

Dividing the cheese an important event in the Justis Valley

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In the world we have been confronted with the spectacle of total war. Very evidently the defence of a nation implies the summoning of all the nation's resources. The nation responds with common consent to this summons. The General is duty-bound to proclaim this and to thank on this day all those who were not called upon to take the oath asked of the troops, but who, nevertheless, served the same flag. These flags assembled before me are the outward sign of the unity of the nation. The solidarity which sustained us during the war must remain our strength throughout the years to come. To ignore this, to deny it, would be to put out to sea unguided despite the tempest which is still raging across the world. To prolong this solidarity is to assure ourselves the maximum chance of overcoming our difficulties. Soldiers of 1939 to 1945, the end of active service does not mean rest for you. It means, on the contrary, manifold problems to solve. In other forms the fight for the nation's existence continues and requires the same fervor and the same faith. Your General now returns to his place in the ranks of the army; but the army remains ready. Recruits who are here for this ceremony and who, tomorrow, will take the place of your elders, receive from their hands the order which they have so faithfully carried out; for these flags will one day become your sacred trust. Farewell noble banner; today I entrust you intact to the authorities of the land. May those who have served under my orders during the past six years never swerve or tire."

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DIVIDING THE CHEESE AN IMPORTANT EVENT IN THE JUSTIS VALLEY.

Not many things happen in the quiet little Justistal which reaches from Merligen, on the right shore of the lake of Thun, up to the mountains which keep watch over it in the background. The valley is only 8 kilometers long and true to its destination dairying is its chief occupation. Geographically the valley belongs to the community of Sigriswil, but the villages of Oberhofen and Beatenberg also have pasture rights. Up to 400 head of cattle find excellent grazing in these parts where the altitude has a pleasant average of 4,100 feet a/s.

Big events in the Justistal are the Alpaufzug, or departure of the herds for the summer pastures, early in June, and the Alpabfahrt, at the end of September. This descent to the winter homes is preceded by the all-important "Kästeilet", the dividing of the cheese that has been made during the season.

On a given day, after grazing of the pastures has been completed, the superintendent of this dairying district summons all owners of cattle on pasture to attend this function. "Kästeilet" has for many centuries been a festive day. It starts soon after dawn, when entire families set out - according to their affluence - with wooden crates, handcarts and horse-drawn vehicles for the far end of the valley. The Beatenberg farmers have the most tedious journey for in order to reach the Justistal cheese cellars they must proceed over a narrow trail which winds around the Niederhorn.

Throughout the summer all the cheeses made in the different alpine huts are brought to the cheese cellars at the "Speicherberg". A cow produces about 800 litres of milk (1 litre - 1 3/4 pint) during an alpine summer and from this about 70 kilograms of cheese are made (1 kilo - 2 1/5 lbs.). In order to have a 100% correct distribution of cheese, a careful daily account is kept of the milk obtained from each cow. The chief dairyman has charge of these calculations and is admittedly an expert at it. Thus, when the peasants arrive on Kästeilet day for their cheese, each can ascertain for himself to how much he will be entitled. The more cows he owns, the more cheese he will receive.

Before the dividing ceremony starts the cheeses, weighing approximately 12-15 kilos, are passed in chain fashion from the cellars to improvised long tables. Here they are neatly arranged in piles of five or six, with a generous portion of butter or cottage cheese as a crowning feature. When all this preparatory work is done, the head dairyman begins to draw small wooden tags from a bag, each bearing the name of a farmer belonging to the Justistal pastoral cooperation. Carefully the tags are placed on different piles of cheeses and presently starts the happy hunt of ownership. However, many small farmers are only entitled to a half or even a quarter of one pile. More calculations are necessary and in such instances the superintendent of the Justistal pastures stands by to settle any possible disputes.

After the cheeses have been loaded on crates, carts and wagons the people enjoy a friendly reunion near the cheese cellars. Refreshments, singing, yodeling, accordion playing, and even a wrestling match or two, are welcome diversions. Finally, in the middle of the afternoon, the entire company starts on its happy homeward march. Immediately behind follow the herds of cattle, with each leading cow proudly wearing a bouquet of flowers on her head.

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SUNDRY NEWS FROM SWITZERLAND.

Pestalozzi Jubilee in 1946. After the collapse of European culture, there is a deep craving for the revival of human rights and social justice. The 200th anniversary of Henri Pestalozzi's birthday, which will be celebrated on the 12th January, 1946, will be an occasion to recall the outstanding work of this great Swiss educationalist and humanitarian, who was the founder of modern principles of education. An international Congress of men who have dedicated themselves to the study of Pestalozzi's work, and of educationalists from all countries, will take place in Switzerland. Great interest in this event is already being displayed in educational circles in the United States, the British Empire, China, and on the European Continent.

Student Exchange with Anglo-Saxon Countries. Right after VE Day efforts were started to work out exchanges of university students between the United States and Switzerland as well as between Great Britain and Switzerland. An agreement has been made with Britain according to which young Swiss friends of England are offered an opportunity to study in England.

American Students in Switzerland. A plan is under consideration to enable students in the American Forces, who are still in Europe, to study in Switzerland. Some 150 American doctors and nurses will visit Swiss hospitals, sanitoriums and health resorts for one or two weeks. Further, special academy courses, lasting 1-3 months, will be arranged for about 2,500 American students. The Swiss Universities have been approached with similar requests by other countries.

Swiss Model Schools for Germany. It is planned to open in South Germany a number of Swiss model schools and colleges, staffed with Swiss teachers. The plan is supported by the authorities of the French Forces of occupation. To begin with only carefully selected German children and young people will be admitted to these schools. The immediate object is to create exemplary education centres.

Exhibition of Swiss Books in Britain and of British Books in Switzerland. Commencing next Spring it is planned to organise an exhibition of Swiss books in London, which will go to all the English and Scottish University towns. Later on a similar exhibition of British books will be organised to tour the bigger Swiss towns.

Swiss Contributions to the International Red Cross. During the war the Swiss Government has granted to the Committee of the International Red Cross at Geneva, approximately NZ £7,250,000, while other sources in Switzerland have furnished another NZ £8,000,000.

Hospitalisation in Switzerland of war victims suffering from tuberculosis. The Swiss radio on 11th September announced that Switzerland considers it her duty to come to the aid of foreign war victims suffering from tuberculosis, by offering free treatment in her many well-equipped sanitoriums. The organisation "Swiss Aid for War Victims" which has recently been backed by the Swiss Government with 7½ million £NZ, and is at present raising a similar amount by private collections in Switzerland, is financing these activities. So far, 104 French and 58 Dutch patients are receiving treatment under this scheme, at Arosa, Davos, Montana and Leysin. Only patients with a good chance of recovery are selected, and the period of treatment is 2 years.

Opening in London of a "Swiss Office for the Development of Trade". Arrangements are almost completed for the opening of a London branch of the "Swiss Office for the Development of Trade" at Zurich and Lausanne, to foster trade between Switzerland and the British Empire.