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February evening when I stepped out of my train and found myself in the town which was destined to be my home for the last four years before the storm broke over Europe. Now, St. Gallen is looked on by some people in Switzerland as a rather "stodgy" little place poked away in a corner of East Switzerland. But deep, crisp snow lay on the ground, the gate-posts had their high fantastic white caps on them, the tree-branches hung heavily down to the ground with their snowy load, and from the Rosenberg the white roofs seemed to snuggle closely around the twin towers of the old Stiftskirche. Down the steep streets youngsters in their warm clothes, the lads with their stockings pulled high above their knees, tobogganed daringly and probably in defiance of a Polizeiverbot! I smelt the "wuerzige" aroma of a "Stumpfen" or a "Brissago" as a good citizen, with his black fur cap, passed by, and from the deep valley toned the sound of countless church bells, for it was "Sonnabend".

And so one's love for Switzerland comes from a whole series of impressions, some of them small and almost undefinable, but all of them contributing to a feeling of homeliness and friendliness and varied beauty. The variety of Switzerland is, in fact, one of the greatest charms of the land. Who can imagine a greater difference than that between a mountain slope which we seem to know so well on our skiing trips in the winter, and the same slope in early spring, gay with mountain flowers and watered by a hundred little streams, dashing down from the melting snow-fields above? It is as though a magic wand had transformed everything.

Or who could think that the villages of the Tessin, with their high, picturesquely dilapidated stone houses, the little hamlets of the Ober-Wallis, the timbered houses of the Thurgau, and the low, spreading, many-windowed Bauernhoeefe of Appenzellerland, all belonged to the same tiny country? The same differences are to be found in the types of people to be seen; yet in every corner of Switzerland there is the same intense consciousness of being first and foremost Swiss. And there is everywhere the inner simplicity and kindness which has made Switzerland a name for hospitality and international mercy throughout the world. I do not think for one moment that Switzerland has been for mercenary reasons a haven and refuge through the ages. I think rather that an inborn "Gastfreundlichkeit" has fitted the Swiss, not only for their grateful task of inviting visitors from the whole world to share in the natural beauty of their land, but also for that great work of humanity whose emblem is merely the reversal of the present Swiss flag.

It is my great dream that in a hundred years or perhaps two hundred New Zealand will become another Switzerland. Nature has been as generous to it as to Switzerland. May it be inhabited by a stock which will have the industry to transform every deep mountain valley, every wild tussock plain sweeping up to the mountains, into loveliness as the Swiss people have been able to do. And may New Zealanders remain as kindly and sturdy and liberty-loving as the Swiss people have remained throughout the centuries. I am returning now to Switzerland and I hope that I shall be able to report that that land has suffered little, materially and spiritually, from the conflict that is raging about it. The world could ill bear the loss of all that Switzerland stands for. "

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AN APPEAL :-

It is our intention to prepare Christmas hampers for two unfortunate compatriots who are inmates of Mental hospitals. Swiss reading matter would be very welcome. The Secretary will be pleased to receive parcels of gifts or monetary donations for this purpose, or will on request gladly furnish name and address of the two countrymen.

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