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## THE OXFORD GROUP AND SWITZERLAND.

High up on the wooded slopes above Montreux, in one of the finest positions at the eastern end of the Lake of Geneva, and with a magnificent view of the alps, stands an imposing turreted building, known to many visitors to the district as the Caux-Palace. Formerly a first-class hotel, it no longer caters for the tourist trade: it has been acquired by the Oxford Group and now bears the name of the mountain House of Caux.

What is the Oxford Group and how did it come by its name?

It is the creation of Dr. Frank Buchman, an American from Pennsylvania. Soon after the first world war, he came to Oxford to launch a campaign for the remaking of the world on Christian lines, to fight materialism and to build up a League of Nations, as it were, based, not on economic preponderance or military force, but on moral values. He called on all men and women to change their lives and mould them anew on absolute standards of honesty, purity, unselfishness and love. He and the team he had trained formulated a new ideology, an answer to both communism and fascism, by which people throughout the world should be enabled to live in a spirit of Christian democracy, and he chose for it, the arresting title of Moral Re-Armament. Dr. Buchman's appeal is undenominational, non-political, world-wide. It is addressed to all classes of society, to the intellectual and to the working man, to young and old, to the leaders of nations and to ordinary folk. "Accept the guidance of God," he says, "in personal and national affairs and all will be well." Against much opposition, especially in its early days, the movement grew to significant proportions and to-day many thousands of adherents are to be found in almost every country in the world.

In 1928, a number of Rhodes scholars and other Oxford students travelled to South Africa where they addressed meetings and spoke of the new idea with enthusiasm and the fire of personal conviction. They were christened "The Oxford Group," the name by which they have been identified ever since. An attempt was made in the House of Commons to inhibit the Group from using the name of A. P. Herbert's constituency but the motion was defeated and in June 1939 the Board of Trade granted the group a charter of incorporation as a non-profit association with the name of Oxford Group.

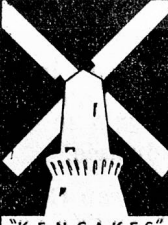
The founder, Dr. Buchman, is in appearance and speech typical of the cultured American. With shrewd, kindly eyes and a firm mouth, he has great personal charm and a bearing of quiet dignity. His oratory is not of the flamboyant kind but calm and convincing, appealing to the intellect and to the will rather than to the emotions. He is of Swiss descent, his ancestors having emigrated, two hundred years ago, from St. Gall to America where they joined the community of hardworking, Godfearing farmers who, to this day, populate the State of Pennsylvania.

In addition to the fortuitous circumstance of his Swiss ancestry, Dr. Buchman's mission has become closely associated with Switzerland by reason of the choice of Caux as the European headquarters and international meeting-place of the movement. It has a large following among the Swiss and it is from them that the money for the purchase of the Caux property was

raised. The Swiss Authorities themselves appear to have given the group their blessing and support. When in 1947 an international rally at Caux was held, attended by delegates from every part of the world, Dr. Etter, then President of the Confederation, paid an official visit. Other prominent Swiss who joined the meetings were Dr. Leimgruber, Chancellor of the Confederation, Professor Max Huber, General Guisan and many more. The Vaud Cantonal Government gave Dr. Buchman an official reception at the Chateau de Chillon where he was welcomed and entertained by the Mayor of Montreux and the Vice-President of the Vaud State Council. The following year, on the occasion of another World Assembly for Moral Re-Armament, President Celio visited Caux and some ninety members of the Swiss Federal Assembly met the Group leaders and distinguished guests. Among the signatories to the invitation for the meetings appear the names of Ernest Boerlin, M.P., General Guisan and Dr. Leimgruber.

Much has been said and written of Dr. Buchman and his work. He has been subjected to a great deal of abuse and overwhelmed with fulsome praise. But from it all emerges an unescapable fact: His honesty and sincerity of purpose. The impartial observer cannot avoid the conclusion that the effects of Dr. Buchman's crusade have been far-reaching and beneficial and that the movement has become a force to be reckoned with.

J.J.F.S.



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