

At the Swiss hostel for girls

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THE COLONY

The Annual Report of the Swiss Benevolent Society not only answers our questions, but the President, Mr. F. G. Sommer, gives a very vivid picture of the many aspects of the work. If we have no heads for figures there is no need to study the accounts and balance sheet. Suffice it to realize that there was again a deficit of over £700 last year. But we should endeavour to go through the President's report very carefully; it makes extremely interesting reading and describes all the fields of activities, the care of the young and the old, the sick and the infirm, the cash and the kind. But it also gives pointers as to where and how we could give more support.

To judge from one's letter-box we certainly seem to live in the age of printed matter. Don't let us treat this particular report as "only" so much print. It tells a very important story if we take the trouble to read it, and to read it *now*, and to deliberate conscientiously what more we should do.

If any reader of the Swiss Observer does not receive an annual report of the Swiss Benevolent Society, their Secretary, Mr. J. Zimmermann, 31 Conway Street, London, W.1, will be only too pleased to send one on application.

MARIANN.

AT THE SWISS HOSTEL FOR GIRLS

Extracts from the Warden's Annual Report 1960

The past year has brought us a record number of 19,893 (1959: 19,742) overnight stays, but the total number of visitors has gone down to 1,553 (1959: 1,654), which, in fact, means only that we had more long-term residents. There was a notable change in favour of attending a language school rather than taking up domestic work.


We had again 270 (1959: 273) girls of other than Swiss nationality, mostly German, French, Italian and Austrian. In view of the increasing number of bookings from our own nationals, we are, much to our regret, obliged to limit the stay of other girls. This does not prevent us from welcoming them whenever there is an opportunity. Our Christmas Party, joined by three charming Indian girl-students, is particularly worthy of being remembered.

Free hospitality was offered to a few destitute girls. Financial hardship is, however, rather exceptional among our Swiss girls. Their main problems are of quite a different nature and are common to all classes. The younger generation is growing up in a society which has lost and not replaced old values. The family ties are often so loose that the children do not know where they belong. They feel lonely and insecure. The tales we hear in this respect are a sad and humiliating chapter. No wonder that the girls are often unbalanced and morally confused! Apparently self-assured and independent, they yet seek protection and guidance.


Now and again the Hostel is mistaken for some sort of a Finishing School. Parents who have lost control over their daughters try to put the whole responsibility on our shoulders and expect us to change a beatnik into a well-behaved young lady.

The television set is greatly appreciated. It is difficult to say whether it has helped to keep the girls more at home and to improve their English. In fact, the TV room is never more crowded than when a "Western" is on!

Lectures have not been as well attended as in former years. Is it a consequence of TV, or lack of interest and general apathy? It is somewhat depressing that only a few residents try to widen their cultural horizon, and that they hardly ever want to know about ultimate things.



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