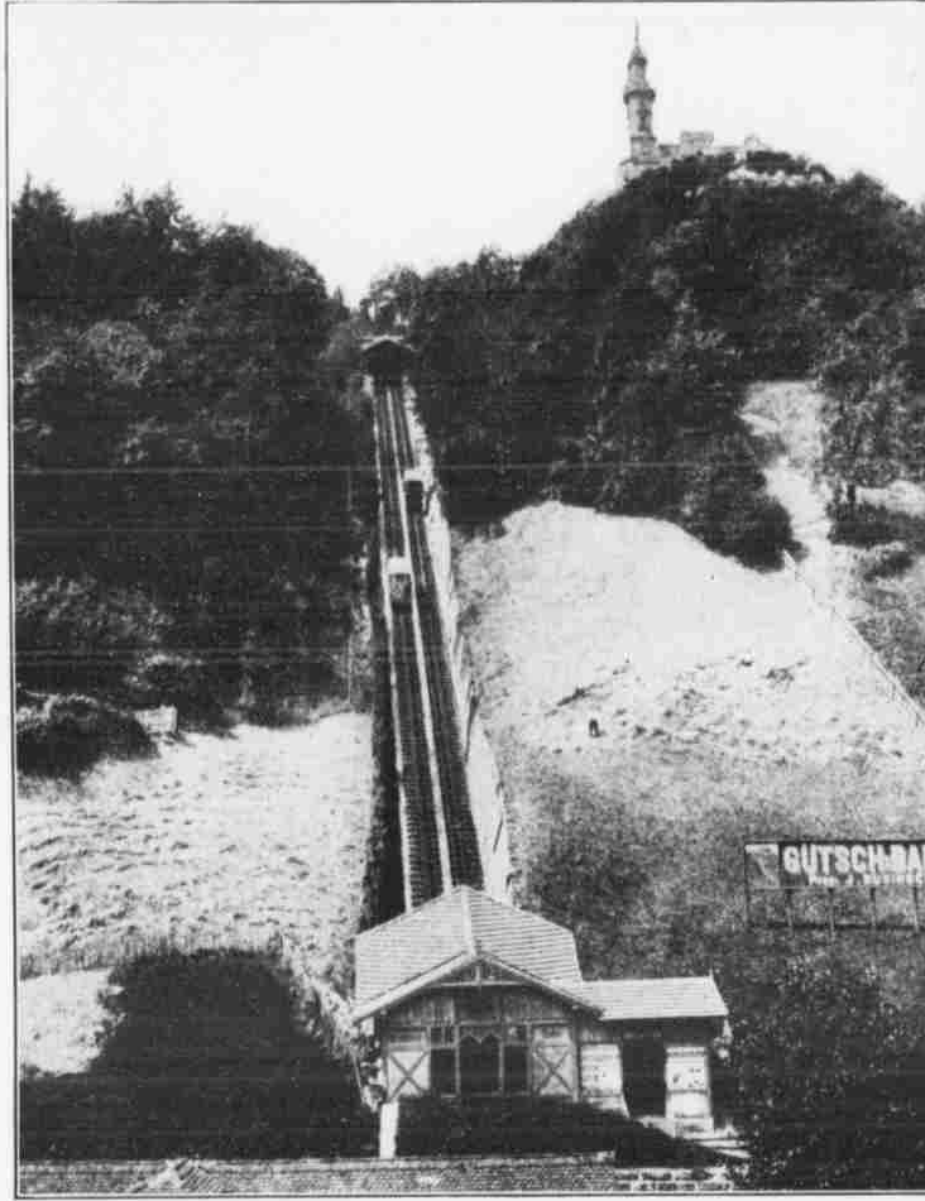
These notes are written at Lucerne, under the shadow of the Pilatus and the Rigi. I went across the lake to Vitznau the other day and took a ride to the top of Mount Rigi on one of the first of Switzerland's mountain lines. It is built on the same principle as that up Pike's Peak. The cars are open, and they are pushed by a little engine behind.

The views are magnificent. There are no sides to the cars and you rise slowly above Lake Lucerne, which flows in and out like a mighty river through the mountains you are climbing. Now the view is hidden by trees, tall, lean maples wall the sides of the tracks and the banks are covered with dandelions, daisies and red clover.

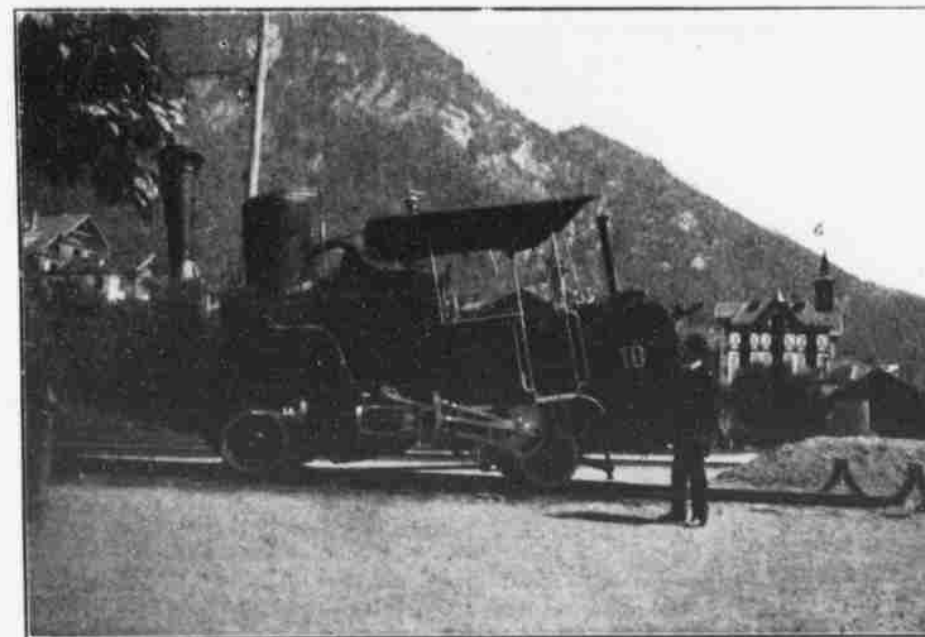
Higher up the lake view widens, mountainous islands rise out of the water like green monsters rearing their heads. Mount Pilatus comes into view. Its sides are gray and hoary and the snow in its crevices marks the wrinkles in its withered old face. You crawl along ravines with precipices hundreds of feet below you.

The snowy range of the Alps broadens as you go upward and at last you reach the top, with one of the most beautiful views of the world spread out before you. Just below is the Lake of the Four Cantons, with a score of Swiss cities and villages dotting its shaded shores, and all about you, walling the horizon, are the mighty Alps, giving you a view of mountain grandeur at least 120 miles long. The peaks of the Alps are covered with snow and the snow lies in drifts and masses in the rocks. In places it has formed mighty glaciers, great rivers of ice, which are slowly but imperceptibly flowing toward the valleys below. You are so high that everything is dwarfed. The steamers upon the lakes look like toy boats, the barns and houses of the peasants have dwindled to the Noah's arks of the toy stores and the great hotels are dwarfed into cottages.

What a place for meditation. The grandeur of the mountains is indescribable and you can appreciate the feeling of the cowboy who, coming into Switzerland at night, awoke to find himself surrounded by these mighty hills. He gazed and gazed, with tears in his eyes, and at last threw up his



"EVERY ALP NOW HAS A LADDER UP ITS BACK, LIKE A PAIR OF SUSPENDERS."



MR. CARPENTER AND ENGINE AT THE FOOT OF THE RIGI.

hat and in stentorian tones cried out, "Hurrah for God!"

The Alps have a beauty of their own which in many respects surpasses that of the Himalayas or the Andes, although the latter ranges are more stupendous in their grandeur. It is only the tops of the Alps that are bleak and bare. The valleys are covered with verdure, and there are nests everywhere in the hills good for pastures and gardens. These mountains are of incalculable value to Europe. Bleak and bare as the tops look, it is this very cold, evidenced by the snow upon them, which squeezes the rain from the winds, and through the Rhine, the Rhone, the Danube and the Po gives Germany, Austria, France and Italy the water that makes their lands tillable. It is the Alps which furnish the water for the great river trade routes of Europe and which indirectly have made this continent the most civilized and best part of the world.

The blot on the beauty of the Alps is the Swiss tendency to turn every rock and view and every cubic foot of ozone over to the traveler at so much per minute. The sublimity in God's mountains is peddled out for a consideration. There is not a beautiful view unmarred. Every place has its hotel. On the very mountain tops you find men selling alpenstocks and picture postal cards. On the Rigi I was offered a genuine St. Bernard puppy, and was shown kennels in which the Swiss raise them to make money, out of the legend that they sometimes rescue lost tourists. As for that, however, I learn that the St. Bernard dogs have long since lost their job. The various hospices kept by the monks are now connected with all parts of the mountains by telephones, and the lost party is easily found by the trackers going from post to post.

On top of the Rigi is a big hotel, the Rigi-kulm, where you can get a dinner for \$1 and full board for about \$3 a day, and there are other hotels scattered from the bottom all the way to the top. If you go to sleep at the top you will hear the toot of an Alpine horn a half hour before sun-

rise, waking you up for the view, and throughout the day a piper plays to the tourists and comes around and pokes his tin collection plate under your nose for pennies. At every step you meet a pretty Swiss girl in a white cap, who inveigles you into buying pressed flowers and edelweiss, and the picture postal woman has her stand at every beautiful point, with half tone reproductions of the same, which she offers you for two cents apiece.

Indeed, the postal card business is fast becoming an important one all over Europe. There are thousands of stores on the continent which sell nothing else, and in Switzerland you cannot travel five miles without seeing a postal card stand. Postal cards are sold at the railroad stations, at the drinking places, at every hotel and restaurant and even in the postoffices themselves.

I mean by this there are stands in the postoffices, separate and apart from the stamp windows, which sell cards bearing pictures upon which you must put an additional stamp before they can go. Such cards are found in all the department stores at reduced prices, and boys and men peddle them about the streets. In Geneva I saw a woman pushing a cart which was loaded with such cards, and while eating my dinner at restaurants outside the hotel I frequently have made a man drop down a package of cards on the table, telling me look them over and see if I don't want to buy.

These cards have half tone engravings of the public buildings and views of the vicinity. Some bear the coat-of-arms of the town, as in Berne, where the bear is the mascot for everything. Some, beautifully colored, represent the types and costumes of the neighborhood. Others are comic and some are fancifully artistic. Some, especially those of France and Germany, are indecent, and of such a character that they would not pass through our mails, but others are as beautiful as chromos and suitable for framing. The cards sell from 1 to 10 cents. Some are in sets and others single. Such cards are now made

in every country, and you can buy German, English, French and Italian cards almost everywhere. The most of the cards have little more than a place for the stamp and address upon them, the other side being given up to a picture, with only room for one or two lines in writing. The card saves the trouble of writing letters to your friends and at the same time enables you to show that you remember them.

I have said that the business is a big one. It brings the government of Switzerland more than \$500,000 a year in extra stamps. The country uses about 40,000,000 postal cards for internal communications and 15,000,000 for the foreign mails. This, at 2 cents apiece, brings in an annual revenue of \$300,000, and the cards sell for at least that much more. The people here use more postal cards in proportion to their number than any other nation in Europe.

Switzerland has as good a postal service as you will find anywhere. It has about 16,000 postoffices and about 2,000 letter boxes, and it delivers mail to the very tops of the Alps. The postal service does many things that our officials would not think of doing. It acts as banker and express company for the people. It will collect your bills for you and bring the money to the house. If you live in Switzerland and a man owes you, say \$2, all you have to do is to send him a bill for the amount in a sealed letter with a word or two to the postoffice on the outside of the envelope, and in addition a 2-cent stamp. This stamp pays the postoffice for its trouble in collecting and delivering the money to you. The charge is 1 per cent of the amount collected. If the bill is \$10, you pay 10 cents, and if \$50, 50 cents, and for this the money will be collected in any part of Switzerland. If payment is refused, however, the government will not enforce the collection.

After the same manner all sorts of goods are sent out C. O. D. by the stores and farmers. You can order goods of any store in Switzerland and the postman will bring you the package and send back the money. Farmers forward their butter and chickens through the mails, and I know of two American consuls who thus order live turkeys, chickens and ducks. Consul Lieberknecht of Zurich got his last year's Thanksgiving turkey from Austria through the mails and sent back the money in the same way, and Consul Frankenthal gets all his fowls from the lower Danube. They are shipped through the postoffice and the postmen bring the live fowls to his door and returns the money to the Hungarian farmers who raise them. If this could be done by our postoffice what an opening it would give the American farmer in the direct sale of his products to the consumers.

FRANK G. CARPENTER.

Pointed Paragraphs

Chicago News: Every man knows that a crank is some other fellow.

A rope often gets tight because that is the way it is taut.

The man who is willing to help you is usually unable to help himself.

It is a curious psychological fact that a man can be in a dozen different minds.

Some men come into the world asking "Why?" but no one is able to answer.

It is easy to have the patience of Job when the bolts are on some other fellow.

The politician absorbs a lot of liquids in order to make himself solid with the boys.

Avoid abbreviations in writing—otherwise you will get into the habit of breaking your word.

Employes may not be meddlesome, yet they are always minding somebody else's business.

Policemen should be successful speculators; so many servant girls let them in on the ground floor.

Death struggles are sad, but they are nothing in comparison with the struggles of some people to live.

Don't snub a man because he looks green. A watermelon has a similar look, but it is usually all right at heart.

When some men talk, others are apt to regret that automatic ear-closers have not yet been placed upon the market.

Time flies—but you can't make the man believe it who is compelled to wait five minutes for a train at a country station.

Uncle Ephraim's Maxims

A catfish on de line is wort a whale in de watah.

Ef yo' don't pull up de weeds yo' won't dig up a crap.

De highah de white collah, de blackah de colahed pussen looks.

De biggest shoutah ain't de man what sees de contribushun plattah.

When de 'possum thinks he's slyest he's closest to de fryin' pan.

Sleep's mighty good, but de rabbit ain't a-gwine to wake de gunnah.

Emptyin' de pantry for dinnah ain't a-gwine to set de table fer suppah.

Cole pertaters from yo' own patch is bettah dan chicken from yo' neighbor's coop.

Youths' Companions: De watermillion dat is greenest in de rind may hab de reddest heart.

De man what's allers gibin' away ginerally has to go a-borrowin' to de man what keeps what he gits.