

News from the colony

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NEWS FROM THE COLONY

LANGUAGE AND EXPATRIATION

"Language and Expatriation" was the formal title of a talk given by Mrs. Mary Hottinger, of Zürich, at the meeting of the Nouvelle Société Helvétique, on 19th September, at the Swiss Hostel for Girls, at Belsize Grove. Mr. Homberger, the President of the Society, was in the chair.

Mrs. Hottinger, British by birth, married to a Swiss, and living in Zürich, herself a voluntary exile, has long since established her name as that of a professional linguist and translator of repute. In addition, she also showed herself as a first-class lecturer, and this reporter is quite unable to do justice to her talk.

Languages have become a world problem: It is one of the modern problems that face us. "Mere words" — indeed; of all advances of man in his long history, speech was his first. Speech and language are rooted deep in the psychical part of man. There is a close correspondence between language and personality, in particular as regards speech and lingual expression. That, no doubt, is one of the reasons why none of the "constructed" languages, not even basic English, has been able to conquer large enough a following to make it a lingua franca in international intercourse. There is, of course, a vast difference between the spoken and the written language. Illiterate people can none the less be highly cultured; language is passed on primarily through ear and memory. The written harnessing of words and grammar are refinements which follow later.

Thus it is that few people are truly bilingual. Words have their emotional connotations — one reason why verbal translations of colloquial sayings often result in meaningless phrases. There are horizontal and vertical differences; differences in words and phrasing as well as in expression may correspond with social strata quite apart from education. It is reported that in certain Red Indian tribes the chiefs have special words which are never used by the other members of the tribe.

The lecturer also enlarged upon the difference between interpretation and translation, and the modern misuse of certain words, such as "abstract" (she would like to know what was an abstract chair), "stewardship", "contemporary", and so forth. Her main point, however, was that language and speech could not be separated from human personality and emotion. In order to "understand" one's

correspondent of a language other than one's own, one had to "understand" his language. A matter that took time and endeavour. One often came across occasions where disputants were giving quite different meanings to the same words.

And, lastly, there were the pitfalls for the translator. Some near-literal translation might be looking quite sensible on paper, but what could one do when one had to translate from Gotthelf that someone had breakfast on "Kaffee und Eiertätsch", when the people for whom the translation was intended hardly knew coffee and never had fried egg without bacon? Or, could the well-meaning correspondent be blamed who mistook "expensive" for "valued" and thus addressed the lecturer as "most expensive Lady"?

J.H.B.

A SHORT BIOGRAPHY OF MR. JEAN DE STOUTZ

Mr. Jean de Stoutz, who succeeded Mr. J. J. de Tribolet as First Counsellor of the Swiss Embassy, was born in Tokyo in September of 1913.

After preparatory studies at the French Lycée of Madrid and in Paris he studied Law at Berne, Munich and Geneva Universities.

From 1937 to 1939 Mr. de Stoutz worked at the Conciliation and Arbitration Division of the International Chamber of Commerce, and later was appointed deputy director of this organization.

In 1942 he took up a post with the Political Department in Berne, and three years later he was transferred to Paris. He was Counsellor of Legation in Moscow from 1952 to 1955, and then head of the Swiss delegation for the control of the cease-fire in Korea, and Chargé d'Affaires of Switzerland in Addis Ababa for four years.

Mr. de Stoutz was actually in Ethiopia when news came of his nomination in London.

ALBERT FERBER AT THE ROYAL FESTIVAL HALL

To-night, Friday, 13th October, at 8 p.m., our famous world-renowned compatriot, Mr. Albert Ferber, will be soloist at a concert given at the Royal Festival Hall.

The Haydn Orchestra, led by Joshua Glazier, will be conducted by Harry Newstone.

The programme will consist of works by Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven.

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