

BERNE AND THE BERNESE, SWITZERLAND.



A FLAX-SCUTCHER OF THE BERNESE OVERLAND.

SWITZERLAND, anciently Helvetia, is bounded on the north by Alsace in France, and Swabia in Germany; on the east by the Lake of Constance, Tyrol, and Trent; on the south by Italy; and on the west by France. Its very name is suggestive of thought. The struggles of its brave and hardy people, their industry, fidelity, simplicity, and zealous attachment to the liberties of their country, furnish an interesting and instructive history. Before the year 1798 Switzerland was divided into thirteen cantons—the liberty of the people had been secured,

Berne, the capital of the canton of the same name, is one of the largest and most populous towns in Switzerland. It was founded in the year 1191, by Berthold V., Duke of Zähringen, who designed it as an instrument for suppressing the refractory spirit of his nobles. The Emperor Frederic II., upon the death of Berthold, elevated it to the rank of an imperial city; he also bestowed upon the inhabitants many peculiar advantages, and a legislative code, which served for a long time afterwards as the basis of their civil law. By the charter, or



FRUIT-GATHERING IN SWITZERLAND.

and they had continued in the enjoyment of that liberty until they were attacked by their French neighbours at that period. In 1802 six new cantons were organised by order of the great emperor, after whose downfall new arrangements were made, and three other cantons were erected, and added to the rest. By this adjustment and division of their territories, the Swiss allies and subjects, as they were termed, have been more closely incorporated with, and united to, the old cantons, under the Helvetic confederation.

bull, which he then bestowed, it was enacted that the council of government and magisterial officers of the city should be chosen by a general assembly of their fellow-townsmen, every one of whom, possessing a house within the town, had a vote.

At an early period in its history Berne was involved, after the custom of the middle ages, in constant broils with the feudal lords in its neighbourhood. But by a steady and vigorous defence, a reliance upon their own strength, and the most dauntless courage, its people overcame every predatory incur-

sion; and so the republic prospered, and its governors became the rulers of a comparatively large and populous state.

In 1298, Louis, the Baron of Vaud, the Counts Peter of Gruyere and Rodolph of Neufchatel, brought their troops into the country. It was a strong and well trained force, men who had seen much of warfare; but the sturdy men of Berne were not to be overcome. Under intrepid leaders they attacked the invading army; the battle was terrible, but the victory was sure; and they returned to their city and deposited eighteen of their enemies' banners in the church of St. Vincent. A military song still celebrates their triumph.

Half a century afterwards a second invasion was made, and this time the attack was more carefully preconcerted, and more vigorously undertaken. The army contained fifteen hundred knights, three thousand chevaliers of a somewhat lower rank, and more than fifteen thousand soldiers. They were commanded by the Count Geraud of Velangin. The whole power of the Austrian empire was directed against the rising state, the most sanguine could hardly anticipate anything but success to the invaders, and disaster to the invaded. The little city of Lauffen, situated within three leagues of Berne, was besieged, taken, and the inhabitants put to the sword. The Bernese having been apprised of what had occurred, demanded justice, but all attempts either to obtain redress or effect articles of peace were alike unavailing, and Rodolph of Erlach was chosen by acclamation as the leader of the citizen army. His first words inspired them with courage: "I have fought," he said, "in six campaigns, and I have seen the strongest army fly before the feeblest; good order is the great secret of victory. You are not incapable of this, you love liberty; and with you I have no fear of the enemy: I trust in God and you. You have chosen me to be your general, but I must command with an absolute power." The people promised obedience, and Erlach took the command. The army was quickly augmented by fresh arrivals; men with hearts alive to the threatening dangers, with stern determination, and invincible courage, gathered thick and fast, and beneath the broad light of the moon, on the 20th of June, 1339, the army set forth; the aged and the feeble, the wives and children of the men who formed that host, gathered on the walls, and watched their progress, till the last man was hidden in the forest depths. The battle which ensued when force met force, was decisive. The Bernese triumphed; the invading army gave way before them; the conquerors passed the night upon the field of battle, and then returned in triumph to their homes. The anniversary of that decisive victory is still kept in Berne as a solemn feast-day.

This defeat of the aggressors served to consolidate the power of the state, and raise it to the first rank among the states of Western Helvetia. A few years afterwards it was admitted into the Swiss Confederation, of which it eventually became the largest and most populous Canton. Its last triumph was that of the Pays de Vaud, which was wrested from the Duke of Savoy, in 1536, in consequence of an attack made by him upon Geneva, the ally of Berne. From that time forward the various acquisitions of territory which the city had made remained peaceably annexed to it, and quietly governed by *Vaillies*, chosen from among the members of the Council, until the changes brought about by the first French Revolution, and the triumphs of Napoleon Buonaparte. A French army entered the Canton in 1798, and met a brave resistance; but the government being destitute of energy and decision, the enemy penetrated to the capital, which they plundered, and from that time its supremacy, as the ruling power of the whole Canton, has ceased.

The situation of Berne is remarkable. It stands upon the left bank of the rapid Aar, which sweeps in a sudden bend around three of its sides, the fourth opens towards the west, upon the neck of a little promontory, which is strongly fortified. The rocky bed of the river is much below the level of the town, and its steep craggy banks form a natural rampart.

A walk through its steep streets and cloistered colonnades is a very pleasant thing. Something of Roman majesty appears in its lofty terraces, in its massive arches, and abundance of

water flowing every day, and all day long, into gigantic basins. There is little evidence of luxury to be seen. Everything has a utilitarian cast with it, you meet no splendid equipages, but many a country waggon drawn by a capital team of oxen. The most careful attention is paid to the wants and comforts of the humbler classes, and as one saunters through the street the eye is recreated by everything which indicates a happy population, well fed, well dressed, well lodged. The streets are abundantly supplied with fountains, decorated with an extensive variety of appendages, and often presenting the oddest appearances imaginable, with their "stiff warriors, program dames, and allegorical conundrums, which might puzzle even Spenser himself." Among the public buildings of Berne, besides the cathedral, are two large hospitals—the *Burgerspital*, or Burgher-hospital, and the *Inselspital*, or Island-hospital. The town-hall is a lumbering mass of antiquity, strangely differing from the Corn Magazine, which is a large and splendid building. The museum, the arsenal, the theatre, and some charitable institutions, contribute to the general air of neatness and elegance which pervades the city.

The city is a specimen of the Canton: throughout the state there is the same neatness and the same elegance reissued. The roads are remarkably good, the road which leads to the city is a superb causeway, planted with lime-trees, which in the summer season impart a delightful perfume to the air. The country is rich in every kind of verdure, its villages, with their white houses and cottages, are scattered over its extent, and a busy population everywhere gives token of its prosperity.

When the winter takes possession of the high mountains, and every day descends nearer to the plains, fruit-gathering begins in the valleys. The whole country appears to the traveller as a forest of fruit trees: stretching far and wide on every side the varied tints of the ripening fruit attract the eye, the heavy-laden boughs bend down beneath their burden, and everywhere busy hands are hard at work gathering in the harvest. Many a happy group, in the strange costume of the country, the broad hat so characteristic of Switzerland, the merry voice of childhood, and the cheerful song add beauty and interest to the scene.

Until the French became connected with Switzerland the fruit of that country was but little cultivated; the wild apple, and the cherries of the wood, occupied the place where now the most magnificent trees are carefully tended, and their productions assiduously cultivated. When the Swiss became aware of the secret resources of their country, they discovered that there were certain localities better adapted for the growth of fruit than others; and the wild productions of the country, the cherries of Montreal, the apples of Berne, the chestnuts of Monthey, and the plums and prunes of Bâle, became fruits highly esteemed in France and in the neighbouring countries.

M. Laine established at his domain in Malley, about half a league from Lausanne, a seed plot or nursery, in which for twenty years he cultivated the productions of the country with peculiar facility and great success. His estate contained some of the finest trees, and was well supplied with water, which contributed to the luxuriance of the vegetation. It was remarkable for the numerous and beautiful specimens which it afforded of what might be made of the wild fruits and wild flowers of Switzerland. M. Laine was the first successful promoter of agriculture in that land of mountain heights and deep beautiful valleys, and his memory is still cherished by its people.

The fruit harvest is a season of festivity. A gay cavalcade sets forth from village homes, and upon arriving at their place of destination, the horses and oxen are turned into the pastures, and the gatherers begin their work. They generally commence in the month of October, the finest month in the year, and the young, the old, the children, all are engaged, all happy; and the romantic scenery, the tall trees, the transparent lake, the gray mountains, the clear sky, afford a charming spectacle. Some of the most beautiful fruit is preserved throughout the year until the next fruit-gathering.