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In the January "Woman's Observer" we asked readers to tell us what brought them to England and how they found the English way of life. Here are the first two replies we had. We hope that more will follow ...

Aiming to be a world citizen

WHEN a letter from Sophie Forrester was published in January's "Woman's Observer", the reaction from women in the Swiss community was immediate.

Long and interesting letters gave a variety of insights into England as a foreign country, so over the next few months "Woman's Observer" will feature extracts from these letters.

We begin with Mrs Ruth Cole, who wrote from her home in Taunton, Somerset:

"When I, as a country girl, left Switzerland to marry a Londoner, I didn't realise what I had given up - a large family, a super job, a stable country and a great affection for the countryside.

"I thought that my husband and our love could replace all these things, so then came the shock, the cold shower, the vacuum!"

"The situation reminds me always of the edelweiss which has been taken from an alpine rock to a valley garden. It will either adapt

or die. If it adapts to the new climate and environment it will slowly grow new roots, and one day it will bloom with a different kind of flower.

"I had to wait three long years before I could go back home. During this period, Switzerland seemed to grow better and better, richer and richer. And England seemed only to slip from one low into the next.

"I kept brainwashing myself that Switzerland was materialistic, narrow-minded and self-centred. But it didn't do the trick.

"I had been taught by my parents never to give up so I joined the PTA and soon made many friends.

"I joined the local church and offered my help as a Sunday school teacher and organist. It gave me great joy, and the church became like a new family to me.

"I took a job and learnt more about the British character; then when I felt anglicised enough I founded a Swiss group four years

ago. How good it was just to be able to speak in my mother tongue!

"As a young mother I used to feel a failure, guilty that I didn't have the strength and perseverance to teach the children my dialect. Even today, none of my English friends understand why the children are not bilingual.

"But now that they are studying for their O-level German I can often speak high German with them, and they accept it. But I have had to do it gently. We must do everything gently abroad.

"Akos Mohar, a Hungarian, presently living in Germany, wrote the following wonderful words; 'To have a home country is a wonderful feeling. To have several home countries, to be a world citizen, is the next step in the human development.'

"This phrase of wisdom gives me great strength and hope - that at the end of my life I'll be able to say: I had two home-countries. I am a world citizen!"



Ruth Cole

Home became

Next comes another letter from the West Country. This one is from Mrs E. Marie Louise Grout of Whimple, Exeter, Devon:

"I was most interested in your article on Sophie Forrester and welcome your invitation to put pen to paper.

"In all the years I have lived in England I have never met a spoonfed or featherbedded temporary immigrant working for a multinational company.

"My own experience, and that of many of my compatriots, has been quite the opposite, and yet most rewarding and happy.

"Years ago I was the only Swiss secretary working in the English section of the International Publicity Services of the Nestlé Company in Vevey when I was sent to England on an exchange basis as the secretary of the advertising manager of the Nestlé Company in Hayes, Middlesex.

"The idea was to improve my knowledge of English and also to meet English people in their own country. It was a splendid idea.

"The princely sum of £7 was my weekly wage. My lodgings cost me £3.3s D.B. & B, plus the weekly season ticket for the train and the cost of my lunch at the canteen.

"As an introduction to English life I joined the local ramblers' club, which was a cheap and healthy way to discover England and make friends as well.

"A few of us from the office would indulge in the luxury of going to the opera at Covent Garden at one shilling (5 pence) to sit in "the gods", to The Players Theatre at the same price or to

life that a success

the Festival Hall or Albert Hall for concerts.

"Cheap tickets were marvellous value and you met the real enthusiasts. Sometimes, when funds ran low, we would even walk back from the West End all the way to Ealing; it was fun.

"I loved my job, my boss was a very businesslike type and my colleagues were helpful and so kind. In those days I rarely met Swiss people and therefore did not have the temptation to make comparisons.

"From being a temporary immigrant I became British by marriage. They say that the best hoteliers are Swiss and yet my husband became the first English manager of one of the West End's top hotels.

"I must admit that I did not find it easy as a bride to live in the luxury of a hotel of international repute. I felt like a bird in a golden cage. How I hankered for the

freedom of my Swiss mountains; how I longed to have a breath of fresh air, not the polluted air of London town.

"At the time I was not a working wife but gradually I found plenty of interesting things to do.

"One day, out of the blue, my husband announced that he had had enough of the rat race and that we were going to buy our own country house hotel. That is how we came to glorious Devon. From being a lady of leisure I became a hard working wife, but it was marvellous to create some-

thing together.

"As I was Swiss, people expected me to be a first-class hotelière and yet it was my English husband who was a dedicated professional hotelier par excellence and I learnt so much from his experience.

"It was a tremendous success but very hard work. Being in the hotel business is one of the most fascinating experiences of my life. I not only met people but I learnt to live with them, too - staff and guests alike - and I have no regrets."

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Ingredients (for four helpings):

2 x 8oz pkts frozen chopped spinach 400g
½oz margarine 15g
8oz grated Gruyère cheese 200g
Salt and pepper
A good pinch of grated nutmeg
2 egg yolks, beaten
Extra egg yolk and breadcrumbs
for coating
Butter for frying

Method:

Cook the spinach as directed on the packet. Stir over gentle heat until all the water has evaporated. Stir in the margarine, and cool. Mix in the grated cheese and seasonings, and beat in the 2 egg yolks. Chill well, to firm up.

Form into 8-10 cutlet shaped or oval patties. Coat twice with egg yolk and breadcrumbs. Heat the butter, and fry the "cutlets" until golden-brown on each side, or grill with little or no butter under moderate heat, turning once, until lightly browned. Serve at once.

