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# HELVETIA

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GROUP NEW ZEALAND OF THE NEW HELVETIC SOCIETY

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## March 21st: NIKOLAUS VON DER FLUE ANNIVERSARY

**Die Tagsatzung von Stans. An extract of the History of the old Swiss Confederation. 1481 A.D.**

TO PUT AN END to the growing irritation, the deputies met at Stanz. Not only did they fail, however, to come to any understanding, but the debates were so violent and the recriminations so bitter that recourse to arms seemed the only possible issue, until the pious hermit, Nicholas von Fluhe, appeared. He had come on the appeal of Heinrich am Grund, a native of Lucerne and now vicar of Stanz—thereby in charge of the two cantons most opposed to one another. Although retired from the world, Von Fluhe—this man who succeeded in soothing disputes which seemed purely political—was not a stranger to managing public affairs, and had formerly borne arms for his country. Although a citizen of Obwalden, his religious character rendered him indifferent to party feeling. Accustomed to think of God and holy things, he was high-minded and of rare firmness. It is not known positively if the pious hermit came personally to Stanz, or remained in his cell at Ranft and charged Am Grund to carry his peace message; but it is certain that his ascendancy led the deputies back to pacific feeling, and disposed them to come to some arrangement.

The irritation was so violent as to paralyse deliberations and all measures conducive to the restoration of harmony. To restore men to right judgment, to consider the confederation as a work of God, to bring liberty to the people of these valleys, to have all momentous questions discussed on the old plan, and to reanimate the first motives which the confederates had obeyed—this was the purpose of Von Fluhe. He sought to make them feel that, whether towns or cantons, they belonged to one family. They should, he thought, be brought to see that if federal fidelity was violated when one member of the confederation broke the laws of alliances, it was not less so when so strict an interpretation was put on the laws that other members of the confederation were deprived of power to provide the necessities of existence, and their development was thereby arrested. Finally, he

reminded them that obedience must be strengthened, not weakened, at an epoch when violence was rife and when intestine war would lead the confederation to ruin.

This basis established, Nicholas von Fluhe made known his propositions. They bore only on essential points, and, in the first place, on the relations between Solothurn and Fribourg with the cantons. His words carried the assembly away. The articles of the Compact of Stanz are not altogether his. His was the moving spirit, but the details were the work of deputies. Those of Zug and Glarus had already made many efforts to maintain peace, and had discussed matters at great length. When concord regarding basic principles was established, an hour sufficed for an understanding on minor points. The legislation concerned all the perpetual allies, present and future, of isolated cantonments, and included the assurance of protection to each canton against all violence, and against any attempt on the part of a fellow state to subvert the pillars of regular government or to promote revolt; the punishment of authors of such attempts; the prohibition of gatherings of the people, secret meetings, and unauthorised petitions; the keeping of subjects in obedience; the sharing among the combatants of booty taken in war, and the equal sharing of conquests among the states—such were the things decided on in the Stanz Compact. The preceding decrees were confirmed.

Complete independence was assured to the cantons in the management of their interior affairs. Plots against Lucerne and the incursions of disorderly bands who, setting out from their small cantons, had lately spread alarm in western Switzerland, doubtless contributed to the introductions of these guarantees into the federal right. The consolidation of constituted powers against assemblies and illegal popular gatherings showed the hand of men accustomed to take the helm of affairs. By them was accomplished that maintenance of public order which the emperors had sought in vain for over a century to introduce, and which was only realised under Maximilian (1495).

—Extract from THE HISTORIANS HISTORY OF THE WORLD