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"SCIENCE IN SWITZERLAND"

A New American Book by

James Murray Luck

The first questions one may ask is "What can an American know about Switzerland?" Why does he bother?" In this instance, there is no reason to doubt the author's knowledge, for he spent two years as Science Attaché at the American Embassy in Berne (1962-1964), and returned several times afterwards. He made a report to the United States Government on the organisation of science in Switzerland, but, as he says himself, he was carried away by the subject of his assignment and was well on the way to writing a book before he realised what was happening. J. M. Luck is Professor Emeritus of Biochemistry at Stanford University, California. He is the author of "The War on Malnutrition and Poverty" and of over 200 papers in the field of biochemistry. He has served in an editorial capacity on several biochemical journals, and is now Editor-in-Chief of "Annual Reviews". Dr. Luck has been a member of a number of scientific missions.

As one whose scientific knowledge is perfunctory and to whom many aspects of the subject are mystifying, I could hardly presume to judge the value of Dr. Luck's book, as far as science as such is concerned. But having read it, I can unhesitatingly state that it is most interesting and revealing for the layman, and the wealth of information contained in the book is remarkable.

The first part deals with the Swiss educational system, its advantages and shortcomings, its problems, all as regards preparation for science. The medical and allied professions are given special mention, first at the middle school level, later at universities. It mentions how much money is spent on science education and covers all aspects, including atomic science research. It makes good use of the Labhardt Report. One chapter is devoted to the cantonal universities, another to the ETH, the Federal Institute of Technology. Under training for engineering, the Hummler Commission Study is fully mentioned. Comparative figures with other countries are given whenever possible.

The second part covers the history of science, the Swiss Society of Natural Science, the National Science Foundation, the Swiss Academy of Medical Science, Information Services, Museum Services, even the Swiss National Park and its value to natural science, forestry, meteorology and climatology. A chapter is devoted to the Swiss Earthquake Service and Seismology, one to the Federal Bureau for Weights and Measures and one to the Federal Public Health Service. Infectious diseases, the Swiss Tropical Institute in Basle and the Blood Donor Service of the Swiss Red Cross are dealt with in detail. The chapter on water not only deals with Switzerland's resources, its use in electricity production, but also with its progressive pollution and the steps taken to deal with it. Food, nutrition and agriculture also get a chapter. Applied research, space science and nuclear science are reviewed. The last few chapters deal with support of research and development, substantive research, Switzerland and International Science and, finally, Evolution of a Science Policy.

The text is interspersed with numerous tables and lists, and the appendixes refer to cancer research, the Zermatt epidemic of typhoid fever and smallpox precaution.

In his foreword, Prof Alexander von Muralt, President of the Swiss National Research Council, said that he read Murray Luck's book "with the same fascination one

experiences in looking through a picture book on Switzerland in which a master of photography exposes well-known sites seen from a different angle, and unknown corners of the country in such a way that one would like to go there. In reading through Luck's book, one becomes aware of 'bridges' that are missing, of 'tortuous' roads which could be improved, and of 'acres of land' which are badly in need of irrigation. It is a unique and valuable mirror for us and should stimulate much further improvement in our country."

It is not for me to agree or disagree with this statement, but where I can wholeheartedly support Prof. von Muralt is that I, a non-scientist, have read the 400 pages with equal fascination. Nothing of the often quoted Switzerland as playground for tourists, of its cows, watches, chocolate, cheese and yodelling. It is an account based on vast and thorough knowledge of Switzerland's intellectual and scientific life. It will greatly enhance the image of the country.

MM

"Science in Switzerland" by James Murray Luck, published by Columbia University Press, New York and London in July 1967, at 72/-.

A NOVEL IDEA FOR A CHRISTMAS PRESENT

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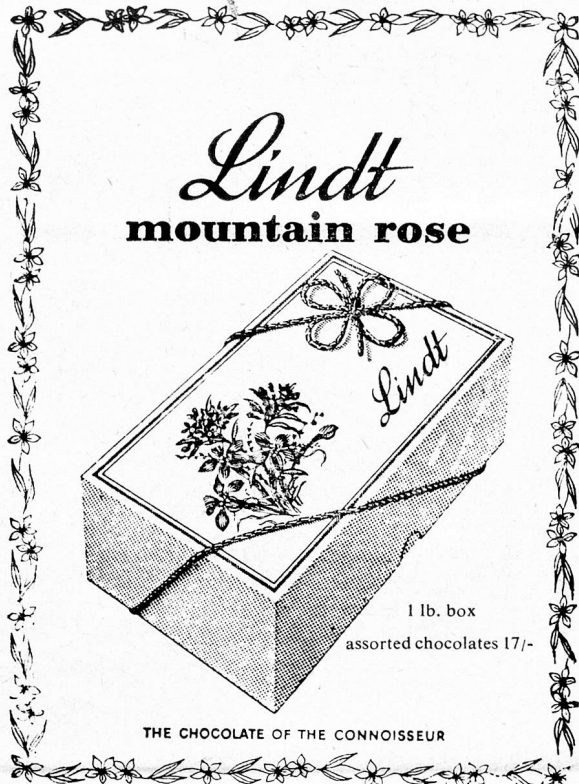
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Incidentally, quite a number of the older Swiss are no longer eligible to join, but would like to support the Fund. A gift membership to a friend or relation would be a way out.

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