

President's address at the annual general meeting of the London Group of the N.S.H.

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**PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS AT THE ANNUAL
GENERAL MEETING OF THE LONDON
GROUP OF THE N.S.H.**

January 17th, 1934

It is again my privilege to address to you from the chair a short survey of last year's work of the London Group of the N.S.H. There are many points or aspects of our activity about which a great deal could be said, were it not for the fact that their evolution during 1933, is almost identical to that of the previous years since 1930; in other words, these have become such a settled and understood part of our programme that they call for little comment to-day. One factor, however, again needs mentioning:— The shrinkage of our membership, the persistence of which is still our greatest domestic problem. The virtual closing of the frontiers to immigration deprives us of all possibility to obtain new recruits, fresh, young, eager and enthusiastic. Consequently, just as in the case of our London Colony at large, there is a further reduction of members to be noted. The loss is due to a variety of causes:— The great enemy "Death," has again gathered some of our most trusted members; some defections must be directly due to economic adversity; then there were some departures for Switzerland and, lastly, two members' names had to be erased from the register for non-payment of subscriptions due. In the course of the year we have lost 17 members, leaving a membership total of 133 to-day. The members lost by death are Messrs. Alexandre Schupbach, Henry Jenne and Alfred Muller, whose memory will always remain fresh with us. A further death in January which affects us greatly is that of Mr. C. H. Lullin, at the ripe age of 79, who was always a trusted friend of the London Group. There was only one admission.

The extraordinary and touching trust of our members in their President and Council has again been evinced by their delegation of the whole of the work and responsibility to the latter, but this praise at least is due to them that they have paid their subscriptions with such commendable promptitude that, at the end of the period under survey, no more than five subscriptions were outstanding. I wonder whether this is not a record for all Swiss Societies in Great Britain? We are grateful to them for their adherence, of course, but we again say that their abstention from attendance at the monthly meetings is as decided a loss to them as to the Group. If they only knew that these meetings are — at least to me personally — the most effective antidote for business and other worries.

In the course of the year under review the Group held eight monthly meetings, at this address, and usually on the third Wednesday in each month. These were attended with great regularity by all the Council members. The Group's activity, other than administrative, may be suitably described under the four headings:—

- a) Lectures and Causeries.
- b) Film Shows.
- c) Official participations, etc.
- d) General activity.

a) Six lectures were presented to the Group, all of them by members with the exception of the one by Prof. Gooch, the famous political lecturer. They were given by distinguished experts, proved to be of considerable educational value and variety and were followed by interesting discussions in each case. It is highly gratifying to know that we may at all times rely upon such valuable co-operation and performances by our own members.

March 1933 Dr. W. H. Rüfenacht:— La situation économique en Suisse, followed by a recital of Swiss folk songs by Madame Hugli-Camp.

April 1933. Dr. H. W. Egli:— La Taxe militaire.
May 1933. Prof. G. P. Gooch:— Present European situation.

June 1933. Dr. Charles Ferrières:— Insect pests in Switzerland.

October 1933. The Rev. Hoffmann-de Visme:— Le Val d'Anniviers.

November 1933 Mr. Pierre Savoie:— La gravure sur bois.

Our sincere thanks are due to the lecturers who have given us so ably and willingly a great deal of knowledge and enjoyment. Special mention may also be made of the venture of combining two features into one evening, as in March at Conway Hall; this was a great success and might be repeated to advantage.

b) We held two film shows, the first in February and the second in November, both at King George's Hall, which was packed in each case to capacity. While the February show followed our usual practice, in November we tried an innovation by inviting Mr. A. Zimmermann to give us a commentary in German of his Bernina Railway film. The great success it proved removed the last fears that the public use of German might be damaging to us as a Society. Your President had the pleasure of travelling to Manchester with Mr. Zimmermann, and to present

the film for a second time to the Manchester Swiss Society, where it was equally appreciated, every member of the Society with his family being present. At this point I would again refer with the deepest gratitude to the whole-hearted co-operation and appreciation of our Minister and the Legation with and of this particular activity of our Group. We have to be equally thankful to the S.S.E. in Berne for their constant and ready disposition to send us suitable films, and to the Directors of the Bernina Railway for their kindness to lend us free of charge their beautiful film and their witty lecturer.

c) In accordance with long standing custom, we participated in the Swiss Sports at Herne Hill in May last, where our three representatives were engaged in the general duties of administration. We acknowledge here with thanks the invitations for a representative of our Group to take part in various banquets of the Swiss Colony. That our relations with the Minister, the Legation and our sister Societies in Great Britain continue to be of the most cordial character, I need not again assure you. The encouragement and co-operation which we have received during the past year from the Minister himself and his staff is treasured by us with sincere gratitude, and will not fail to evoke in us a greater enthusiasm for our cause and a deeper patriotism. Nor should I omit to express our thanks for various publications and printed matter sent to us by a number of associations and institutions.

d) The Group's general activity during the year followed much the same practice as previously, but it is worthy of note that the correspondence in particular keeps on increasing. It would lead us too far to mention in detail the extended ramifications of our activity, but I can assure you that more and more time and work is involved in these matters, month by month. The intercourse between our Group and other Groups abroad is steadily becoming more intimate as a direct result of our Christmas Greetings to all Groups abroad. We have also remained in closer contact than ever with our Secretariat in Berne, and these ties are still further strengthened by the accession to the Presidency of the Commission des Suisses à l'Etranger by our good old friend and collaborator Prof. A. Lätt of Zurich. The Commission decided last year to allot ten out of the thirty seats to "non-resident members," each one representing a territorial Group of Swiss abroad. Your President has been honoured with the invitation to represent Great Britain on the Commission and he has accepted the call.

Apart from the very considerable amount of work created by the film shows, our service to

LEMBO TICINESE.

Faccio anch'io come le lucertole. Me ne sto tranquilla, sulla terrazza, invasa dal biondo sole di gennaio. E non lo temo, perché, per strana ed inspiegabile superstizione, ho piena fiducia nella sincerità del detto popolare nostrano "che il sole dei mesi che non contano tra le loro sillabe "r" non fa male!" Quindi gennaio di "r" non ne ha! Ha invece la neve, con mattinate bluastre, involte di nebbia e di brividi, e notti serenamente stellate, e dall'aria che taglia come un coltello il viso; ma le sue giornate sono chiare con il cielo trapuntato da leggere nuvole color fumo, come venissero da qualche grosso camino, ed i monti finemente rosati da questo sole che è tiepido e bello a sentirsi. Ad un tratto la mia profonda tranquillità è scossa; il silenzio rotto da un miagolio, da un suono indistinto, come di vapore che fatica ... è invece l'apparecchio radio che fatica ... Le lucertole, al primo rumore, guizzano via, rapide, io, invece non mi muovo. Mi piace anzi ascoltare questo rumore, preludio (poco musicale è vero!) di qualche cosa interessante. Infatti si delinea ora nitido un violino, poi delle campane ed una voce di bimba. La Radio della Svizzera Italiana, impianto del Monte Ceneri, presenta i personaggi del Presepio ... di quel Presepio tanto grazioso, tanto pieno di misticismo, che ormai va scomparendo purtroppo; sono rari i Presepi che ornano le case, all'epoca dell'Epifania: pochi e modesti. Forse per questo mi fece piacere, trovarmene lì davanti agli occhi, uno, quando meno lo prevedevo, ed in luogo dove meno lo aspettavo: in una vetrina di salumiere, grande, bello, ricco di fantasia e di lavoro; fatto ... con il grasso di maiale! Ma ormai l'era nostra vuole cose moderne, il misticismo scompare per far posto a tutte quelle trovate novecentesche.

Così, forse, al posto del presepio, c'è una radio (a proposito chi a ragione? si dice "la radio" oppure "il radio"? ... controversia non ancora ben chiarita.) che trionfa, orgogliosa, cialtrona, chiasosa a volte! Eppure ... eppure piace e tanto anche! E chissà che non sia un mezzo per far ritornare alla quasi scomparsa ("quasi," per fortuna non completamente) riunione di famiglia: la sera, invece d'uscire, d'andare al caffè, il giovanotto è tentato di rimanere ad ascoltare la voce armoniosa che un'onda misteriosa porta; la giovinetta ascolta con un lavoro in mano ... Interessante d'altra parte. E ormai anche noi ticinesi abbiamo la

the Colony at large is constantly increasing in such matters as the provision of Swiss calendars, books, informations and recommendations. A very large number of letters had to be dealt with during the year for England alone. In these circumstances, I am happy to possess the assistance of a most able and willing secretary in Mrs. Clara Muller, to whom I offer here the sincerest thanks on behalf of the Group.

From the foregoing you will perceive that we have just cause to look back with a certain amount of satisfaction upon last year's achievement, however much more we might have had it in our minds to perform. The ever-present crisis, although it has still sadly handicapped us in some respects, has not been able to sap our strength or to wipe us out of existence. Rather has it increased our determination to follow the appointed path in an even stride and to develop the cause which we know to be its own reward. Three years ago I told my business staff that the crisis was going to be "ever-present," that it was going to be the actual normality for a long period to come, and that it was going to be our salvation. The same thing, I feel convinced, applies to our Group. I have developed a sort of sneaking regard for this crisis which has knitted us closer together, has reduced our numbers but increased our faith and has revealed the strength of our foundation. I repeat that the cultural and moral value of our activity stands in direct relation to the necessities of the times and is, in fact, determined by them; our aim, therefore, must be SERVICE in the cause of TRUE PATRIOTISM. Taking this view, there is bound to be a great deal of work in front of us, and we must remember that it is work alone which will purify our aim and patriotic endeavour. Let us be steadfast in our determination to do our duty, and we may look to the future of the London Group of the Nouvelle Société Helvétique with calm assurance.

PERSONAL.

Mr. George Forrer wishes to express his sincere thanks to all those who have sent kind messages to him, on the occasion of his 90th birthday anniversary.

"TIR FEDERAL" AT FRIBOURG.

We are glad to state that efforts are being made to constitute a team for competition at the forthcoming Federal Shooting Competition which will take place at Fribourg in July-August next.

Radio nostra. E il nome "Monte Ceneri" è diventato quasi sinonimo di radio ticinese. Un impianto ottimo. Si disse, non so più da chi, il migliore della Svizzera. I programmi sono sempre tra i più scelti ed apprezzati, soprattutto apprezzato dai ghiottoni il menù settimanale che dà il cuoco delle onde. E bello è pure lo Studio, al Campo Marzio, a Lugano. D'aspetto novecentesco, semplice ma con ogni comodità, perfino un ampio caminetto in un salone sottostante. Così, ascoltando questa nuova voce, eco di tante voci lontane e vicine si dimenticano le solite baruffe chiozzote, i soliti grattacapi nostrani, che vergono poi sempre sui medesimi soggetti: per la donna, la moda, la vicina, la domestica ... per l'uomo: la politica, la crisi ... Questa crisi che fece, qui da noi, una nuova vittima: i bellinzonesi decisero di non più fare, almeno quest'anno, il solito corteeggio carnevalesco, così S.M. il Rabadan è messo all'indice da S.M. la Crisi! Ma nel campo politico la crisi par non si conosca, nuovi partiti nascono come funghi ... così, abbiamo ora il fascismo ticinese che è venuto da un mesetto circa a scombussolare la vita politica ed è divenuto soggetto di tante divergenze od aderenze, di tante discussioni su ogni giornale locale, con le relative ... lodi personali (caratteristica dei giornali ticinesi questa di "lodarsi" a vicenda!) — partito che pubblica il proprio giornale, Il Fascista Svizzero, stile veramente fascista, ogni giovedì; settimanale di polemica e di battaglia, come si definisce esso sul frontispizio — con la sua brava pagina dedicata allo sport "tonico della razza" — Sport! anche qui la crisi fa cilecca! i ticinesi stanno diventando sportivi per eccellenza — nel calcio possono vantare delle squadre forti e temibili, con Lugano e Locarno nella Divisione Nazionale, e con Bellinzona che s'appresta ad entrarci pure; gare di sci, d'inverno, tanto che a frotte, al sabato, partono da ogni centro baldi sciatori, verso le preferite stazioni invernali, dando così una buona entrata alle Ferrovie Federali (alquanto anemiche al presente) le quali istituirono i biglietti festivi (l'andata valevole per il ritorno), allettando così anche i più oziosi a viaggiare; gare di tennis, d'estate, anzi a Bellinzona s'istituì pure un tennis al coperto, per l'inverno. E fanno benone! Mente sana in corpo sano. Così, ritemprati al sole ed all'aria frizzante, i ticinesi si manterranno degni dei fieri e forti antenati loro.

Elena Lunghi.