1926

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Recommended Citation
Fitzsimmons, Cleo (1926) "A Bit About Switzerland," The Iowa Homemaker: Vol. 6 : No. 8 , Article 4.
Available at: http://lib.dr.iastate.edu/homemaker/vol6/iss8/4

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A Bit About Switzerland

By CLEO FITZSIMMONS

THE people of Switzerland do not live in the super-refined atmosphere to which most Americans are accustomed but their lives are simple and happy, they read much, and both men and women are exceedingly well informed, according to Mrs. P. H. Elwood who spent the greater part of her girlhood in that country, receiving her education there and who has visited the small European republic several times since coming to Ames with her husband, Prof. P. H. Elwood, head of the Landscape Architecture Department of Iowa State College, to make their home. "Everyone in Switzerland is educated," says Mrs. Elwood. "There is nothing which corresponds exactly to the instruction in child care and training which we have in America, if we except the little bit of such information which was brought over by the Red Cross during the War, but that small country is recognized as having schools which are among the best in the world. Many, many students from other countries come there to take their work. Co-education has not been the rule in Switzerland as it is here. Only recently has it been taken up. However, women formerly might enter the men's universities if they wished, and they were ambitious to have the same education that the men received have entered the universities and have been graduated there. "Many Swiss children of the better class are brought up at home receiv­ ing instruction from governesses and tutors often under the supervision of the parents. The "lycee" corresponds to the American public school. Here as in the universities boys and girls are kept in separate groups. When they graduate at the age of 17 or 18 years, they have received education which is equivalent to our second year of college. There is also an enormous number of private schools. Methods are more thorough and studies are more difficult in Switzerland than in America. "As a rule, a graduate of the "lycee" has a better all-round education than an American student of the same age. Boys and girls in the United States would consider the exacting Swiss professor a terrible person, but the children of Switzerland regard education as a serious business. They work more and play less and are willing to put more effort into acquiring something that will help them during their whole life. Every student who desires to enter a university in Switzerland must pass the examinations of the "lycee". "The Swiss people speak three languages, German, French and Italian and some of them also speak English. Since the country, tho so small, consists of three parts, Germany, French and Italian Switzerland, girls from the different provinces exchange homes for a time with girls of one of the other provinces so that each may become acquainted with the habits and home life of other parts of their country. Both families and daughters enjoy this exchange. Some of the girls enter English homes in the same way, living as a member of the family and helping with the house or children after the manner of a daughter. "Women's clubs are unknown. The women of Switzerland spend most of their time in their homes or in helping their husband about his business. Some work in the hotels where they keep office or act as housekeepers. They are wonderful homemakers, neat, thrifty and very skillful with the needle. Their hand-made embroidered stuff is a ready market in America and in other foreign markets. The Swiss women are seldom idle, much of their embroidery work being done while they rest and visit together. "Tho not handsome, the Swiss are a wholesome, happy people. They are of rather stocky build, stolid and strong, Much of their time is spent out of doors. They are exceedingly fond of play and every Sunday when the weather is fine, whole families gather at the little inns and dance to music furnished by a funny little old fiddle and a clarinet if one is available. At noon everyone lunches on sausages, black bread and beer. Americans would consider them childish but we, who know them, think them friendly and wholly delightful, the most truly democratic people in the world. The aristocracy of money, so commonly noticed here, is unknown to them, for the rich man in Switzerland is too well bred to make a show of his wealth. "The men and women enjoy singing out of doors in the mountains. They group themselves into singing clubs and on long walks into the country, they sing as they go. In the fields, it is not unusual to hear the peasant singing with his wife as they work together. In all of their actions, the Swiss are natural and lacking in self-consciousness. Their simplicity of manner shows itself in their politics in strong contrast with ours. Their president is chosen every two years, but there is no ostentation about his inauguration. He has been elected to lead his people and he does it in the unassuming manner which they expect of him. "The Swiss way of living would appeal to Americans who love tidiness and order. The life of the children follows that of their parents. They do not have the variety of games that we play, but they take part often with their elders in the charming folk games of the country. They, too, are fond of long walks. They dress simply and eat such plain, nourishing food as sausages, cheese, dark break, milk and chocolate. For lunch at recess in school, the children eat dark bread and chocolate. Butter is a luxury in Switzerland and no child

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As the details are unimportant, and as the case might serve to suggest better methods or ideas, I am offering what I remember. In this instance there happened to be several children who consistently refused milk. The parents finally devised a nautical game in which buttered toast and milk played the principal parts. It is the other principals—Adam and Eve by name—whose identity escapes my memory. Perhaps, in fact I am sure, they were imaginary creatures and existed only by virtue of their spirit. The milk in the bowl was the sea and the toast the raft, and the game was called "Adam and Eve on a raft—Wreck them!" This consisted of the disappearance of the raft—and the sea followed the raft as a natural event. The popularity of the game led to the use of whole wheat toast as the children's demand was principally for bread and milk from that time on. In the case of an only child, daddy and mother will have to enthusiastically join the "wrecking crew" if the venture is to be a success. I can even conceive that such a venture might be fun!

Whatever the means, the acceptance of milk naturally and happily is a priceless heritage for every child, and the child who does not like milk is beginning life under a physical and economical handicap.

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I would expect to have it every day. Setting this absolutely down. "Travelers who stay at the large hotels do not see the Swiss people and learn very little of their life, for the native is retiring, the friendly, and he does not often mix with the foreigners. Sports in winter and the mountains and scenery in summer draw great crowds of people into Switzerland. St. Moritz is especially well known for its skating, skiing and coasting but the whole country abounds with winter sports. The hotels are an important source of revenue for the people.

"The Swiss have given contributions of various sorts to the world. Geneva has always been a place of peacemaking. Swiss watches are world famous. The making of milk chocolate was discovered in the Peters' chocolate factories many years ago. Gruyere cheese is a product of Switzerland. The parcel post system was first adopted here and the United States has been the last to take it up. In Switzerland even trunks can be sent by mail.

"As a people, the Swiss are not particularly famous for their art although they have a keen appreciation of beauty and have established a number of famous museums. They seem to see more beauty in everyday things than does the average American. Their lives are less hurried. Perhaps, too, as our country becomes older, we, too, will find time for the simpler, more beautiful things that are close at hand and, we like them, in spite of differences in habits and customs within our country will develop a wholesome love of home which will bind us in friendly unity."

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