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CULTURAL LIFE.

By HANS EHINGER.

To march separately and to fight in close formation was an old and proved tactical guiding principle of the ancient Confederates, who were feared as well as respected for their fighting qualities. It originated in the Primitive Cantons all around the Lake of Lucerne, or rather, to give it its correct name, the Lake of the Four Cantons. The Cantonal Governments of this region would appear to have recalled this principle, not from any warlike standpoint, but from that of cultural activities. The High Authorities in the Cantons of Lucerne, Uri, Schwyz, Obwalden, Nidwalden and Zug have for long been fully aware of the various prizes and credits for the promotion of Art which have been granted in the bigger and richer Cantons, either as yearly subsidies or at longer intervals. Taken separately, the old Cantons do not possess the requisite means to attempt anything of this kind, and yet they feel it to be their duty to undertake some similar activities within their own sphere. For, here in Switzerland, culture is fortunately not the prerogative of big cities, and is to be found blooming in many an out-of-the-way spot, favoured by artists because of the peace and quiet which prevails there.

Anyway, the afore-mentioned Cantons did not remain satisfied with fine words, but proceeded to energetic action. Representatives of the Governments met in Lucerne, which is really looked upon as being the capital of Inner Switzerland, and there they proceeded to found the "Cultural Foundation of Inner Switzerland". The Director for Education of the Canton of Lucerne, Dr. G. Egli, was elected chairman of the Board, which consists of representatives of the Government of each Canton which is taking part in this scheme, most of these being Directors of Education also. They were all aflame with the desire to accomplish something really worth-while, with their combined efforts. Unfortunately, the means at their disposal being very modest, their plans had to be brought down to modest dimensions. It was finally decided that literature and science had the greatest need for help. This being the case, it was agreed to establish a prize for literature and one for culture, amounting respectively to 1,000 and 2,000 francs, and in addition to these, a special large prize for literature and one for culture amounting to 3,000 francs at least. These two latter prizes are to be awarded on alternate years and they are to serve not as a subsidy, but as a recognition of some outstanding work: this, to my mind, is especially important. Should there be no suitable candidates for this award, then the money can be used for the purchase of books of a "belle-lettres" or scientific character.

Do I hear you ask — And what about music and the fine arts? As regards music, it appears that the number of candidates for special recognition is very small in this particular region of Switzerland. It is true that there are a few composers living around the Lake of the Four Cantons, but hardly any of them have made a name for themselves outside their local orbit; most of them are church organists, choirmasters and teachers for the greater part of their time. And that is no doubt the reason why in the announcement regarding the founding of this new cultural Foundation, there is no mention made of music.

The situation is quite different in respect of both

painting and sculpture, both of which play an important rôle in that part of the country and most certainly deserve to figure among those cultural activities which the Foundation aims at encouraging. The report recognises this fact and expresses regret that it is impossible to include the fine arts in its programme. The reason for this is due primarily to the fact that the Foundation has only very limited means at its disposal and, under no circumstances, must these be split up into small sums. It is pointed out, however, that whereas both artists and sculptors — fortunately for them — are able to obtain quite a lot of commissions in connection with the construction of private and public buildings, nothing of this kind is available to writers and scientists. And that is why the latter should be helped first of all.

And, anyway — is it not better to rejoice that such a good scheme has been undertaken in a district which is for the most part rural, than to start finding fault with it immediately? It seems to me that the "Cultural Foundation of Inner Switzerland" should be warmly welcomed as being a fine piece of co-operative work.

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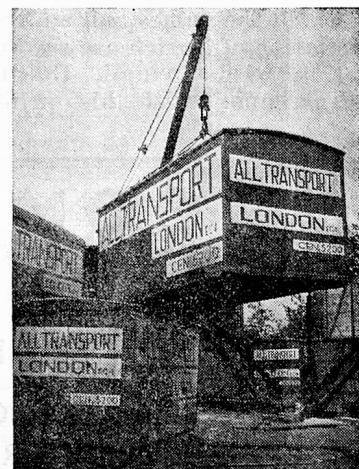
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