

Swiss Benevolent Society

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As one of our most respected and sagacious members of the Committee reminded us, if it was found wise and necessary to suspend the Fête Suisse during the last war, how much more so is it incumbent on us in the present one, so infinitely more serious and grave, from every point of view.

The chairman, in summing up, told the Committee that, although he had three sons with the British Forces, he spoke without any consideration of his personal feelings, but that he was convinced the members had arrived, with a majority of two to one, at a right and proper decision. The minority, as good Swiss, were, of course, perfectly willing to fall into line.

Mr. Ch. Chapuis, when he presented his report as Treasurer, observed that, after having held that position for twenty years, he considered he was entitled to retire, but the Committee were fortunate in getting him to accept re-election for at least another year. Pasteur Pradervand proposed a hearty vote of thanks to the Treasurer for his long, arduous and untiring services; this was duly seconded and carried by acclamation. The Treasurer, in returning thanks, told his colleagues that his work could not have been carried on so successfully and with such beneficial results, to the general fund as well as to the Swiss Benevolent Society, without the constant and whole-hearted support of Mme. Chapuis.

At the close of the proceedings Mr. Suter announced that, in the circumstances, the Committee would remain in being as at present constituted, so as to be able to resume the work at the earliest possible date. He expressed the view of all those present in declaring that so old and honoured an institution as the Fête Suisse must and would survive and that the abandonment of the function was merely temporary.

No one present on March 6th at "Swiss House" will forget the weighty words of the chairman, when he impressed upon the meeting that the present is a time for introspection and for prayer, far more than for merry-making. The religious leaders were glad to take up this lead of a layman and hoped that all would take this very truth to heart. They also reminded us that the Churches would offer official celebrations of our great National Day on Sunday, August 2nd.

A hearty vote of thanks to the Chairman, as well as to the S.M.S., for kindly having placed their members' room at the Committee's disposal, brought the proceedings to an end.

GALLUS.

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SWISS BENEVOLENT SOCIETY.

The annual general meeting was held on Saturday afternoon, 28th February, at Brown's Hotel, Dover Street, London, W.1.

Mr. Anton Bon, the President of the Society, was in the chair and the meeting was attended by the Swiss Minister, Monsieur Thurnheer, who is Honorary President of the Society, by Madame Thurnheer, who is Patron of the Home for Aged Swiss, by Mr. F. M. Gamper, Chairman of the Committee of the Home for Aged Swiss, by Mr. Louis Chapuis, Chairman of the Swiss Relief Centre, and by some thirty members of the various committees.

In his opening address, after reviewing the general activity of the Society during 1941, when fortunately no unexpected strain of any consequence was placed upon its resources, Mr. Bon drew attention to the heavier calls which are bound to be made upon the Society's funds in the post war period, quite apart from any sudden emergency which might spring up at any moment and against which some provision was necessary. And so he stressed the need already now for special efforts if we, as a colony, are to maintain our reputation for looking after our poor throughout the war and in the difficult years to follow.

One hard fact may be mentioned in this brief survey, in anticipation of the detailed report and accounts to be published and distributed in due course, i.e., that notwithstanding the decrease in unemployment brought about by the war, the Society's total disbursements are again on the increase, as the following figures will show:

1940 £5,150

1941 £5,886

Therefore, provision against an uncertain future fraught with great and unavoidable difficulties cannot be expected to be built up from, nor even assisted by, any easing of the ordinary burden on the Society's finances.

It is comforting to note that the Committee of the Swiss Benevolent Society is taking the long view, in the confident belief that it may rely on the sympathy and help of all who have the welfare of our poor at heart. Here then is an opportunity for all subscribers, in the colony and outside, to continue and, if possible, increase their generous support — so gratefully acknowledged by the President and by the Hon. Treasurer in the course of their speeches — and to try and induce others, not yet enrolled, to join in the common effort in the noble cause of charity, in the true spirit of our national motto: "One for all, all for one" and remembering always the everlasting truth that it is more blessed to give than to receive.

Satisfactory reports were given by the various sections of the Society and, like the yearly accounts, were duly approved with the customary thanks to the executive officers and their helpers. Whether you listen to the Hon. Treasurer's minute analysis of monies received and spent, or to the more directly human side of events emerging from the Secretary's report, or again to the story of happiness, contentment and well-being of our old people in their country retreat at Hatfield, where other members of the Colony, hit by the war, have found a temporary haven of peace and quiet under the roof of the Swiss Relief Centre, or to the care with which the Society's funds are managed by

the Finance Commission, the conclusion is inescapable that here is work well done.

The Swiss Minister summed up all this in a short address at the end when, for himself personally as well as for the Swiss Government officially, he expressed thanks to all who do so much, whether on committees or as contributors, for our fellow citizens here in need of a helping hand.

Once again a special, well deserved tribute to Mr. Ritter's most efficient services and unfailing devotion was paid by the President and fully endorsed by the hearty applause of all present.

Mr. Bon kindly consented to preside over the Society's affairs also during 1942 and the various committees were re-elected too for a further year.

After the formal proceedings were over, the company stayed on and were most kindly entertained to tea by their President and perfect host. For an hour or so, the homely atmosphere at Brown's Hotel became a babel of lively conversation in groups of three, four or more. This opportunity for informal talks with all and sundry was seized upon no less by the Swiss Minister and by Madame Thurnheer in that good old democratic Swiss fashion, with which they have from their very start in London entered into the life of the Colony.

J.Z.

SWISS MERCANTILE SOCIETY.

The Monthly Meeting of the Society was held at Swiss House on Saturday, March 14th. Mr. J. J. Boos presided.

The Chairman informed the meeting that the lease of Swiss House expires on Lady Day (March 25th) and that the Society would then vacate building No. 34. Negotiations for retaining building No. 35, the original Swiss House, for a further period were not as yet concluded and the President mentioned that he would report more fully at the next meeting.

The usual agenda, including the admission of a new member, Mr. Alfred Hugentobler, was promptly dealt with. In the discussion which followed, the question of this year's First of August celebration was raised. The Committee was instructed to approach the other Swiss Societies with a view to ascertaining their opinion in the matter. As our national day this time falls on a Saturday, it was thought to be particularly opportune for arranging a modest function in keeping with the seriousness of the times through which we are passing.

In view of the lengthening hours of daylight, it was decided to revert to the old practice of holding the Monthly Meetings on the evening of the second Wednesday of the month. The next meeting, therefore, will be held on Wednesday, April 8th, at 6 p.m., at Swiss House.

This concluded the official part of the meeting and the members then adjourned to the Members' Room, where refreshments were served. Although the Society is only giving up part of Swiss House, the loss of the cosy Members' Room which had become endeared to so many members after a tenure of 15 years, was nevertheless keenly felt. To mark the occasion, members then exchanged reminiscences of Swiss House. Mr. Boos briefly recalled many outstanding events which took place in this room, such as the visits of the late Swiss

Presidents, Federal Councillors Motta and Schulthess, as well as those of the Delegates from our Headquarters in Zurich to the 50th anniversary of the Society. Messrs. Stahelin, Deutsch, Meier, Rothlisberger, Schneider and Burren also related many humorous as well as serious incidents from their own experience and it was a most happy hour for all present to hear something of the inner history of the S.M.S., with particular reference to the Members' Room.

Although the old Members' Room will no longer be available, a room in No. 34 will be suitably arranged to replace it and members will, therefore, find every opportunity for meeting in a congenial atmosphere.

W.B.

AN EPISODE OF THE WAR OF NO MILITARY CONSEQUENCE.

A Major from Liverpool in charge of a Camp in the South of England has in his care a company of A.T.S. Amongst these girls is a Swiss girl who appeared to be somewhat lonely with few friends in this country. She wanted a fortnight's holiday rather badly, so the Major wrote to the Consulate asking if we could arrange this for her. We consulted Mrs. Cheetham who lives at Meliden, part of Prestatyn, whose native town is Bâle. She agreed to give her this holiday and the Consulate was able to inform the Major that this Swiss girl would receive the invitation he had requested from Mrs. Cheetham. In the ordinary way the cost of the journey would have been prohibitive but the Army provided a free pass. The young lady has had her holiday and Mrs. Cheetham and Mrs. Steffen, her mother (82) but still lively and in good spirits, liked her so well that she will probably be invited again. So the story ends with smiles all round. Mrs. Cheetham deserves the greatest credit. She illustrates, like Mrs. Macquarie and Mme. Davidson who are still doing excellent work for our girls, that these ladies who have to change their name and nationality on marrying still retain the highest form of patriotism, the patriotism of service to the people from whom they sprang. But the Major too deserves credit for the kindly interest he has in one of his subordinates and for his confidence that the Consulate would assist him if it possibly could.

In this case it was an advantage that the Consulate, driven from Liverpool last May, has now a temporary home in such an attractive holiday resort as Prestatyn.

E. MONTAG.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS.

Wednesday, April 8th, at 6 o'clock p.m. — Swiss Mercantile Society — Monthly Meeting, at Swiss House, 35, Fitzroy Square, W.1.

Saturday, April 11th, at 1 p.m. — City Swiss Club — Annual General Meeting, at Brown's Hotel, Dover Street, W. (See Advert.).

Saturday, April 18th, at 2.15 p.m. — Nouvelle Société Helvétique — Monthly Meeting, at Swiss House, 35, Fitzroy Square, W.1, followed by Mr. G. Keller's "Comment on Current Events."

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