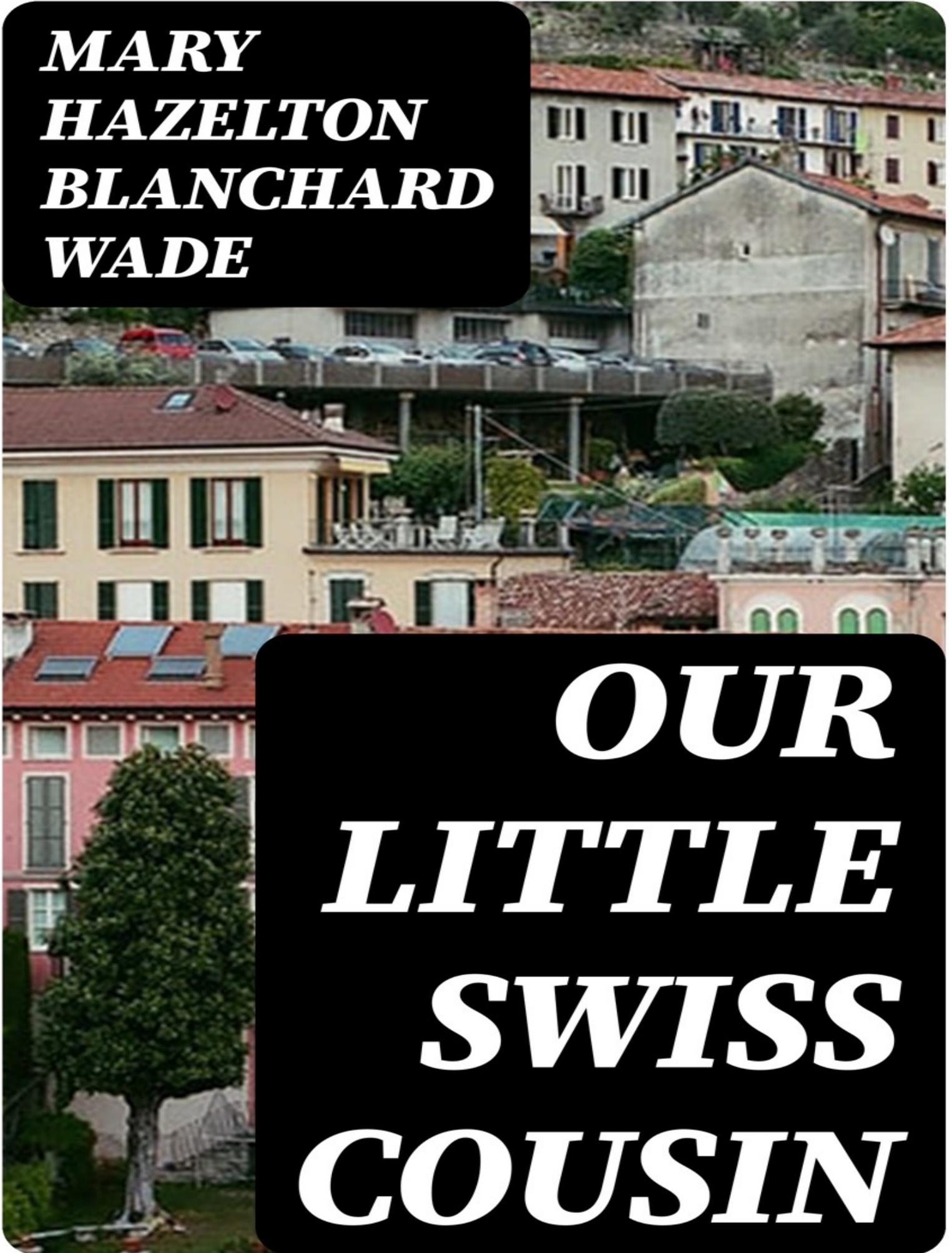


**MARY
HAZELTON
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**OUR
LITTLE
SWISS
COUSIN**



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Our Little Swiss Cousin

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Preface

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IN the very heart of Europe lies a small country nestling among the mountains. It is unlike any other in the world. Its people speak four different languages; they believe in different religions; the government is not alike in different parts; yet the Swiss states are bound together by a bond stronger than unity of language or creed can possibly make.

Our brave Swiss cousins believe in liberty for all and brotherly love. These make the most powerful of ties.

In their mountains and valleys they have fought against the enemies who would have destroyed them, and the tyrants who would have made them slaves. They have driven out their foes again and again, for their cause was noble and unselfish, and to-day the republic formed by them can teach other countries many wise and worthy lessons.

How the stories of William Tell and Arnold von Winkelried stir our hearts whenever we hear them repeated! These were only two of many heroes who have made the country famous for its bravery and unselfishness.

Surely we shall be glad to turn our minds for a while to its fertile valleys, beautiful lakes, and the noble mountains among which the good monks live with their trusty dogs, that they may give aid and comfort to unfortunate travellers overtaken by cold and storm.

CHAPTER I.

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CARL'S HOLIDAY

"TO-MORROW, to-morrow!" Carl kept repeating to himself.

He was standing at the window of the little cottage and looking out toward the great mountain. He had lived under its shadow all his life. Its snowy summit was coloured a fiery red as it stood against the sky in the sunset light. People in far-away lands would give a great deal to see such a glorious sight.

But Carl saw another picture in his mind. It was the grand procession of the next day, that would celebrate the close of school before the summer vacation. Thousands of children would march in the line. They would carry the flag of Switzerland,—the white cross on a red ground. It was the emblem of their country's freedom, and they loved it well.

There would be bands of music; there would be a speech by the mayor of the city. Feasts would be spread, to which all the children were invited. Yes, the glorious day was near, and Carl was very happy.

"Carl, my boy, are you thinking of the good time to-morrow?" said a voice at the other side of the room.

Carl started, and, turning round, he saw his father standing in the doorway.

"O father, is that you? How glad I am to see you!" and the little boy rushed into the good man's arms.

"Yes, I am all ready for the festival. Mother has my best clothes laid out on the bed. She is planning to go, too, and

now you are home just in time to go with us. I am very, very glad." Carl was so excited that he talked faster than usual.

"I am tired of working in a hotel in the city, the country is so much pleasanter," answered his father. "And now I shall spend the summer with your mother and you. The people of the village wish me to take the cows to the mountain pasture. You shall go, too, and we will have a good time together."

"That will be fine. I never spent the whole summer there before. How soon are we to start, father?"

"Next week. The days are growing warmer and the flowers must already be in bloom upon the Alps. But now we must see your mother and talk about to-morrow. On my way home I heard in the village that you were going to the festival. Nearly all the neighbours are going too, aren't they?"

At this moment the door opened and a kind-faced woman came in, bringing a pail of milk in each hand. Her eyes were as blue as the sky, and her hair was nearly as fair as Carl's. It was easy to see that she was the boy's mother.

A happy smile lighted her face when she saw who was in the room. It was as much a surprise to her as it had been to Carl. She supposed her husband was still working in the big hotel at Lucerne, where so many strangers came from other lands.

When her husband told her of the work he had been doing, the heavy trunks which he had to lift till his back had grown lame, her face grew full of pity.

"It was too hard for you, Rudolf," she cried. "It is far better for you to take care of the cows this summer. We will

go with you, Carl and I, and we shall have a merry time."

She moved quickly about the room as she strained the milk into the crocks and made ready the simple supper. In a few minutes the little family gathered around the table. There was sweet, fresh milk from the cows. There was the black rye bread which Carl had been used to eating all his life,—indeed, he had never seen white bread in his home. Besides these, there was a round cheese, from which each one cut a slice as he wished.

Best of all, there was a sort of cake made of dough and chopped dried fruits. Apples and cherries and almonds were all mixed in this cake and Carl thought it was very nice. It was put on the table to-night in honour of his father's home-coming.

Night after night Carl had a supper like this. Morning after morning, the breakfast was the same. The only difference was that sometimes there was the cake with the dried fruits.

Yet Carl was very happy and healthy. To be sure, he had meat and coffee for dinner only once a week. This was on Sunday. It was no wonder that he looked forward to that day as the best of all, for it seemed a feast day to him. At the noon meal on other days there was only soup or potatoes with the bread and cheese. There was little change through the year except at the time when the fruit and nuts were ripe and they could be eaten fresh.

After the supper was over, the family sat a while longer around the table and talked about the school festival. Carl's father had just come from Lucerne. He told the boy how the buildings were decorated. He named the bands that would furnish the music.

"I am to march, father," Carl said. "And I am to carry the flag of my country. Children from all the villages around the lake are to take part, I hear. Just think! although we are back in the country, our school has its place in the procession."

Carl's mother showed her husband the bright red skirt that she was going to wear. It would reach to the tops of her shoes. There was a white waist with big sleeves that she had starched and ironed. There was a new black bodice she had just made; it would be laced about the waist, and it fitted her finely. She had polished the bands of silver to fasten across the back of her head above the long braids of glossy hair. She would certainly look very well in her finery, and her husband would be proud of her. Oh, yes, that was certain.

What kind of a hat would she wear? None at all! There was no need, and it would be a shame to hide the silver bands; they were too pretty. What did it matter if some of the women of Switzerland dressed like the people of other lands? Carl's mother was not ready to follow new fashions yet awhile. The old customs of her village were good enough for her.

It was a small room where Carl and his parents sat and talked. Everything was fresh and clean; the floor had been scrubbed so that no spot could be seen upon it. The table was unpainted. The chairs had straight, stiff backs; no rocking-chair or lounge had ever found a place here. Carl's mother had never rested herself on such a piece of furniture in her life.

There was one strange-looking object in the room. It was large and white. It reached far up toward the ceiling, and

was made of porcelain. It was the family stove. It had belonged to Carl's great-grandfather, and had stood in this very place, summer and winter, for a hundred years at least. It would not seem like home without it.

When baby Carl was first old enough to notice things around him, he used to creep up to the stove and try to touch the pictures painted on its sides. One was the scene of a battle where the Swiss were driving their enemies down a mountain. On the other side, a hunter was painted. He was bringing home a chamois that hung from his shoulders.

When the boy grew older, he used to climb the steps that led up to the top of the stove. It was so nice and warm there behind the curtains that hung from the ceiling down to the front edge. It made a cosy little room where Carl could lie and warm himself after a walk in the winter air. Sometimes the boy slept there all night long; but that was only in the coldest weather.

In the daytime his mother often put her fruit there to dry, or perhaps she hung wet clothes there. It had many uses.

There were no real stairs in the house. There was an upper room, however, and when a person wished to enter it he must first climb on top of the stove and then pass through a hole in the ceiling. It was a strange way of building the house; don't you think so?

Perhaps you wonder that Carl did not get burned when he lay on top of the stove. That was because there was never any fire in it! This probably seems the strangest thing about it, but you must understand that the fire was built in a sort of furnace out in the hall. The heat passed from this