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Preface

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Preface

This issue of the *Swiss American Historical Society Review* represents the first of two issues focusing upon the Swiss Protestant Reformation. The Editorial Board is pleased to present the research of two eminent scholars of the Reformation, the Swiss theologian Dr. Gerda Altpeter, who traces the development of the Reformation in the canton of Valais, and the American professor, Dr. Edmund Campion, who reviews the recent film *Luther*. I myself have written the introduction to this series on the Reformation.

This year promises to be an *annus mirabilis* for the Swiss American Historical Society. We shall soon present to our readers Leo Lesquereux's *Letters from America*, first published in French in 1850 but unknown to the American public until my present English translation. This is without doubt the most profound and eloquent study of Victorian America and the nineteenth century American emigrant experience in existence. The work is permeated by descriptions of nature as beautiful as those in Margaret Mitchell's *Gone with the Wind* and characterized by a style as elegant as that of Edward Gibbon in *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*. The book also contains numerous eye witness accounts of pioneer frontier adventures and dramatic descriptions of the fierce struggle between the Indians and the European colonists reminiscent of the exploits of Hawkeye in James Fenimore Cooper's *The Last of the Mohicans*. I hope that you, our readers, will encourage your family, neighbors and friends to purchase this fine study of nineteenth century American civilization.

In addition, an enigmatic mystery surrounds the book. The final chapters appear to be missing, and I believe the lost chapters to contain information of historical importance and great literary worth. It is for that reason that I am appealing to our many readers around the globe to help me to discover this missing literary treasure.

We know that Leo Lesquereux left for his tour of the American South on April 1st, 1850 and that he returned to Ohio during the late summer of 1850. Yet his journal records only half the trip. Where is the other half? The journal we currently have records his itinerary from Cincinnati, Ohio, down the Ohio and Cumberland Rivers to Dover,

Tennessee, then on to Nashville and Murfreesboro, Tennessee, then down to Huntsville and Gunthersville, Alabama, and finally back up the Tennessee River to the Raccoon and Lookout Mountains of northwestern Georgia and southeastern Tennessee. But then the book mysteriously stops, in *media res* as it were. Where is the remainder of the journal?

If you visit Tennessee, Alabama, Georgia, or the Carolinas, or if you have relatives in these areas, I would be deeply grateful if you could inquire if any locals have ever heard of a visit to their towns circa 1850 by an eccentric French speaking botanist who asked a lot of questions. Perhaps someone will remember an elderly relative making mention of such a visit.

For my part, I shall continue to spread the news about this mystery among the regional historical societies in the South and among the regional newspapers. For your part, if you have any information about the missing Lesquereux chapters, would you please forward this information to me at my address in Madisonville, as such information could provide us with invaluable clues as we continue our indefatigable efforts to bring this work in its entirety to the public.

Dwight Page, Editor, SAHS Review
Madisonville, Tennessee, September, 2004