

TALK ON SWITZERLAND.

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Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen of the Convention:

In the south-western part of the European Continent lies a small country of about 16,000 square miles about one third the size of the State of Wisconsin and having in round numbers about three and one-half million of inhabitants, which country has been named Switzerland and in ancient times Helvetia and by themselves the "Eidsgenossenschaft" or the members of the Oath. Every school-boy knows or ought to know that this small country is bounded on the east and north by Germany and Austria on the west by France and on the south by Italy, which accounts for the many languages spoken therein and we might truthfully say the many nationalities of which it is composed. In the north and east the Allemanic branch of the Teuton Family and therefore the German language predominates, while on the west it is peopled by the descendants of the old Gauls and French is spoken, while on the southern slopes of the Alps Italian habits and language prevails, while in the extreme south-east of Switzerland in the mountain fastnesses of the Canton of Grisons live the remnant of the old Helvetians, who were driven into those almost inaccessible and desolate mountains and narrow valleys by the victorious legions of Caesar after the decisive battle on Lake Lemman. They still speak their old mother tongue a sister of ancient Latin and by them called Romanic or Ladin. So it will be seen that there are four

distinct nationalities and also four different languages spoken and used. But in spite of this diversity of tongue and birth there is no country where the people are more of a unity in patriotism and love of their country and its free institution and observance of the self-given laws and the only contention between them is who loves his country the most, the German, the French, the Italian or the Helvetian Swiss and it would be a hard task indeed for any judge to award the prize.

The government of Switzerland is a purely democratic Republic, the 22 Cantons of which the Federation is composed, each having its own Cantonal Government subject to the Constitution and final Jurisdiction of the Federation. A "Staende Rath" being the same as our Senate, composed of two members of each Canton and the "Nationalrat" in manner something like our House of Representatives, its members chosen by the Canton according to their population, one representative for each 20,000 inhabitants or major fraction. These two houses form the Government and the President of the Nationalrat, a position somewhat analogous to our Speaker, is also the President of the Cabinet and the President of Switzerland and also Secretary of State as against foreign Powers. The Cabinet is chosen by the Representatives as well as the President and so but very little if any excitement or disturbance is created by a change of President which occurs every year. This with an independent Judiciary makes the best indicated and best installed Government on this Globe.

Switzerland through and by its topographical Situation has been not unaptly called the Backbone of Southern Europe. Its mountains, known as the Alps, are the highest elevation in Europe and the source of nearly all the rivers in southern Europe. The Rhine, the Danube, the Rhone all have their source in the Alps. The most specific River of Switzerland having both its source and mouth in Switzerland is the Aare. Coming out of the western Bernese and Jura Alps with its mighty confluents the Reuss from the

original Cantons, the Linth and Limat from Glarus and Zuerich and the Emme. Along those three named rivers which drain the largest part of Switzerland and especially on the Emme, the industry in whose interest we are today assembled took its start in the gray and ancient times and long before history mentioned Helvetia or Switzerland Swiss cheese was made for home consumption and later on for market in those valleys. From the Emmenthal, the valley of the Emme, this cheese derived its specific name but the other valleys as well were driven by nature to resort to the same kind of work. The people living in those narrow valleys between these stupendous hills and gigantic mountains were there as now compelled to drive their herds into the small patches of pastures in the thrifts and valleys high up on the mountains to utilize the sweet grasses growing there during the short summer months and when snow again commences to fall to return to their home valley where they are housed and kept until the warm rays of the spring sun again melts the snows on the Alpine pastures and getting ready for a new season. These rivers also furnish an inexhaustible source of water power fed by the melting mountain snows and rushing in torrents down the narrow gorges and valleys until they reach the lower level of Switzerland. Many are the ways in which this power is utilized and the spinning and weaving machines put in motion by them gives employment to many thousands of people who otherwise would not know how to gain a livelihood.

Another and at this time perhaps the greatest sources of income of the Swiss people is the large number of tourists who come annually from all parts of the world. The English, American, Russian and all other people who are seeing Europe would not be satisfied if they had not spent some of their sovereigns, eagles and roubles in and among the splendid hotels and pensions of Switzerland which, has not been unaptly called one great hotel and sanatorium on account of the innumerable places where

travellers can put up and find all, even the most modern comfort and improvements high up in the pure and salubrious air of the Alps. So called baths or watering places allure the travellers and tourists both sick and well and air cures, whey cures, water cures, goats' and asses' milk and every conceivable thing is turned into an attraction of which there are legions and with the great care and comfort with which they are surrounded, with specific treatments of all kinds, added the excellent air, magnificent views very few travellers and tourists come away who are not refreshed and bettered both in their mental and physical conditions and somewhat relieved of their troubles and what interests the Swiss people the most — some money. But all come away well pleased with the country.

The great drawback of Switzerland is its tillable land and for that reason every grain of breadstuff has to be imported into the more rugged parts especially the original Cantons, as they are called, from the more fortunate Cantons and from Germany. The farmer in the level Cantons where they engage in farming, tills his land with the utmost care and raises exceedingly large crops from his small patch which he cultivates. Necessarily the farms are all very small and a farm of a hundred acres is a rarity. This dearth and scarcity of food is the cause of the great emigration from that country principally to the United States, where they annually form large colonies both in country and city districts. They appear clamish to the average American, but it is not so, for their is no greater Cosmopolitan than a Swiss of the better classes, and men in humble positions as hotel porters and waiters, employees in the postal, telegraph and railroad service who speak three or four languages fluently are rather the rule than an exception as the Swiss is a born linguist and thru his constant intercourse with so many nationalities in his own country it is but natural that he should soon learn something of their language.

Switzerland has no great future before it; it has no room for expansion, but has changed a great deal socially and somewhat politically thru the great flux of foreigners from all nations and especially the working class of Italy. The heavy passenger traffic demands good roads and facilities and considering the roughness of the territory thru which they had to pass experienced Roadmakers were needed and as the Italians are Past-masters in this Art they were imported in great numbers for that purpose to overcome the almost unsurmountable obstacles of mountain road building. In late years the greatest engineering skill has been exerised to make the steepest mountains accessible to the weakest tourist by mountain railroads such as the Jungfrau-Bahn and others of similar nature. But by and thru these achievements much money as they cost and much money as they bring into the country a great deal of its former romantic and poetic prestige has been lost and draws it down to the level of any other country, but should not be so great a source of downheartedness as is the case with a great number of the Swiss people, who deplore the sacrilege, as they deem it, but they should rather be joyful when they contemplate the vast sums of English, American, Russian and German gold which flows into their coffers, although a great deal of the old simplicity has been lost and with it a number of other things which were dear to the heart of every Swiss and we hope that the time may still be far away when the love of liberty and their country will be submerged into and replaced by greed and love of money and the comforts of life, the splendor and luxury and final physical and mental weakness concede thereby, which has proved the ruin of many a great and strong Republic. May Switzerland learn from them and take a lesson from them before it is to late.