

A new musuem of swiss national costume

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A NEW MUSEUM OF SWISS NATIONAL COSTUME.

(This interesting article is reproduced from 30th August issue of the "Lady" by courtesy of the Editor.)

Lovers of fine needlework and embroidery, who are going to Lucerne this year, will enjoy a visit to the country mansion of Utenberg which has recently been opened to the public. The house, 300 years old, and of considerable charm, contains a rich collection of folk-costumes, specimens of which have been gathered from all the cantons of Switzerland. Admission, from 9 to 12 a.m. and 2 to 6 p.m., between May and September, and at other times by appointment, costs 1 franc (1s. 8d.).

Utenberg is easily reached from Lucerne by walking along the chestnut-shaded avenue beside the lake as far as the trolley-bus terminus and then catching the funicular (return fare, 1 fr. 50 = 2s. 6d.) to Dietschberg, about half an hour from the town centre.

Here are 97 life-sized wax figures, mostly of exceptionally pretty girls in graceful poses, who show off the costumes to great advantage, and in these the infinite variety of colour, material, embroidery stitches, pleating and smocking, within the apparently restricted basic pattern of blouse, skirt and apron, will entrance anyone who appreciates good needlework.

Not only each canton, but also each town or village, has its own traditional dress for working, for Sundays, for festivals and for weddings. It becomes more elaborate and lavishly embroidered with silks, jewels and beads with the importance of the occasion. By their costume it is possible to recognise where any Swiss man or woman comes from.

In one district, young girls wear no hat, but a heavy jewelled comb, thrust sideways through their back hair. Only when married are they allowed to carry proudly the stiffly-starched, fan-shaped, white lace head-dress, which conceals an erection of jewels, mounted on fine gold wire.

In another canton, unmarried girls wear the "Schäppeli," which looks like a deep golden crown and consists of many-coloured jewels, beads, tiny artificial flowers and gold wire mounted on a stiff foundation. Sometimes the head-dresses are of black lace — one particularly beautiful specimen being made of fine horsehair, so that although very delicate in appearance, it stands stiffly erect even in wet weather.

In Montreux, a wine-growing district, the girls wear, not lace head-dresses, but large straw hats, whose crowns are made in the shape of inverted wine-glasses, stems uppermost. One wedding-dress from the Ticino includes a head-dress consisting of 44 long golden hairpins, each of a different design. These, stuck fanwise in the hair, make a brilliant sparkling halo round the face of the radiant little Swiss bride.

Sometimes, as in Lucerne, lace-mittens, invariably a part of the formal dresses, are an indication of the married state, according to whether they are black or white.

The blouses, mostly of white linen of varying weights, have their sleeves pleated, smocked and goffered in every conceivable way. One even has deep, stiff, box-pleats pressed horizontally, making the sleeves resemble white concertinas.

Embroidered bodices, darted to fit closely to the figure; skirts gathered or so finely knife-pleated as to

be works of art in themselves; and aprons of every material from delicate white lace to heavy, richly coloured brocade are bewildering in their variety.

The figures stand in glass-cases, whose backs are covered with further examples of peasant handwork. Shawls, bright belts embroidered with flowers in petit-point, lace handkerchiefs, children's bonnets and embroidered ribbons (a particularly fine collection from Basle, where ribbon-making is a local industry), can be studied in detail.

The charming Swiss guide, who can explain her treasures to you in any of half-a-dozen languages, assured me that nearly all these traditional costumes are still in regular use all over Switzerland. They are very valuable and handed down from one generation to another. One of them, a specially elaborate example of a wedding-costume cost 700 francs (nearly £60) to acquire.

Another, which is now worn in Austria by people who originally emigrated from the Valais in Switzerland, has not changed its style in the slightest detail ever since 1292, although its component parts have been replaced as necessary in the course of the centuries.

The costumes have been collected over a period of 40 years by Madame Panchaud de Bottens from whom they were bought last year, to be enjoyed by the public.

This old lady's toys are also on show. Even her dolls were dressed in accurate copies of peasant costumes. So it is obvious that her love of these beautiful clothes started when she was still a child and has continued ever since.

Iva Howard.

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