



Spitzweg: Einsiedler

Hermits Live in Caves

Rise at Dawn and Seek Sleep with Setting Sun

The strange colonies of hermits who have taken up their abode in the neighborhood of Locarno, Ronco and Orselina are increasing in numbers. One group, which occupies the wooded plateau known as Monte Verita, is 125 strong, and counts in its members six German professors, three military officers, one of whom is married to a countess who also belongs to the sect, two doctors and a priest, says a correspondent for the St. Louis Globe-Democrat.

The majority are well to do, and some are wealthy. As these pay well for anything they buy and do not trouble about making converts, the inhabitants are on friendly terms with them.

They sleep in caves, are vegetarians and do not wear ordinary clothing. A linen hood and a shroud of the same material are the only garments they wear. Their feet, legs, arms and necks are uncovered, and the hair is never cut, though the men trim their beards in a patriarchal way. The Women allow their tresses to float in the air.

The motto of all is „Back to nature.“

„The height of wisdom and philosophy,“ they say, „is to understand nature; that alone brings peace and happiness.“

They rise at dawn and go to sleep with the setting of the sun; they eat only fruit and vegetables and drink only water. In the summer they have daily sun baths and in the winter snow baths.

Some of them have extraordinary theories, which they carry out with great perseverance. One beautiful woman of 30, who was formerly a well-known singer at the Berlin opera, refuses to touch money, which she says is the root of all evil. Her theory often lands her in difficulties, from which she occasionally extricates herself by singing to her debtors.

Another member only eats vegetables that ripen underground. A third confines himself strictly to raw eggs and potatoes.

A fourth spends \$25 a week among the poor villagers and keeps the doctors busy by bringing to their notice cases for which he pays.

All the colony are in the best of health and always appear perfectly happy, amiable and polite.

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