Divine Services

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hardly be kept secret; so that the different interests are freely open to work for their own aims. There is no danger in Lötschental of the serious distortion of public opinion which is often done by rich pressure groups in large democracies like England or America.

Education is given in two schools, each consisting of a single room; 25 boys under a master in one, and 25 girls under a mistress in the other.

The school year consists of six months' continuous work during the winter and six months' holiday. It is an eight-year course from the age of seven to fifteen, followed by a compulsory continuation course of 120 hours a year for four years. This includes twenty hours of religion given by the priest; of the rest, given by the teacher, history, law and citizenship are major subjects.

The one teacher is thus responsible for teaching the children for twelve years. Each year he has about three new boys who stay with him from the age of about seven to nineteen. The priest told us that this system, which, of course, prevails only in remote rural areas, gave excellent results. The six months' work with the family, on the land and in the house, during the summer, gives them practical experiences, teaches them responsibility and is admirable from the health point of view. The six months' steady intellectual work during the winter prepares them for examinations so well that they can hold their own with the children from the towns. This must, of course, depend on the quality of the teacher. The teacher of Blatten, who has for the last ten years been President of the commune, is a man of high quality, and no doubt capable of carrying this very heavy responsibility effectively. When I asked him how many of the citizens of Blatten would be able to keep the somewhat elaborate accounts of the commune in order, he said that in his opinion the majority could certainly reach this pretty high standard successfully.

" Burger " Assembly (Bürgergemeinde).

Nearly all the forest land in the commune, as well as a little grazing land, belongs to the so-called " Burger " Assembly. Membership has to be gained by inheritance or by purchase. All the sons of a Burger are automatically qualified. Membership gives rights to timber, mainly for purposes of firewood, and involves duties to maintain the forests and other land. Every year, on Whit-Sunday, the Burgers meet together for a feast and merry-making; also they meet occasionally as a body to decide what is to be done about the forests. Every year the members spend about two days in large groups clearing the forest, cutting and carrying the hay — without remuneration.

The routine administration, which is not heavy, is carried out by a President and two other elected members; it is interesting to note that thel present President is only thirty-two years of age. He is a guide, a captain in the Swiss Army and an inn-keeper. He is a man of considerable qualities; for instance, he is perturbed that the forests have been going backward in recent years and is trying hard to develop a scheme of afforestation.

The Canton is offering a 50 per cent. grant towards an afforestation scheme. But the poverty of the citizens is such that they can only provide their share by unpaid labour, on which there will, of course, be no return for twenty years. Yet he hopes to get the scheme through. This indicates a fine public spirit. I wonder what the citizens of Manchester would say if they were asked to give two days a year of free labour towards the afforestation of their water works?

The Grazing Co-operative.

The various grazing alps on the hillside have from time immemorial been owned co-operatively by a number of peasants; every peasant belongs to one of these groups. The co-operative as a whole has grazing land for a certain number of cattle. Each individual peasant may have the right to graze anything from one-quarter of a cow up to, say, five cows. Each peasant has part or the whole of a simple house and cow-shed. The agricultural operations are rather complicated; but, broadly speaking, the cows are grazed for about two months in the summer and sometimes also in the autumn. During the summer the cows are milked and looked after generally by the women; often the women and children spend two pleasant months of what is practically a summer holiday on the alp.

The management of the alp is in the hands of the whole of the peasant owners, who meet early in June to discuss arrangements for the year and spend generally about two days as a group clearing up the winter damage and preparing the alp for its year's work — each peasant, rich or poor, spends the same amount of time in this common work; again without remuneration.

Relations with the Canton.

The Canton plays a considerable part in the life of the commune by way of supervision and subsidy. It pays three-quarters of the salaries of the teachers and inspects the education. It has a professional forester to advise the commune and strictly controls all cutting down of trees. It is prepared to subsidize a proper scheme of afforestation. The Canton and the Bund are offering a large subsidy for the new road, and the Canton occasionally offers grants for rebuilding after disasters due to avalanche. There are other small subsidies, as, for instance, one towards the expenses of a midwife. But, on the whole, it can fairly be said that as regards local self-government the bulk of the responsibility falls on the commune itself.

Cantonal or national politics play only a small part in the life of the commune. The members are such unanimous and wholehearted supporters of the Catholic Conservative Party that serious discussion of the larger aspects of politics seems to be rare, though on occasions there may be a good deal of discussion on some important referendum.

The Education of the Citizen.

Let us consider how far the education and experience of the citizen of Blatten enable him to judge wisely of measures and of men; for this is probably the best test of the efficient working of a democracy.

Practically every peasant is a member of three bodies:

The Communal Assembly.
The " Burger " Assembly.
A Grazing Co-operative.

The Communal Assembly is the governing body of the commune; all matters of any importance come before it. As a member, the peasant not only knows everything that is being done, how almost every franc raised by the taxes is being spent, but personally helps to take every decision.

The " Burger " Assembly and the various Grazing Co-operatives between them control the whole of the public forests and grazing lands. Each peasant takes part in their various meetings and decisions; and each peasant has to put in three or four days' free work in the year repairing the damage of the winter and doing the many jobs which are necessary to put the land into good working order.

Every peasant therefore spends a considerable amount of time on the ordinary business of democracy; discussing and making decisions on public affairs. Meetings of the whole of the citizens are held perhaps on twenty Sundays each year to vote on national or cantonal affairs, or to deal with the affairs of the commune. The attendance varies from 50 to 90 per cent. according to the importance of the agenda. In this way every citizen acquires the habits of discussion and persuasion, of reaching agreement ,of the good-humoured acceptance of the decision of the majority, which is so fundamental to the effective working of democracy.

Further, every citizen spends several days in the year actually doing work with his own hands for the public benefit. If that work is done less strenuously than the work on his own plot, if there is something of a holiday atmosphere in this public co-operative work, that is no bad thing. The work is done and done voluntarily by the whole of the peasants, equally by the rich and the poor, without any pay.

(To be continued.)

TO OUR READERS.

The Editor of the Swiss Observer would be greatly obliged if readers would supply him with addresses of likely subscribers, so that specimen copies could be posted to them.

If such addresses supplied should be already included on our mailing list, no extra copies would be sent.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS.

Friday, January 27th, at 8 o'clock, (Supper at 3/- to be served at 6.30 p.m. sharp) — Nouvelle Société Helvétique — Annual General Meeting — at Foyer Suisse, 15, Bedford Way, Russell Square, W.C.

Friday, January 27th, from 8.30 p.m.-2 a.m. — Swiss Accordion Club — Grand Social Evening and Dance — at the Helvetia Club, 1, Gerard Place, W.1. (Admission 2/-).

Wednesday, February 22nd — Unione Ticinese — Annual Banquet and Ball, at Pagani's Restaurant, Great Portland Street, W.

Saturday, February 25th — Nouvelle Société Helvétique — Film Show — at Kingsway Hall.

Saturday, March 11th, at 7 o'clock — City Swiss Club — Cinderella Dance — at the Mayfair Hotel, Berkeley Square, W.1.

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Dimanche 22 janvier 1939:

11h. Culte M. M. Pradervand.

11h. Ecole du dimanche.

6h.30 Culte M. M. Pradervand.

Pour l'instruction religieuse et les actes pastoraux, prière de s'adresser au pasteur, M. M. Pradervand, 65, Mount View Road, N.4. (Téléphone Mountview 5003) Heure de réception à l'église le mercredi de 11-12h.30.

SCHWEIZERKIRCHE
(Deutschsprachige Gemeinde).
St. Anne's Church, 9, Gresham Street, E.C.2.
(near General Post Office.)

Sonntag, den 22. Januar.

11 Uhr morgens, Gottesdienst, Pfr. E. Bommeli

7 Uhr abends, Gottesdienst, Pfr. E. Bommeli.

Mittwoch Nachmittag: Schwyzerchränzli von 2.30 an, 15, Bedford Way (Zwanglose Zusammenkunft der jungen Schweizerinnen im Foyer Suisse, wozu alle Schweizerinnen freundlich eingeladen sind).

Sprechstunden des Gemeindepfarrer's:
Jeden Dienstag von 12-2 Uhr in der Kirche.
Jeden Mittwoch von 5-6 Uhr im Foyer Suisse, 15, Bedford Way, W.C.1.

Jeden Donnerstag abend 7 Uhr Versammlung Christlicher Verein junger Männer, 28-29, Bedford Place. W. Jedermann ist freundlich eingeladen.

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