

# 1st August celebration in Emmental

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**1st OF AUGUST CELEBRATION IN EMMENTAL.**

(Reprinted from the "Young Traveller in Switzerland", by Mariann Meyer, published by Phoenix House, Ltd., at 7/6, by courtesy of the Publishers and kind permission of the author.)

August 1st was Switzerland's 'birthday' — the anniversary of the founding of the Confederation over 600 years ago. The celebrations included a bonfire on the hill behind the house. Dried wood was carted to the highest point and piled up symmetrically.

Supper at the farm was early that evening. At seven-thirty all the bells started ringing, and the whole household went to the main square of the village. Here, as in towns and villages all over the country, the celebrations were to be held. Outside the *Bären* inn a crowd had already collected. On one side immediately below the double stairs leading up to the front door of the inn the village brass band was stationed, and on the other side the mixed choir. The school children carried paper lanterns, and red, round lampions with a white cross on either side. The band, conducted by a soldier, played a patriotic march passably well. The crowd applauded heartily. Then the choir, with Herr Schüpbach staunchly supporting the bass, sang a tuneful evening song.

By and by the street lamps were lit and the children lighted the candles in their lanterns. A few men gathered at the top of the stairs. Above them the Swiss flag was stirring in the evening breeze, and a hundred expectant faces looked up at the elderly, corpulent farmer who was going to address them, in his capacity as village president. He spoke in German, with a strong Bernese intonation and a fair sprinkling of local dialect. John knew that German, although never spoken in daily life, was used for public addresses. It was a forceful speech recalling briefly a few important happenings since 1291 and ending on a note of sincere thankfulness to the Almighty that He had spared the country from the horrors of war.

'We are under three crosses, the white cross of the Federal Arms, the red cross of the Geneva Convention, and above them the cross of Christ. Let us remember this and remain united and true to the Swiss motto "One for all, all for one".'

Loud clapping greeted the speech and then the local school-teacher conducted the singing of 'Trittst

im Morgenrot daher', the Swiss Hymn. Everybody sang with great fervour. Next came the school children with another song and then the *Turnverein* presented a few tableaux each showing a scene famous in Swiss history and illuminated by Bengal lights.

The Protestant village clergyman followed with a short prayer and the Swiss National Anthem finished the ceremony. 'Rufst Du, mein Vaterland' must have been sung by hundreds of thousands all over the country at about the same time, and John, too, hummed the familiar tune, which is identical with that of 'God Save the King'.

After the crowds dispersed. Some of the fires on the distant hills had already been lit, and John and Werner hurried to the one they had built in the morning. Processions of children with their lampions went too. One of the boys set a match to the bundle of straw below the wood, and soon there was another *Bunderfeuer* blazing, while the young people sang more folk-songs.

At the inn a rural dance was in progress. The local dance band consisted of a clarinet, accordion, and double bass, a very popular rustic combination generally known as a *Ländlermusik*. Just as John and Werner passed the inn, the couples were dancing a very fast waltz. The windows were wide open and the sight of the dancers, some in *Tracht*, was a very pretty one. The boys watched for a few minutes and then returned to the farm where all was quiet. They went to bed at once.

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