

## The Swiss in America

### PEOPLE FROM THE EARLY REPUBLIC OF SWITZERLAND BECOME LOYAL AMERICANS.

**B**ECAUSE the German language is spoken by some of the Swiss people of this country, they have been subjected to unwarranted suspicion as being German sympathizers from sources not familiar with the history of Switzerland and the ideals of her people.

There is no taint on the citizenship of the Swiss people of this country. The purity of their patriotism is beyond question. It comes from a source resembling that of the Northlands,—from the pure atmosphere of lofty mountains and the rugged character of pastoral life.

Switzerland also resembles the Northlands in the richness of its historical background. Its legendry is composed largely of accounts of acts of heroism and patriotic devotion, of which William Tell and Arnold Winkelried are examples, which have been incorporated in the universal literature.

The Northman will in time review the history of all countries of the world in searching out the pure elements of Democracy and their application to government but Switzerland will be considered in greater detail because it possesses unusual interest to Americans. It is one of the most conspicuous examples of conservative democracy among the nations of the earth and furthermore resembles the Scandinavian countries in being a laboratory of experiment in government, contributing to the instruction of the self-governing peoples under all the various republican forms throughout the world.

The population of Switzerland is divided into four language groups. German is spoken in the northern and central sections, French in the western states, Italian in the south, and Romansch, a dialectic remnant of old Roman, by the Grisons, who constitute a small percentage of the population.

In defiance to great obstacles the Swiss nation has been built slowly but strongly. Situated in the center of the unprecedented upheaval in Europe, Switzerland maintained an irreproachable neutrality, and in the treaties and conventions of which she has been adherent, faith has always been rigidly kept during the period of her existence as a republic, which is more than six centuries. The original 22 cantons, resembling our 13 colonies, were federally united in 1291.

The initiative and referendum are usually linked together but they are not, as is popularly supposed, political Siamese twins. While constitutional referendum is of American development, if not origin, the referendum applied to ordinary legislation is distinctively a Swiss product. The Swiss federation possesses the referendum in obligatory form, that is, taking effect without petition—for all amendments to the constitution; the initiative for constitutional amendments only, on petition of 50,000 voters, and the optional referendum, which takes effect on petition of 30,000 voters, or of eight cantons, applying to the more important acts passed by the national legislature. The Swiss people have played a very important part in the legislation of the country

through these agencies, and so effectively as to be very often referred to as the "third house". Switzerland's experience with these measures covers a long period of continuous activity and a wider field of legislation than that of any other country. To Americans this experience should be of exceptional interest because of the adoption of these agencies in many of the states.

The initiative was first introduced into a number of cantonal constitutions following the revolutionary movement of the thirties, and though at that time regarded by the conservatives as an extremely dangerous innovation, it gained such popular favor that it was incorporated into the constitution of 1848.

The constitution of Switzerland was revised in 1874, and in the years since that date the people have been called to the polls less than fifty times to vote on federal initiative and referendum measures. While cantonal and communal proposals also come before the electorate, the ballot has never been overburdened as has frequently been the case in the United States. The populous canton of Zürich, for instance, the largest number voted upon in one election, including both federal and cantonal proposals, was nine. In 1912 Ohio voted on 42 constitutional amendments, and in 1914, 31 measures appeared on the state ballot of California.

In the United States it is usual to state the number of signatures required for initiative and referendum petitions on a percentage basis, while in Switzerland the number is fixed. The fixed number, however, amounts to a percentage a little more than half the percentage prevalent in this country.

The same methods of collecting signatures prevails in the two countries, and the same complaints are heard with regard to the abuse of persuasion—the use of personal and political pressure. In Switzerland, as well as in this country, canvassers are sometimes employed and paid at a fixed rate for each signature secured. Some cantons, however, require that petitions be kept at the town hall and voters who desire to sign must go there to do so.

It will be readily seen, therefore, that the people of Switzerland have nothing in common with the imperialistic systems and sympathies of the German empire and that those who come to this country are not only democrats at heart, but familiar in a very large degree with our political system, and very naturally become active and efficient citizens.

### AMERICA FOR HUMANITY.

By Rabbi David Levine.

**I**N A FIT of frenzied patriotism the Rev. Mr. Kramer exclaims from his pulpit: "I am an American, a Fourth of July American. My creed is America for Americans."

Too soon have some forgotten how Mark Twain exposed the absurdity of this sentiment. Were not the very discoverers of America foreigners? Does not the composition of its citizenship justify the definition that an American is a foreigner who has sworn allegiance to the Stars and Stripes, or the descendant of such a foreigner?

"American for Americans!"—a creed

well fitted to check our development and to thrust us into suicidal isolation. A cry arose in the Orient—"China for the Chinese!"—and lo, the great yellow giant writhed under the heels of his triumphant foes! A cry arose in the occident—"Spain for the Spaniards!"—and now none so poor to do her homage.

Moreover, is not the Rev. Mr. Kramer's Americanism porcine in the superlative degree? Is he prepared to maintain that the Jew of Nazareth would have countenanced such a doctrine? Since when, then, is it the function of the Christian ministry to distill into Christian ears and Christian hearts the deadly suppuration of selfishness?

A man that is guilty of such an utterance as the Rev. Mr. Kramer's would shut the door of America in the face of a John T. Sullivan and boycott the steamship company that brought him from Ireland.

Let us who are born Americans and our fellow citizens from other shores ever remember that at the gateway of our beloved country stands the genius of America gazing o'er the seas, offering freedom and light to myriads groaning in the bondage of ill-requited toil or groping in the valley of the shadow of death.

Let us remember that America is the home of the brave and that "the bravest are the tenderest."

Silenced be every cry that turns us from the golden path of America's golden destiny! Let our deathless slogan be—"America for humanity!"

### SPORT AND CITIZENSHIP

**H**E WHO SAID: "Let me but write a nation's songs and I care not who writes its laws" had an ear close to the heartbeats of humanity. He knew that sentiment is stronger than law and that the one is swayed by the charm of music to which the other is deaf.

A nation's songs are indicative of its civilization. What is true of song is also true of sport and recreation, for of these is the music and from these are the songs largely composed. Therefore, from the sports of a people may be told very accurately the degree of their enterprise, culture and refinement, together with their principal traits of character.

Comparisons are ever odious. It is only necessary to note that the nations of the world which have little of sport and recreation have little of song and are low in the scale of civilization. The nations with free and fulsome sports, drawing recreation from the pure air and golden sunshine, are the nations which progress toward higher levels and greater things. Man without wholesome amusement and pastime becomes old and sodden before his time. The man who indulges in ardent, buoyant, bold and courageous diversions is young after his allotted years of three score and ten have been run.

Clean, healthy sports and athletics are to be encouraged and fostered. The ski glide and the deer trail may be too strenuous for the average business man, but there are many milder forms of exhilarating sports and a few—a very few—more ardent—lion, elephant and rhinoceros hunting—but these are only for the ultra-energetic, men of the strength and intrepidity of the Roosevelt type. There are scores of healthful sports and amusements of milder form in which may be found the secret of perennial youth.

Encourage the young people in these sports—the girls as well as the boys.