

Women's influence in Switzerland

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WOMEN'S INFLUENCE IN SWITZERLAND.**An N.S.H. Lecture.**

Not for the first time the London Group of the Nouvelle Société Helvétique has devoted its last meeting to the position of women in Switzerland. But never has it heard better sense about this important question than from Mademoiselle Alice Briod, joint-director of the Secrétariat des Suisses à l'étranger at Berne. In common with practically everyone in her audience at the Vienna Café the speaker deplored the fact that women still have no right to vote in what otherwise might rightfully be called the most democratic of democratic countries in the world. But Mlle Briod has herself come round to this point of view only these last few years in connection with the struggle for a more understanding treatment of the national status of Swiss women who marry foreigners, a struggle that still continues with the pending revision of the law on Swiss citizenship. The main battle has been won in obtaining the consent of both chambers to the principle of an option to retain Swiss citizenship despite the marriage to foreigners. But it required years of effort to which the N.S.H. at home, the Secrétariat des suisses à l'étranger, the Swiss colonies abroad and other organisations in the home country have contributed so much. And the conditions of exercising the option are still subject to acute differences in Parliament. If women already had the vote in Switzerland, Mlle Briod reflected, the struggle might have been very much less strenuous.

This conversion to the support of women's suffrage illustrates clearly the reason why Swiss women have so far not shown as keen an interest in this question as those of other countries, as was pointed out by one speaker in the lively discussion that followed the lecture. Apart from the question of the vote Swiss women have relatively little to complain of regarding their equal rights with men in civil law, as well as regarding the practical matters of the community in which they are particularly concerned, such as housing, health and education. These equal rights in the eyes of the law have been established in Switzerland a generation ago that knew nothing of the vote for women, and these practical matters have found satisfactory solutions that could hardly have been bettered on a basis of universal suffrage. Women, according to the lecturer, have evidently found other ways and means to influence the course of things, ways and means with which many of them seem still quite

satisfied. Only when the men prove unreasonable or obstinate in resisting reforms in accordance with changing conditions and opinions, such as regarding the possibility of retaining Swiss citizenship when marrying a foreigner, Swiss women manifest more interest in the question of the vote. It might subside again after a generous revision of the law of citizenship, but the lecturer had her audience largely if not entirely on her side in considering that sooner or later the suffrage question also must be solved in accordance with the trend and demands of modern life.

Dr. E.

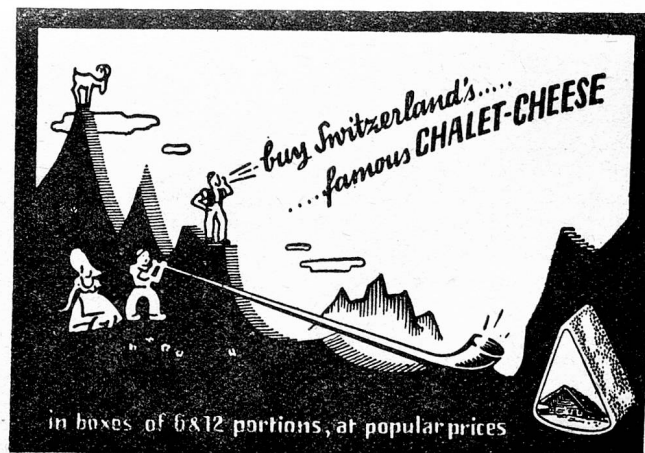
CORRECTION.

In the report about the Service of Installation of Pfarrer H. Spörri, published in our last issue (page 6468) a printer's mistake has occurred, on the last line but one, it should read: "diversity may well exist in unity, which in its *turn* (not terms) etc.

OUR NEXT ISSUE.

Our next issue will be published on Friday, July 11th, 1952.

We take this opportunity of thanking the following subscribers for their kind and most helpful donations over and above their subscription: P. Lequint, Mrs. O. A. Stanton, F. Bassi, H. Tanner, J. Froehlicher.



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