

To all members

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and referendum, that goes back to the old spirit of the Landsgemeinde.

Each of the five Landsgemeinden has its own special character. The most picturesque is the Obwalden assembly on the castle hill above Sarnen. The most heated is that of Nidwalden. In Glarus, the ring and the magnificent mountain background are most impressive. In Appenzell, where men love a good song and a good joke, we might almost call proceedings jolliest, while in Appenzell Outer Rhodes they are most solemn. In this canton an old Germanic folk-custom has remained alive. According to the old principle that it is the armed man who is the free man, the citizens appear at the assembly armed with dagger or bayonet, and the unarmed intruder is soon shouted into the outer pale of the onlookers. Thus weapons of war have here taken on a symbolic meaning, and it would be well for the world if all weapons could be thus ennobled by the union of might and right.

That is the thought that comes into my mind when I look at my Landsgemeinde dagger, on which some old armourer has engraved the Roman motto "suum cuique." For our fighting ancestors this may have been a token of defiance, but in our day it has become the watchword of justice. It is a saying which unites Christianity and democracy. The Christian respect of the person and the foundation of human laws on the divine commandments find expression in the solemnity with which Catholic Unterwalden intones the "Veni creator spiritus" while Protestant Appenzell Outer Rhodes is opening its Landsgemeinde with a hymn to God. This deep faith in their community under the fatherhood of God is not only the root, it is also a guarantee of all democracy, and without this political form of the community, no freedom, no justice and no lasting peace can be imagined or achieved among men and nations.

SWITZERLAND AND THE ENGLISH-SPEAKING NATIONS

When the Pilgrim Fathers set out for the New World in the seventeenth century, they took with them the Geneva Bible; the Mayflower Pact of 1620 is imbued with the spirit of Calvinism. The University of Harvard was modelled on Calvin's Academy in Geneva. Similarly, the Declaration of Faith promulgated in Geneva in 1537 inspired not only the National League and Covenant for the defence of religion drawn up by the Scots in 1638 and the Solemn League and Covenant of 1643, but also the covenants of the New England pioneers.

When President Wilson chose Geneva as the seat of the League of Nations in 1919, his decision was doubtless influenced by the remembrance of these historical connections and affinities.

In the nineteenth century, the influence of the United States was, in its turn, felt by Switzer-

land. When, in 1848, the question of a new constitution was raised, Swiss legislators adopted the American bicameral system, the most representative both of the nation as a whole and the Cantons individually. The Swiss Federal Assembly corresponds to the Washington Congress, the National Council to the House of Representatives and the States Council to the Senate. The introduction of this system has brought real and lasting benefits to Switzerland.

In the course of history, England has often taken a political interest in Switzerland and, from Elizabeth to Cromwell, from Castlereagh to Palmerstone, she has in each case intervened or lent her support to help and safeguard the smaller nation's independence. At the time of the War of the Sonderbund, in 1847, when France and Austria wished to bring their armies to bear on Switzerland in a matter of domestic policy, England opposed the attempts of the two great powers.

History also reveals a great number of associations between the English and the Swiss. It is a little known fact, for instance, that Othon de Grandson, a Swiss knight and poet at the court of the Dukes of Savoy, also served under Edward III. Chaucer called him "the flower of French poets" and translated three of his poems into English. Peter II, Duke of Savoy, who was related by marriage to Henri III, spent several years at the English court and later, when he had extended his dominion over a large part of Switzerland, he called upon English military architects to build strongholds and fortresses throughout his newly conquered domains.

(To be continued.)

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