

The processions of Romont

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THE "SURREXIT" IN ESTAVAYER-LE-LAC

This little town in the Canton of Fribourg on the shores of Lake Neuchâtel has kept up remarkable old customs. One of its most significant traditions is the "Surrexit" ("He Has Risen") whose origins are lost in the dimness of ages past.

During the night before Easter the men of Estavayer foregather in front of the Parish Church. At midnight a procession, surrounded by torch bearers, starts on its way and at a slow pace strides through the medieval streets and alleys. The ancient melodies of "Surrexit" and "O filii, o filiae" ("Oh Sons, oh Daughters") are sung to the accompaniment of wind instruments. This night-time round leads to the Convent of the Dominican Sisters and to the cemetery where the procession stops at the graves of friends and benefactors. This paying of respects in the dark of the night surely is the tradition's most touching highlight.

In closed ranks the men of Estavayer then continue on their round, stopping once more in front of the hospital where they sing the song of the Resurrection. — And how could it be otherwise? According to the "good old customs of the country" this nightly rounds finally winds up at the "Bistro", at a meal taken together which is partly financed by the interest paid to an honourable foundation. Sadness is gone and has given way to a happy mood.

[S.N.T.O.]

THE PROCESSIONS OF ROMONT

Palm Sunday is justly described at Romont as "blossoming Easter" (*Pâques fleuries*) for the procession which winds its way through the city's streets is a riot of colour. Everywhere small fir trees have been placed, richly decorated with lovely ribbons and sweets. — Only a few days later, on Good Friday, we come across the Procession of the Wailing Women (*Procession des Pleureuses*). This is a relic of the Passion Mystery during which the Virgin Mary is carried through the streets in mourning garments. To the melody of "Stabat Mater" she is accompanied by young girls, all shrouded in black, who carry the symbols of the Passion in front of them.

[S.N.T.O.]



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