

A unique Village

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A UNIQUE VILLAGE.

On the outskirts of Trogen, pleasantly situated among the peaceful, smiling pastures of the Appenzell uplands, stands a pretty red-roofed village. In outward appearance it does not differ greatly from the usual type of Swiss village, except that the houses are all new, but it is unique in one respect: it bears the distinction of being the only village in the world inhabited entirely by children of different nations, under the supervision of a few adults qualified to care for and educate them.

These children, some 200 of them at present, are mostly war-orphans from many parts of Europe, from France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Poland, from Great Britain and even far-off Finland. They are housed in modern buildings, each nationality being kept separate, but allowed to mix at work and play and encouraged to fraternise. The British contingent, by the way, occupy two houses christened "Thames House" and "Stepping Stones".

The idea of creating an supra-national settlement for orphaned children from war-stricken countries germinated in the mind of Dr. W. R. Corti, Editor of the Swiss periodical "Du". He launched his first appeal in 1944; the offer of a suitable site from the community of Trogen converted his dream into a practical proposition; by 1946 it became possible to start building, mostly by volunteer labour and under the direction, generously given, of a well-known architect. In 1947 the village was ready for occupation. It was given the name of Pestalozzi-Dorf and came under the management of the Swiss Pestalozzidorf Gemeinschaft and the British Pestalozzi Children's Village Association.

Finance was, of course, a difficult problem. It was solved through the generosity of the Swiss people. Contributions large and small came pouring in, the wealthy and the poor, and above all the children of Switzerland, gave freely; the "Don Suisse" and the "Pro Juventute" assisted. Gifts in money and kind were also received from abroad.

To alleviate the suffering of innocent war victims is, to the Swiss people, not a new impulse; it lies within their traditions and is made possible by their neutral status. Swiss neutrality, sometimes misunderstood, is by no means a self-centred isolation, and it may not be out of place here to recall the services

Switzerland has rendered in 1870/71 to the inhabitants of Strasbourg and to the wretched remnants of the Bourbaki army, to the refugees of the first world-war, and to mention that during the last war 200,000 children were taken into Swiss homes for a three-months convalescence. Above all, is not the International Red Cross an abiding monument to Swiss initiative in the service of humanity?

We therefore welcome Mrs. Mary Buchanan's little book "The Children's Village" (Bannisdale Press, price 6/-) which brings before the British public a timely reminder of the humanitarian work done in Switzerland at Dr. Corti's inspiration. Within no more than 30 pages of reading matter Mrs. Buchanan, herself Hon. Secretary of the British Pestalozzi Children's Village Association, tells the story of this noble enterprise and describes in detail the daily life of the children for whose benefit it was organised. The remaining 30 pages of the book consist of photographs which give an excellent idea of the village and the children who inhabit it. Among these photographs, two have taken our particular fancy: one being the lovely head of Maria, a Greek child, with finely chiselled features, the other an amusing snapshot of an Austrian boy engaged in a difficult conversation with an English girl. The boy cannot understand her and his puzzled frown, shrugged shoulders and outspread hands are most eloquent. Equally striking are two reproduced drawings by a Polish boy showing the contrast between his war impressions and the peaceful atmosphere of his new life.

Over this Pestalozzi village, so aptly named, hovers the spirit of the great and devoted lover of children who, more than 150 years ago, consecrated his life to their service and well-being. In the organisers of the children's village he has found worthy successors.

J.J.F.S.

EXCHANGE OF MESSAGES BETWEEN THE SWISS MINISTER AND MEMBERS OF THE FEDERAL COUNCIL.

As usual, the Federal Assembly elected in December 1951 the President of the Confederation and the Vice-President of the Federal Council for the year 1952. Federal Councillor Karl Kobelt, Head of the Military Department, was elected President and Federal Councillor Philipp Etter, Head of the Department of the Interior, Vice-President for the new term of office.

The Swiss Minister sent to M. Kobelt and M. Etter telegrams of congratulation in the name of the Swiss Colony in Great Britain, as well as of the Legation and the Consulates. The President and Vice-President both acknowledged these messages extending at the same time their sincere wishes for the prosperity and happiness of the Swiss Colony during the new year.

A new Year's message has also been sent by M. Max Petitpierre, Head of the Political Department, to the Swiss Minister extending to the Colony his best wishes and expressing his appreciation for their unflinching attachment to Switzerland. In a letter addressed to M. Petitpierre, the Minister expressed his thanks for these wishes and reciprocated them on behalf of the Colony.

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