LUCERNE

There is good warrant for turning directly to Lucerne and to the lake which lies in the midst of the four Forest Cantons when making, or renewing, acquaintance with Switzerland; and there should be no question of thereby slighting other famed districts of this favoured land. Almost invariably it is best to go straight to the heart of things, and the Vierwald-stätter-See, or Lake of the Four Forest Cantons—commonly known to us as the Lake of Lucerne—is held to be, both geographically and historically, at the very heart of Switzerland. There is, too, the additional assurance that no other district in the whole of the twenty-two Cantons which go to the making

of the Confederation can offer a more admirable, a more ideal introduction to the fascinating wonders and delights of Swiss scenery. In spite of our being in the heart of the country, we are, as it were, upon the frontier of a Promised Land, one flowing as literally as may be with milk and honey—and glaciers; we are, that is to say, at the portal by which we may as lief best enter the domain of the Swiss Alps. For if we except Pilatus, that gaunt, tormented rock-mass standing in severe isolation upon the threshold of the city, Lucerne is relatively modest and restrained as regards its immediate scenery; but away on the horizon which bounds the waters of the Lake is the long snowy array of majestic Alps, and we may soon reach by boat and rail the giants of Schwyz, Uri, Unterwalden and the Bernese Oberland. The steamboats alone will transport us, through graduated scenic grandeur, to the great cliffs and snow-covered crags of Uri, romantic birthplace of the Swiss Republic.

However, there is no occasion to become restive at the prospect; Lucerne itself is the most charming of preludes and *points d'appui* for all that lies afield. Particularly is this so if opportunity allows us to be here in the spring of the year, with the fruit trees all a-flower and the grey-towered Musegg ramparts deep set in a rosy-white haze; and with the fields all a-wave with blue, white, and gold, and the lakeside

promenade laden with the myriad flower-spikes of the horse-chestnut trees. Spring is earlier here—some ten days earlier in May—than away at the very feet of the Alps. We may well be content, then, to remain awhile amid such vernal freshness, studying the life and history of the town of the "wooden storks' nests", and revelling on the quay in the Alpine panorama framed by the soft blue sky and blue-green waters—a panorama which is never more delightful than at this season of the year, never even in autumn when October clears the atmosphere, robes the near hills in fire, deepens the blue colouring of distant rock and forest, and spreads a new white drapery upon the higher peaks.

To those who knew this town, say, five-and-twenty years ago, and who have not revisited it until to-day, how many are the changes which they will meet, and with what mixed feelings will they meet these changes! The past twenty-five years have meant astonishing developments for almost every quarter of Switzerland. Cities have burst their bounds and have spread far along the countryside; villages have grown into towns, and from nothing, or perhaps from a single old-time chalet, great groups of hotels and their dependencies have sprung up upon the mountains. And Lucerne certainly has been no laggard in this movement. Twenty-five years ago the sign and symbol of the

city was a stolid, stunted tower set in water beside a long, roofed, wooden bridge running slantwise across a river, with tapering twin steeples beyond. But nowadays the place would be unrecognizable without an airship floating above vast Palace hotels which all but obscure the twin steeples and cause the aged Kapell-Brücke and its faithful companion, the Wasserturm, to look as two quaint old country folk come into town to see the sights, and who remain coyly by the See-Brücke on the outskirts, so to speak, of all the splendid modern hustle—two dear, simple, reticent old things in their old-world garb, despite the efforts of the authorities to bring them abreast of the times by festooning them about with many strings of electric lights. We have to be thankful that these and other intensely individual relics of the past weathered the rage for demolition that appears to have reigned in the town during the middle of the nineteenth century. Something of what this rage was like can be gathered from Professor Weingartner's pictures which line the walls of Muth's Beer Restaurant in the Alpen-Strasse. Here, whilst sampling the *Schweinswürstl*, a speciality of the house, we can study the presentment of at least a dozen old gates and towers which were pulled down between the years 1832 and 1870. That the remaining nine Musegg towers, the two wooden bridges

LUCERNE: SPRINGTIME ON THE MUSEGG

and the Water Tower escaped this onslaught would seem to have been a miracle of good luck. At any rate, the townspeople of to-day must surely look upon it in some such light. For a new spirit now rules in this direction—a spirit of conservatism, even of rehabilitation—and what of the antique past remains is dear and safe, and what can be done to reinstate or reconstruct that which was lost, or in danger of being lost, in the fresco and iron-work decorated house-fronts is rapidly being done. Art is in the ascendancy to-day in Lucerne, and Hans Holbein's heart would be rejoiced could he but return to the quarters he frequented in 1516 before he journeyed, in 1526, to the Court of England. I do not think that the townspeople would go so far as Rodin, the great French sculptor, and say, "*Une seule chose est utile au monde: l'Art!*" (for there is the hotel business, and however artistically inclined the Lucerneois may be, they are eminently practical); but it is quite evident that to-day they would never accept without amendment Plato's scheme for a republic in which Art was ignored.

In some of its aspects Lucerne is reminiscent of both Nuremberg and Venice: of the former in its ancient towers, its beaten ironwork and its frescoed houses; and of the latter in its river and lakeside life and architecture, especially looking from the Schwei-

zerhof Quay to the finely domed railway station across the water, or again at night-time when many-tinted reflected lights dance upon the flood, and row-boats, with the oarsmen poised much as in Venetian gondolas, move stealthily athwart the velvet shadows. All this, however, is merely reminiscent; Lucerne is substantially herself—"Lucerna, the Shining One", quick with an individual beauty in which orderliness, dignity, and self-respect are prominent qualities. And because these traits in her character are so manifest, certain lapses in good taste and the fitness of things are apt to be the more keenly regretted. Go down along the right side of the Reuss river, past the Kapell-Brücke with its 154 paintings of ancient local history and legend filling the beam-spaces beneath the roof, past the befrescoed Gasthaus zu Pfistern, past the Flower and Fruit Market in the old Rathaus arcades, past the Hotel Balances and its history-telling *façade*, across the Wine Market containing a fifteenth-century fountain dedicated to St. Maurice —who, with St. Leodegar, is co-patron of the town —down to the Mühlen-Platz, and there you will find stark modernism, in the shape of ramshackle baths and uncompromising factory workshops, right beside one of the chief and most picturesque relics of Old Lucerne—the fourteenth-century wooden Spreuer-Brücke, with its quaint shrine and paintings of the

Dance of Death, sung of by the poet Longfellow. But perhaps a more brazen example of this intrusiveness is to be seen by passing over the bridge and standing at the nearest corner of the Zeughaus. From this point there is what is probably the most perfect *ensemble* of varied mediaeval architecture to be found in the town—the old bridge and its quaint, rosy-red shrine in the foreground, spanning the green and rapidly flowing Reuss, and backed by the Musegg towers and ramparts and the bulky monastic building whose deep roof is pierced by a triple line of windows. It is a nearly perfect glimpse of the past, and that it is not entirely perfect is due to a bald modern villa set high against the rampart walls. This brazen-faced building is wellnigh as incongruous, perched up there beneath the unique and precious Mannlitthurm, whose warrior sentinel, hand upon sword, watches over the town, as is the Alhambra Labyrinth, with its "interesting Oriental groups and palm-groves", in the Glacier Garden.

However, it will not do to be too critical. Rather should we give thanks for the strong directing hand which in the main the town now holds upon Progress, that arch-egoist with no eyes but for itself. There are times when it is no easy matter to reconcile the old with the new: to say where antiquity shall rule for art and sentiment's sake, and where it shall

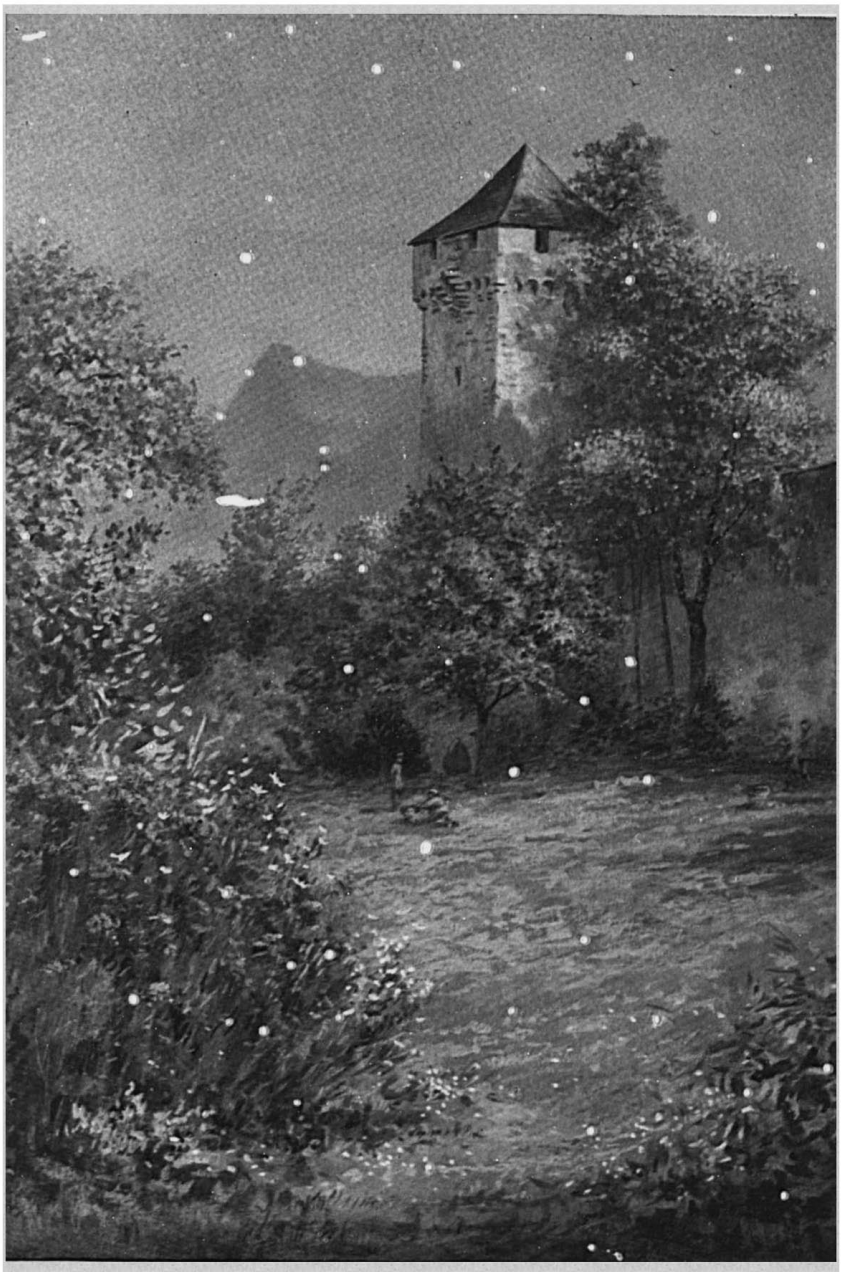
give way, tears or no tears, before the utilities of the present. Nor is it less difficult to give an unprejudiced and far-sighted judgment upon the actual truth, and, therefore, upon the actual merit and value of beauty and ugliness. It is such a personal matter —personal so largely to the time being. We must not imagine that the chimney-pot hat will be for all time cherished as respectable, though we may expect some wailing and remonstrance when its call to go arrives. So, possibly, even probably, here in this town the old inhabitants of 400 years ago, when every house was of wood, were heard to carp and grumble—may even have risen in protest—when Jacob von Hertenstein built for himself the first stone dwelling and had it painted gaily with pictures by young Hans Holbein, thus setting a fashion which eventually not only ousted the "storks' nests", but set up something for whose preservation we now clamour, although at the same time we incline to rave against some of its recent offspring, the Palace hotels. Thus, if we are not careful, do we find ourselves caught in a tangle of inconsistencies. Apt to think, like the cicerone of Chichester Cathedral, that "nothing later than the fourteenth century is of much value", we should be wary lest posterity has cause to deride us. We are enthusiastic children where temporary custom and passing bias are concerned,

and what to us is horrible to-day is often splendid to-morrow.

On the other hand, there is a strong tendency, perhaps a kind of bravado, which aims at showing that we are no longer overawed by the past as were our ancestors; that we live very much in the present, with one eye on the immediate future, and that we do not so much say "Let the dead bury their dead" as "Let us at once bury all that is moribund". In short, an egotistical irreverence stalks abroad with regard to the past, as well as an exorbitant sentimentality, and our pressing necessity is to beware of both and to keep in the middle of the road. Now this is just the happy and wise position which Lucerne seems to occupy at present. The merest feather will show which way the wind is blowing, and in the current edition of the Official Guidebook there is no trace of the phrase employed in an earlier edition: "In a town where the present is so beautiful, we may well let the past be forgotten". Beautiful most certainly the town is to-day, and that is partly because the beauty of its past is *not* forgotten.

History is boiled down and compressed into tabloid form in another guidebook. "In olden times," it hurriedly tells us, "there stood upon the banks of the Reuss a little village of fishermen, for which the founding of the convent of St Leodegar, about the

year 735, became the first event of importance. The little place grew up by and by into a town, and the time came when it was strong enough to lay its hands upon the trade of the lake. Later on, when the peasantry of the inner cantons concluded that alliance, out of which in time the Swiss confederacy was to rise, Lucerne did not hesitate to join them, so that from the year 1332 the history of the Confederacy has been also that of Lucerne." That is all very true as far as it goes; food in the form of a tabloid is never quite satisfactory. But probably the majority of visitors will be content with this high essence, not caring to dive deeper into antecedent waters to fish up Lacustrians, Alemanni, King Pepin, the Abbot of Murbach, or the Dukes of Hapsburg. There are, however, certain tit-bits of history—or are they of legend?—which are always palatable, and among these is a story meriting a place by the side of that recounted of Tell and his son. It dates from 1362, from the time, that is to say, when the hold of Austria upon Lucerne was weakening under the contagious example set the townspeople by their neighbours of Uri, Schwyz, and Unterwalden. Things had reached such a pass that the partisans of Austria had had to leave the town, and the Bailiff of Rothenbourg, Governor of the district, was vowing vengeance and plotting with certain traitors among the Swiss



THE RIGI FROM THE MUSEGG, LUCERNE

to retake the town by night and put the townspeople to the sword. After dark, on 29th June, a little boy, Pierre Hohdorf, who had been bathing in the lake and had fallen asleep on the shore, was awakened by the stealthy tread of armed men creeping warily towards a cave beneath the Abbey of the Tailors. Recognizing the Governor among the number, and knowing well the bad blood existing between the Austrians and the townspeople, Pierre Hohdorf, under cover of the reeds, followed these men to their meeting-place, but was surprised by a newcomer, taken by this latter into the cave, denounced as a spy, and threatened with instant death. The boy could only confess that he had fallen asleep after his bath, had been awakened by footsteps, and had become curious to know what was the matter. This was not considered a satisfactory explanation by his captors; a dagger was already uplifted above his breast, when the Governor intervened, caused little Pierre to swear that he would never reveal to a living soul anything of what he had seen or heard, and then allowed him to go free. The boy made his way in all haste to the town and to the Abbey of the Butchers, where he saw that lights were still burning. Entering the building and going to the hall where numbers of citizens were talking and drinking, Pierre went straight up to the big stove and thus addressed it:—

"O stove, you are not a living soul; I may therefore tell you what I have just seen and heard without breaking the oath which the Austrians have forced me to take". He then went on to tell the stove the whole of his adventure. At first the men thought it was just a child's prank; but they soon pricked up their ears, realized the seriousness of what they were hearing, buckled on their swords, shouldered their battle-axes, hurried out into the streets, and awaited the coming of the Austrians and traitors. As one o'clock struck, the enemy stole out from the Abbey of the Tailors, were quickly confronted and after a fierce struggle were either killed or routed, the arch-traitor, Jean de Malters, together with the Governor, saving their lives in flight.

But Lucerne suffers somewhat from the brilliant history of her near neighbours, her precursors in Swiss freedom. William Tell and his famous companions monopolize so much of the atmosphere that the average visitor is probably satisfied if he supplements a knowledge of their exploits with what he can pick up casually in his strolls around the town.[1] In this way, if he finds himself in the Pfistergasse and notices the ancient three-storied building known as "von Moos's Haus", he will come into contact with Ruskin,

[1] Canon Rawnsley's little *brochure*, *The Revival of the Decorative Arts in Lucerne*, is a useful companion to have with one when strolling about the town and looking at the frescoed houses.

who made of it one of his exquisitely careful drawings; in this way, at the Gütsch, he will learn how Queen Victoria loved the alleys midst the stately pines; in this way he will hear of Richard Wagner's erstwhile residence for some six prolific years at Tribschen, the country house nestling among Teutonic-looking poplar trees on the promontory not far beyond the airship station, and of how the great man was wont to wend his way of an afternoon to Dubeli's Café in the Fürren Gasse, where he smoked his pipe and in all probability sought inspiration for *Die Meistersinger*, the *Siegfried Götterdämmerung*, and the *Siegfried-Idyll*, and perhaps discussed philosophy with Nietzche, who was a frequent visitor to Tribschen in those friendly days before he discovered that the great composer was merely a "clever rattlesnake" In this way, too, the visitor will hear of the droll doings of Fridli an der Halden, popularly known as Bruder Fritschi, who flourished in the fifteenth century, and founded a merry festival which, in the shape of the Fritschi Procession, is still kept up at carnival-time. Many tales are told of this worthy. He seems to have been a prime favourite; not only in Lucerne, but far afield, being on several occasions held captive in some distant town.

"The news reached Lucerne", we are told, "that Fritschi was being detained at Basle, whereupon the burgomaster and council

of the former town at once declared war, announcing that within eight days they would appear in force before Basle and demand the release of the prisoner. They received the reply that their appearance was eagerly looked for, and that the greater the number of the enemy, the better pleased the Basle folk would be. The expedition really took place. Several hundred of the men of Lucerne, with the two burgomasters and eighteen councillors at their head, marched to Basle, where they were received by the burgomaster and council and a host of citizens in martial attire. Brother Fritschi welcomed his fellow-townsmen from a window of one of the best houses, and several days were spent in feasting and revelry."

The lighter side of warfare, this, and without doubt a welcome interlude in what were seriously stirring times. Frivolous history, do you call it? Is, then, serious history a record only of long faces, and a reserve

> "For heathen heart that puts his trust
> In reeking tube and iron shard"?

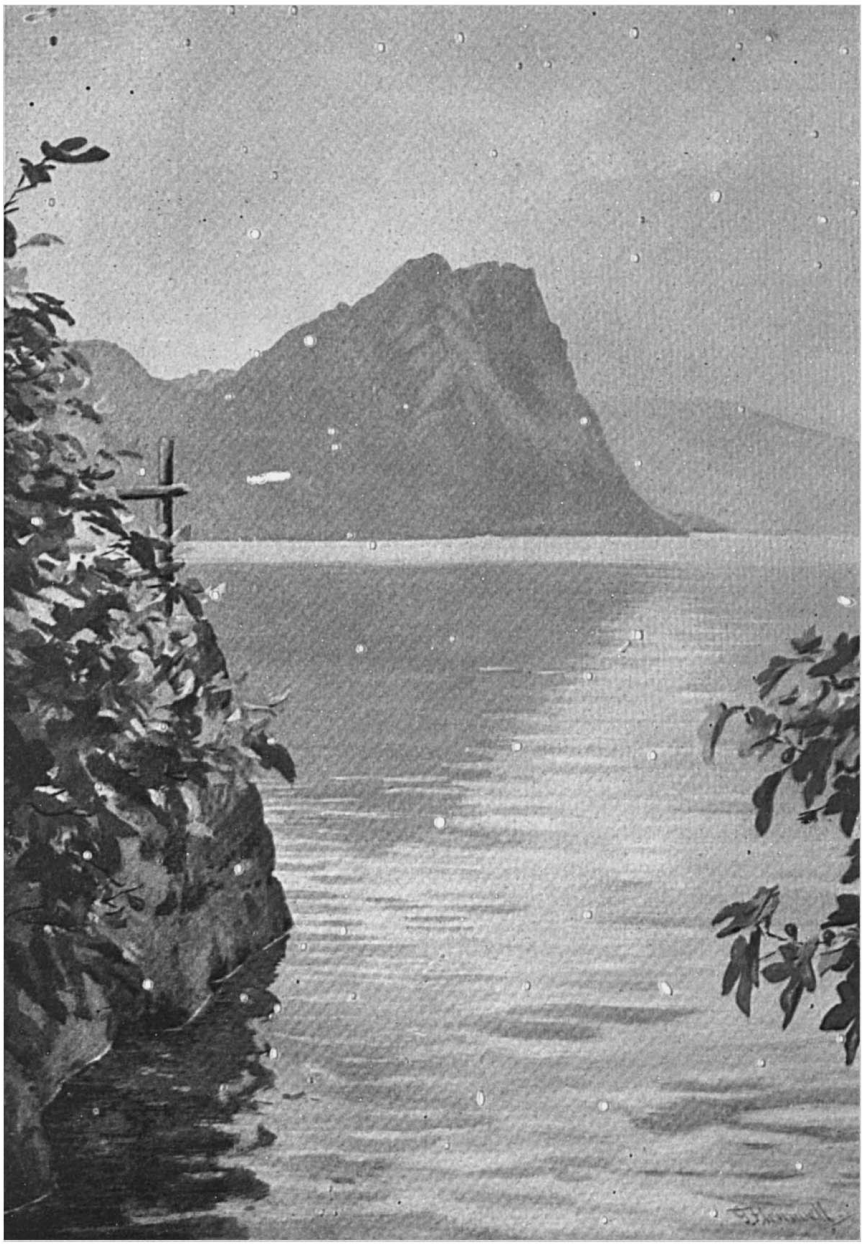
Is not a merry smile a thing of great gravity in the world's economy, and may not a hearty laugh be as potent as a bloody battle? Why, at a time when kings and their peoples slept booted and spurred, jesters were paid to break the horrid spell with laughter. True, the world called, and still calls, these merrymakers "fools", but the sooner a foolish world recasts its mode of thinking in these matters, the sooner will it realize how low and odious is its recognized god of war. Lucerne holds excellent and moving proof of

this in the Museggstrasse, where stands the International Museum of War and Peace, founded by the Russian, Johann von Bloch. In this Museum there are things which, although they represent what have long been looked upon as among the noblest elements in serious history, come as a dreadful and a useful shock to such as pin their faith to the vaunted advance in intellectuality, humanity, and civilization of this present age.

In Lucerne there is much excuse for pensiveness upon this subject. I know no town where the problem of Peace and War presents itself more suggestively. Not that Lucerne is a hotbed of that militarism which is apt to think of Peace as "sweet poison for the age's tooth"; for excepting a subdued rattle of arms from the barracks near the Spreuer-Brücke, and an occasional drilling of recruits in the recesses of the Gütsch woods, little or nothing is seen here of the actual cult of warfare. Peace pervades Lucerne, and War is evident upon all hands as an irresistibly suggestive reminiscence. There could be no more appropriate home for the Bloch Museum. Fritschi is the town's hero, not for the part he played in the Burgundian Wars, but for his drolleries; a sham castle-fortress stands picturesquely by the steamboat quay; the Glacier Garden, witness of neolithic man's grim struggles as far back, possibly, as 700,000 years, is

now a sylvan resort of pleasure-seeking tourists; and the soft-blue distant Alps of Uri and Unterwalden send to the town subdued echoes of past tyranny and revolt. On every hand is all that could be wished for from peace; and warfare, in the form of battlements and towers, sits crumbling upon the Musegg slopes—swords turned into ploughshares, the past's frowning exigencies left to serve the present's decorative sense and purpose. Truly the Bloch Museum has found a fitting home, and for long years may this fitness endure, spreading wide its virtues to the four corners of the globe and inspiring men to live up to that high level which, in their quiet moments, they so persistently claim for modern civilization.

And yet, because something finer is expected of the present than of the past there is no right rhyme or reason for heaping wholesale abuse upon the latter's crudely drastic ways. We may quite well admit how much of actual beauty arises from previous horrors. As, surely, few can visit Lucerne's unique Glacier Garden without being impressed with the fact of how much the loveliness and grandeur of the town's surrounding scenery is indebted to that dismal and terrific epoch, of which these giants' cauldrons, mills and mill-stones are the witnesses, so, surely, few can stroll up to the Drei Linden, or through the cathedral-like pine woods of the Gütsch to Sonnenberg, and survey



THE BÜRGENSTOCK FROM VITZNAU

the lovely reaches of the Lake and the blue borderline of the Alps beyond without feeling the enormous and quiet benefits which to-day are enjoyed because of the sanguinary struggles of a bygone age. Nor, surely, can many stand by the shady water pool and gaze at the rock-cliff wherein is sculptured Thorwaldsen's famous masterpiece and not be sensible of how large a debt is laid upon to-day's tranquillity by such past incidents which in a sense were so ugly and so vicious. "Honour to you, brave men", says Carlyle with stirring eloquence, referring to this same monument in honour of the 800 officers and men of the Swiss Guard, slain at the Tuileries in defending Louis XVI, very many of whom were natives of Lucerne and district (which was noted for its so-called mercenaries)—

"Honour to you, brave men; honourable pity, through long times! Not martyrs were ye; and yet almost more. He was no King of yours, this Louis; and he forsook you like a King of shreds and patches; ye were but sold to him for some poor sixpence a-day; yet would ye work for your wages, keep your plighted word. The work now was to die; and ye did it. Honour to you, O Kinsmen; and may the old Deutsch *Biederkeit* and *Tapferkeit*, and valour which is *Worth* and *Truth*, be they Swiss, be they Saxon, fail in no age! Not bastards; true-born were these men: sons of the men of Sempach, of Murten, who knelt, but not to thee, O Burgundy! Let the traveller, as he passes through Lucerne, turn aside to look at their monumental Lion; not for Thorwaldsen's sake alone. Hewn out of living rock, the Figure rests there, by the still Lake-waters, in lullaby of

distant tinkling *rancę-des-vaches*; the granite Mountains dumbly keeping watch all round; and, though inanimate, speaks."

Yes, it speaks. Aye, and the mountains speak, the Lake speaks, the whole wide landscape speaks—speaks of all we owe to the violent deaths of such as these. And if to-day this land breathes freedom throughout every pore; if to-day she attracts all wanderers by her beauty, how shall we deny that it is due to a convulsed and tortured past?

But in admitting this, our deep sense of gratitude to bygone men and days, is such gratitude to bespeak our resolve to follow closely their example? Are we to despair of freedom and beauty being maintained, even accentuated, by other and more refined methods? Why should we? Why should not this very freedom, this very beauty be the instrument of our secure regeneration? In view of the hundreds of thousands of travellers who come to Switzerland (it is deputed that 300,000 yearly visit Lucerne alone), who fall under the beneficent spell of her life and landscape, and who return to their hearths and homes with ineffaceable souvenirs—in view of all this precious and increasing influence, it seems impossible that history can so far repeat itself as to soil afresh the Alps with battle-carnage. Walk along the lake-front amid the gathering shades of night, when the gulls have gone to slumber, leaving the duck and coot alone to seek

their supper from the passer-by, and when the lights flash out from the great hotels on the heights of Pilatus, the Stanserhorn, the Bürgenstock and the Rigi. Can you help believing, when you gaze over at those far-off constellations of electric lights, that men are now living in closer and truer communion with all that is ennobling in Nature? can you help believing that, although men may drag luxury with them to the summits of the Alps—although they there must have their billiard and their music room, and eat their evening's dinner in full dress, yet are they inevitably influenced for good in their ideals, and in the practical assertion of their ideals, by the air, the flowers, the snow-capped peaks and rolling glaciers around them, and the wondrous lake-land panorama spread out low about their feet?