

The Population of Switzerland

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THE POPULATION OF SWITZERLAND.

There are some books, especially works of a scientific nature, which to the layman appear forbidding at first sight and not likely to provide other than difficult and heavy reading. But once the hard shell, as it were, is broken, the reader finds the contents surprisingly easy of absorption, intensely interesting and worth the effort he has made to overcome his initial reluctance.

A book of this kind is Professor Kurt B. Mayer's study **THE POPULATION OF SWITZERLAND**, issued by the Columbia University Press, New York and published in this country by Geoffrey Cumberlege, Oxford University Press, London E.C.4, price 32/6 net.

Born in Switzerland, Kurt B. Mayer is assistant professor of sociology at Brown University, U.S.A. He has studied at the University of Zurich, the London School of Economics, and Columbia University, from which he received his doctorate.

His book represents a well-written and thoughtful study of the trends and changes in the Swiss population and the factors, historical and economic, that were and still are responsible for them. The study is largely based on statistical data made available by the Swiss authorities. These statistics are among the best and fullest of any nation, making possible an unusually complete and detailed survey.

In the middle ages the population of Switzerland was probably about 650,000 inhabitants. By 1950 the number was 4½ millions and would have been higher but for the effects of mercenary foreign service and oversea emigration. The latter reached its peak in 1880 and was followed by another upswing in the period 1910/20. The largest number of emigrants settled in the U.S.A., (125,000 in 1910) two-thirds in California.

An attempt is made to forecast the future population. On the assumption that the present annual increase of 6.31% will gradually fall, the population in fifty years' time will probably not exceed five millions.

The average birth and death rates are more favourable than the corresponding figures for Great Britain. This is attributed to full employment and the various social and economic measures taken to protect the standard of living.

The drift of agrarian labour to the towns is analyzed. Switzerland being a highly developed industrial country, this urbanisation was inevitable. Machinery and Chemicals account for the largest number of industrial workers, the Hotel and catering industry absorb no more than 5%.

Language and Religion have remained remarkably stable in their relative positions, there having been practically no change within the last few hundred years. The latest figures give the following picture:

Language	Creed	
Germanic 73.9%	Protestant	57.6%
French 20.9%	Roman Catholic	41.1%
Italian 3.9%	Jews	0.5%
Romansh 1.1%	Others	0.8%

The alien population in Switzerland is probably larger relatively than in any other European country. It represents 5.2% of the total population and included, in 1941:

68,622	Germans
24,396	French
96,018	Italians
33,000	Others

We have quoted only a few of the statistical items on which Professor Mayer's extensive study is based. But the book does not consist of statistics alone. The accompanying text presents, with admirable clarity, a reasoned explanation of the causes and effects of each particular problem. The author has contrived to put the mass of material into a readable and absorbing form. It conveys a great object lesson and demonstrates the fact that in spite of — perhaps because of — the many diversities in the national structure, the Swiss have achieved equilibrium, in stability and harmony.

J.J.F.S.

SWISS YODELLERS IN ENGLAND.

The "Dover Express" (58 '52) writes:

"Cross-Channel passengers arriving at the Marine Station on Friday had an unexpected treat when the members of the celebrated Bluemlisalp Swiss Yodel Club gave an audition on the quayside while awaiting their turn in the Customs queue. The club were on the way to the Town Hall — their first call on a three weeks tour of this country.

All skilled manual workers, the Yodel Club use their talents to spend a cheaper holiday away from Switzerland, and by this method are able to visit a number of countries.

At the Town Hall on Friday evening there were about four hundred at the club's performance, one of whom writes:—

"The Entertainment Committee is to be congratulated on its choice of engaging the Swiss Singers for the second year. Last year they came from Zurich, but this year from Interlaken and Thun. It is a pity that it was not more advertised, for their singing was a joy — the audience sat spell-bound. It was, of course, in their own tongue, but one could easily distinguish the type of song. One was obviously a kind of hymn for the 'Amen' at the end of each verse could hardly be mistaken. The whole atmosphere was joyous. They came smilingly on to the platform dressed in chocolate-coloured trousers, short black velvet coats with sleeves only to the elbow. Below the elbow were white shirt sleeves gathered into a cuff. The lapels of the coats were embroidered with edelweiss. Their soft brown felt hats were worn during the singing, only being removed by some in acknowledgment of the applause. About half-way through they changed into embroidered skull caps. They kept their hands hidden in their pockets. The singing and yodelling was unaccompanied, and the sweetness and purity of tune had to be heard to be appreciated. At the end they sang our own National Anthem in their own language — at least everyone thought so, for with one accord the audience rose to its feet. For those whom singing does not appeal, there was a band, to give it its full title the 'Bure Music Ensemble.' They played their own national airs and folk songs, and enjoyed it so much that they themselves broke into song from time to time. There was also a clever display of flag-waving — the performer using a large red flag with a white cross, their national emblem. It was a pity that so many seats in the hall were allotted to the higher priced tickets. Many of these were empty, while the half-crown ones were full to overflowing. The show continued until 10 p.m., and many people expressed the wish to come again."