

NO.69 SPRING 2006
BENE LEGERE
NEWSLETTER OF
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Swiss Enlightenment Collection

Germanic Collections

Taken as a whole, this important collection reveals to us the Swiss sectors of a tremendous international network of scholars, literary figures, and scientists during the era of the European Enlightenment. The writers included in this collection ranged over the entire world of learning—esthetic, scientific, philosophical, theological, philological, literary, historical, and legal.
 --Thomas Brady, *Peder Sather Professor of History*

The European Enlightenment, stretching from the late 17th through the early 19th centuries, was marked by a turning away from absolutism and institutional rigidity toward new ideals of rationalism and political liberty. Great minds of the period, such as Kant, Rousseau, Locke, Voltaire and Montesquieu, ushered in an “Age of Reason,” forever changing the philosophical and political landscape of Europe and North America. The Swiss Enlightenment collection contains more than 1,000 printed and pictorial items in over 1,500 volumes. It focuses on literary, philosophical and historical texts from the German-speaking regions of Europe, many of which were published in Zürich, one of the great European cultural centers during this period. This acquisition places Berkeley's holdings for early modern and enlightenment studies in the first rank of research libraries worldwide.



Die Bündnerin im Schwabenkriege (The Swiss Woman in the Swabian War)
 During the Swiss-Swabian War of 1499 the imperial forces were encamped near the border with Tyrol. In the small village of Schlein on the Inn, the villagers were burying a local who had been killed in a recent battle. A lone village woman remained behind alone in her house to prepare the traditional funeral meal for all of the villagers attending the burial. Drawn to the smoke from her chimney, enemy troops stormed into the kitchen and asked, “Who are you preparing this meal for?” With a firm but calm tone she replied, “For the Swiss soldiers, who

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will soon return. Do not disturb me, for I must hurry.” Shocked and confused by her tone, the soldiers quickly became frightened and fled the house. As they fled, the woman ran to the church alerting the villagers to the intrusion and calling them to arms. Grabbing anything that could be used as a weapon, including the iron cross of the church itself, the men charged after the offending troops and easily conquered them in battle.

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