

Jeremias Gotthelf

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SWISS CATHOLIC'S 1ST OF AUGUST SERVICE.

The pretty St. Ann's Church Westminster was packed for the 1st of August Service, the congregation being composed of young and old compatriots from all corners of Switzerland now resident in London.

The church was neatly decorated with red and white flowers and the Papal, British and Swiss Flags. In the Sanctuary Altar Linen recently presented to the church by H.E. the Swiss Minister (who was present at the service with Madame de Torrenté) was used for the first time on the Altar.

The Celebrant of the Mass was the Rev. Fr. G. Zanetti, M.H.B., whilst the Chaplain, Rev. Fr. Lanfranchi, conducted the augmented choir who sang the Sacre Coeur Mass by Gounod. For the first time too the newly installed Swiss made Organ Blower was used, this being the start of the Organ renovation now in progress.

In his sermon the preacher reminded the worshippers of the many graces and blessings our country has been granted during its long existence and implored all to follow the guiding line of our forefathers who in the name of the Almighty founded the Confederation in 1291 asking for His blessing.

The Chaplain announced that the next Swiss National Service would be held at St. Ann's Church on Sunday, September 19th "Bettag". He also revealed that a generous Swiss has promised to provide a statue of our Swiss National Saint, Niklaus von Flueh, for which he has already a suitable position reserved.

J.B.

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The Swiss Writers Society has recently been celebrating at Lützelflüh the memory of one of the foremost Swiss authors Albert Bitzius, who died a hundred years ago, having depicted, under the pseudonym of Jeremias Gotthelf, the life and work of his local peasant community in the Emmenthal.

His stories proclaim with rare felicity the virtues of a small but heroic people who went doggedly on their way undiminished by the contending forces of Burgundy, Milan and the Holy Roman Empire.

He was a pastor as well as a novelist, and as such a subscriber to the ideas of the Great Swiss humanist Pestalozzi.

"The Times" (Literary Supplement, June, 11th) wrote:

"A frontiersman standing on the boundary between conservative and liberal ideas, Gotthelf has a special appositeness to our own time; his influence, moreover, can be perceived in stories of village life in more than one literature. Like Tolstoy, or Fritz Reuter, or Bernanos, he possessed the gift of making the simplicity of country folk the yardstick of a larger humanity; and if there has been some revival of his reputation in the past few years it is largely because the uneasiness of the age requires of contemporary writers an attitude not unlike that by which Gotthelf tried to protect his own civilization against the disintegrating influences of the revolution of 1848.

It was right, therefore, that the Lützelflüh celebrations should recall the peculiarly international character of Switzerland. They were carried on in the four languages of the country — German, French, Italian and Romansch. Among the speakers Professor Muschg was especially successful in showing how Gotthelf's lifelong struggle against the coarsening encroachment of nineteenth-century materialism reflected that sane refusal of the seductions of power which has been advocated by writers as different as Burckhardt and Lord Acton. Not that Gotthelf ought to be dismissed as a kind of peasant prophet, turning his back deliberately upon the responsibilities of an uncongenial world. He is didactic, certainly; his art was nothing if not engaged. But a warm simplicity protects him from the stiffness of the teacher, and it is unlikely that new readers, brought to his work by the attention paid him in his centenary year, will be ungrateful for the dialectical movement in taste which is slowly bringing his work back into circulation again."

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