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dications territoriales à formuler. Il ne se pose point au premier plan. Et quand ses grands voisins vident leurs querelles sans qu'ils daignent s'en apercevoir il est un peu écrasé, entre eux. De bonne foi, ils l'avaient oublié.

Alors, ensuite, tous lui font des politesses, parce que, au fond, il est très utile. Il a bon cœur; on sait qu'on pourra toujours s'adresser à lui pour soigner ici, consoler là. Et puis, si intact et paisible, il est un réconfort pour tout le monde. On lui sourit, d'un bon sourire un peu amusé; comment peut-on être un si petit pays ?

Ce qu'il a pour lui, c'est qu'il est très, très vieux, beaucoup plus vieux que la plupart de ceux qui l'entourent. Cela lui confère une haute dignité morale. On le bague un peu, mais on a une grande estime pour lui, et on regarde volontiers à lui comme à un exemple. On le prend, dans les litiges, comme arbitre, sachant qu'il est honnête et exempt de jalousie. On lui confie des bureaux internationaux. Chacun voulait les avoir, ces bureaux; et les savoir dans ce petit pays, chacun s'incline.

Bien des fois déjà, il semble qu'il eût dû être balayé par une de ces vagues de fond qui déferlent parfois sur le vieux monde, et culbutent des empires dix fois gros comme lui. Mais non. Il est toujours là. Il continue, et travaille. Il ne dit pas grand-chose. Qu'est-ce qu'il pense, au fond de lui-même ?

Des hommes dernièrement, pour voir, l'avaient ainsi interpellé: "Hé, la Suisse! Tu n'en as pas bien tant, de ton existence monotone? D'être toujours rangée, travailleuse, attachée à de vieux usages ridicules? Une bonne petite révolution, ça ne te dirait rien? Une saignée générale de ceux qui ont des économies, pour que les autres, enfin, puissent se payer un peu de bon temps? Hein, qu'en dis-tu?"

A cette insidieuse question, un grand silence s'est fait, tout soudain, dans l'attente de ce que le petit pays répondrait. Le monde entier s'est tourné vers lui. C'est que cela devenait une palpitante consultation: qu'allait-il choisir ?

Le petit pays a planté son regard clair dans les yeux de ceux qui avaient fait la proposition méfaste. Il a lu dans ces yeux, toutes sortes d'arrière-pensées, aides, de calculs louches, et la joie de faire du mal. Il a répondu: "Non!" d'une telle force, que cela voulait encore dire: "Et qu'on ne me dérange plus pour de pareilles sottises!"

Le monde entier a été soulagé. C'aurait été dommage de perdre la confiance qu'on avait dans ce petit pays, n'est-ce pas? La confiance subsiste. Et l'estime a cru encore. Vive le petit pays! Les étrangers l'ont salué très bas, et ses fils sont fiers de lui.

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CORRESPONDENCE.

The Editor is not responsible for the opinions expressed by his Correspondents.

MILITARY TAX & MATRICULATION FEE.

To the Editor *The Swiss Observer*.

Sir,—I had not intended to prolong this correspondence, but, in view of "Critic's" appeal, I will point out that my letter in your issue of December 9th really covers the whole ground raised by "Critic," including his special points. So I will only add that I am convinced of one thing, which is, that Swiss Consular Officers, whenever they find themselves compelled to apply the measures provided against Swiss citizens who, with intent, do not pay their military taxes—(which, I trust, will not occur very often and which, I feel sure, must be very distasteful to every one of them)—they will deal with each individual case on its merits and within the meaning of the "Ordonnance concernant la fixation et la perception de la taxe militaire de Suisses à l'étranger."

Should they not do so, there remains always the remedy of a complaint or an appeal to a higher authority.

Yours faithfully,

EMILE STUTZ.

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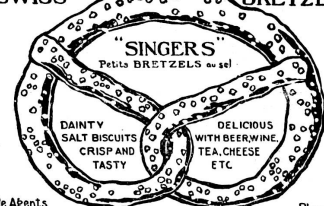
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