

August 1st, the Swiss National Day

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AUGUST 1st, THE SWISS NATIONAL DAY

1291 - 1955

When the tumult of the day has died down, when the hurrying footsteps of those returning from work are not heard anymore, when the little children are safely put away in their cots, when father turns to the newspaper, lights his pipe or cigarette and settles himself down in his chair to read of happenings outside his immediate circle, when mother takes up her darning needle and when, through the wide open windows the preciously cool air of the summer evening streams into the room and all is peace and quietude, when, in the words of that wonderful song: "Die Dämmerung sinkt auf's Schweizerland" then, if it be the 1st of August, all of a sudden, bells are heard all over the country, joyous bells, thankful bells, little ones and big, deep-voiced ones, all sending out one momentous message to the people: **SWITZERLAND AGAIN CELEBRATES ITS INDEPENDENCE!**

Gladness and gratitude fill the hearts of every right thinking man and woman. Gladness that once again Switzerland has been allowed to live a year of peace, gratitude that once again the Swiss People may celebrate that precious gift which surpasses everything else in importance, that **FREEDOM**.

Bon-fires are lit on the hills and mountains signalling one to the other that "all is well", songs are sung in the towns and villages testifying to the same message, speeches are made from endless platforms to thank Providence and to exhort the listeners to continue living lives worthy of **FREEMEN** and **FREEWOMEN**.

We Swiss living abroad, separated from our homeland by land and sea, send our innermost thoughts across on that evening, across to our beloved country, across to the hills and dales, the eternal mountains and in those moments, when we celebrate in close union of spirit with our kinsmen at home, we too feel that deep gratitude that holy stir in our hearts, we too testify with our kinsmen and rejoice that once again "all is well".

We are proud to signal, not only to each other, but to the world at large, that "all is well" in Switzerland. We know very well that there is a great deal happening also in Switzerland, to which that signal could not be applied, but when, on the 1st of August we Swiss celebrate our **INDEPENDENCE**, we say "all is well", and we signal it to those abroad, not in a spirit of arrogance, of superiority, but in a spirit of deep gratitude, and in the hope that others, who, in an effort to cure the ills that beset their people, chase after all sorts of chimerical expedients, might take stock of themselves and their thoughts, and turn, for a moment to the contemplation of what has been achieved in Switzerland and what is being held fast there.

It has been stated with a great show of reason that the abolition of patriotism must necessarily precede any serious attempt to bring the Nations of the world together in a closer union. It all depends what one understands by the term "patriotism". If it means the love one bears to one's own country to

the exclusion of kindly consideration for any other, if it means that one's own country must be considered right in every case, that one's own country must come first in every instance, that one must be imbued with the notion that no other country can possibly come near it in any way, that no other country's people can possibly be anywhere so good and excellent as one's own countrymen and women, then I agree to the necessity of abolishing Patriotism.

If on the other hand, Patriotism means the natural love any living man and woman has for his or her country of origin, the same as the love that a Bernese quite naturally feels for his home town, but which does not prevent him for feeling a deep love also for any other canton and equally so, even more perhaps, for the country of Switzerland, then I disagree.

Patriotism which enables one to extend one's love for one's nearest home to the larger home without and from that to the still larger home which is represented by the country of one's birth, and from that, it would follow quite naturally, to the still larger home represented, say, by the Continent of one's birth, and, still extending, to the whole Earth, is a fine thing and to be encouraged.

And, I think and hope, in that respect, we Swiss can be an example to others. We can show other Nationals that although we are Swiss first and foremost, we are also good Europeans and good "Worlders", if I may coin that name.

When we come to look into the history of the Swiss Confederation, as we know it today, we shall see that it has grown up from very small beginnings, in precisely the same way, as the World-Confederation will grow up one day. From a beginning of three small cantons in 1291, it embraces to-day 24 cantons most of them, as individual cantons, larger than any of the three first ones.

This progress from the smaller to the larger unit has been slow, has necessitated a number of wars, all sorts of "international" clashes, religious strife, economic wars, congresses and conferences in great numbers and of the most varied composition, but, finally and under the pressure of necessity as much as because the individual really wanted it, the **FUSION** has come about, gradually, painfully at times, joyously in other instances.

Tariff wars, quotas I believe, and other trade hampering devices, all have been used at one time or another during the growth of this Switzerland, this Swiss League of Nations, until today Switzerland has **ONE COUNTRY — ONE CONSTITUTION — ONE DESTINY** — which constitutes **PATRIOTISM**.

In other words, the growth of the small units into a larger **WHOLE** has not done away with patriotism, but, on the contrary, made patriotism possible, in a loftier form, in a form which in its interpretation means much more to the welfare of the individual Swiss than did the old form of patriotism embracing only the smaller unit.

"**ALL IS WELL**" signal the celebrations in

Switzerland on the 1st of August, 1955, because the difficulties of the time through which we, in common with the whole world, are passing, and which are, I believe, emerges fairly clearly from the above, but the travail of the world struggling towards the greater FUSION of its individual units, are difficulties which, although they beset our people at home directly and impose extremely heavy sacrifices upon them, are as nothing, compared to the all important fact that our Switzerland, that lovely, beautiful country of ours, is SAFE and INDEPENDENT.

Therefore when we Swiss celebrate the 1st of August let us be aware of the deep significance attached to that UNITY and INDEPENDENCE which we celebrate. Let us take renewed hope that one day it may be possible to celebrate this festival of achieved independence on a much larger scale. Let us hope that the world at large will finally realise that salvation will come only when the various units come together, that improvement will be possible only when the various forms of warfare in which the different countries are engaging today, have ceased and when in their stead there is PEACE and GOODWILL, UNITY and INDEPENDENCE.

We all have learnt from the lips of men like Sir Winston Churchill and other qualified to form an opinion on such matters that FEAR is the greatest stumbling block to disarmament and to the efforts that are being made to abolish trade barriers, in other words, to the bringing together of the Nations into one harmonious, and therefore independent whole.

May not they look at the history of Switzerland too, they that FEAR? Swiss history will teach them of fears that brought about wars and other distur-

bances throughout the growth of the Swiss Confederation. At the same time the Switzerland we know today, will teach them, how utterly unfounded those fears were, how infinitely better off the various formerly individually independent members of the Swiss Confederation are today, now that their former individuality has been merged into the greater sovereignty embracing them all.

"ALL IS WELL!" Let us pray that this signal may flash next year not only from the eternal mountains of our beloved country, but from all the beacons right throughout the whole world.

And meanwhile, on the evening of August 1st, 1955, let us send our affectionate thoughts across to our dear homeland, commune with our people and celebrate with them, and let us thank GOD and invoke his further blessing on the land of our fathers.

HEIL DIR HELVETIA, VIVE LA SUISSE, EL VIVA SVIZZERA!

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