

Weaving and Spinning in the Fex Valley

MODERN conditions press hardly on the peasants who live in the remoter valleys and mountain hamlets of Switzerland. Many of them have a hard struggle to keep body and soul together: their homes are cheerless and their life toilsome and monotonous. The winters are long and dark, for months the snow lies piled high at their doors, the cattle are confined in close, gloomy stables, and time hangs heavy on the hands of their masters. The result has been that many of the younger men and women leave their homes and seek service in the towns, or else they quit the country altogether and emigrate to America or other distant lands. An effort is being made to improve and brighten the lives of the Swiss peasantry by introducing home industries which will give them interest and employment as well as an opportunity of earning some extra money.

Peasant industries have been organized with great suc-



A woman from Oberhasli, Bernese Oberland, Switzerland, at her spinning wheel



A Swiss family of basket weavers touring the country to sell their ware

cess in Norway and Sweden, where many of the people lead their lives under very much the same conditions. They have the same long, dark winters, intense cold and deep snow, as have the dwellers in the High Alps.

Wood-carving has long been one of the chief home industries of Switzerland, but machine labor has dealt the handworker a severe blow; embroidery has gone out of fashion for the time being, so that something else is required to take its place.

An exhibition of women's work was successfully held at Berne last summer. Among the exhibits was a model peasant house. The idea was to teach the coun-

try people how they themselves can make their lives more comfortable and more artistic. Here in the Engadine a home industry has been revived: handweaving and spinning are being taught in the Fex Valley. Not only that, but the people are being taught to sow their own flax and how to

(Continued on page 38)

WEAVING AND SPINNING IN THE FEX VALLEY

(Continued from page 29)

make their own and their children's clothing, also mats and carpets and curtains for their houses, simply by their handiwork.

A Swiss artist, Mme. Maria Schulthess, who lives in the Fex Valley, has started a school of hand-weaving and she hopes to provide employment for many women and girls. Among the articles dyed and woven under her directions are dress materials, curtains, cushion covers, linen bags, and hangings for chairs and couches in artistic colors. In order to promote the sale of these home-made goods, depots have been opened at St. Moritz where many attractive wares are displayed by Fräulein Greber, near the Palace Hotel, and by Fräulein Steiner, at the art shop close to the village church.

Further information may be obtained from Frau Maria Schulthess, Engadine Hand-Weaving Workshops, Fex, near Sils Maria.