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The Canton of Glarus

The author, Prof. Dr. Georg Thuerer, was born at Tamins (Grisons) in 1908. He grew up in the Land of Glarus. His thesis describes «The Culture of the Old Land of Glarus». From 1940 to 1978 he was Ordinary Professor of German Language and Literature, as well as of Swiss History at the Graduate Institute of Economics and Social Sciences in St. Gall. His chief scientific work is the «History of St. Gall» (1953/72). The publication in honour of his 70th birthday, «Erker», comprises «Speeches and Essays on the Culture of Eastern Switzerland» and offers a catalogue of his poetic, historic and civic works for which he was awarded the Culture Prize of the town of St. Gall (1966) and that of Glarus in 1978.

Nature preshapes the State

Amongst the Swiss Cantons, there are a few whose boundaries could almost be recognized on a map in relief. We think of the giant compound of the Valais, of the valley State of Uri or the rocky area of Glarus. The Zurich chronicler Johannes Stumpf depicts this rocky protection admirably «The Land of Glarus is guarded on three sides with terribly impressive, even high and mighty mountains which act as invincible city walls». Only towards the North is there a gateway which could be blocked by a barricade. The self-contained landscape is such that every drop of water which runs off Glarus ground is collected by the river Linth in the valley. The yokes of the passes in the East and the South rest on the watershed, and it is only in the West that the Cantons of Uri (Klausen) and Schwyz (Pragel) reach above the pass height.

Most of the mountains of Glarus (Toedi, Glaernisch, Wiggis and Schilt) consist of limestone. In the East, we find the red sernifit and in the North some conglomerate rock. The bottom of the valley rises only slightly from the Lake of Walenstadt towards the capital Glarus. Yet the smallest village

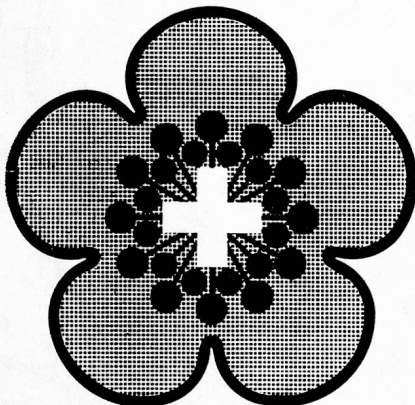
right at the back of the main valley, Linthal, lies only 682 m above sea-level; the Toedi (3620 m) rises to nearly 3000 meters behind it. The impressive rockfaces rising steeply from the bottom of the valley give the landscape a majestic character. Along the Linth, the villages are strung like pearls on a rope. There are only two inhabited side-valleys, the Sernf – or Small Valley to the East and the Kloental to the West, as well as the settlements on the two terraces, the holiday and sports resort of Braunwald (South) and the Kerenzerberg (North).

Of the People and its Language

The people of Glarus are small in number. In 1977, its population was estimated at 35 700. Thus it is one of two Cantons – the other is its neighbour Uri – which send more Councillors of State to Berne than National Councillors; two of the former, one only of the latter. The proportion of foreigners with 16% is rather high. This is explained by the fact that a large number of inhabitants work in industry. For over a thousand years, German has been the main language in the Canton. Previously, Rhaeto-Romansh was spoken on the Upper Linth, and many names still remind us of this. The name of Glarus (Clarona) is derived from the Latin *clarus* which, in Romanesque languages, means a light spot in the dark wooded countryside. There is no doubt that the primitive Rhaeto-Romansh population was not expelled, but germanized. This is shown in the fact that there is only one fair-haired, blue-eyed person to a dozen people with dark hair and eyes.

In the language, however, the Alemans who immigrated around the 7th century, prevailed com-

Swiss National Day Fund



1st August 1979

This year, the collection organized by the Swiss National Day Fund will benefit «Woman in the Service of the People». We recommend this lovely badge with St. Gall embroidery, produced almost exclusively by handicapped people.