

The French Hospital

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THE FRENCH HOSPITAL

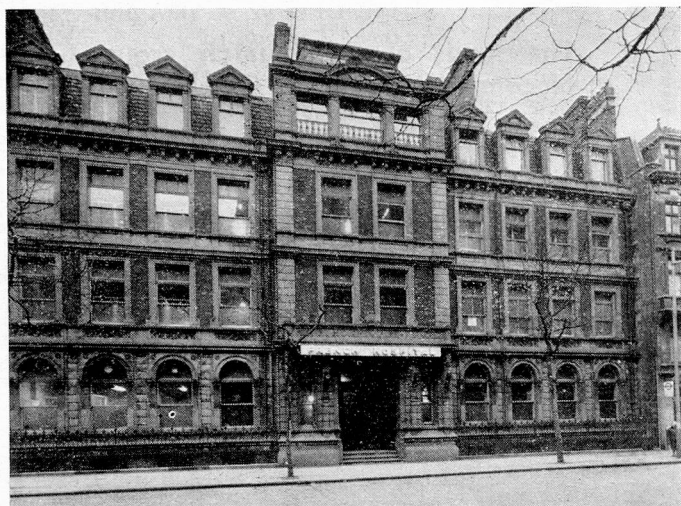
WHAT IT MEANS TO THE SWISS COMMUNITY IN GREAT BRITAIN

Why should news of the French Hospital be given in the "Swiss Observer"? The question is put by Mr. R. L. Thomas, one of the Swiss members of the French Hospital Committee and well-known in the Swiss Colony as Chairman of the Fête Suisse. He also gives the answer: "If we think of the French Hospital in terms of the Hospital for French-speaking people, it becomes clear to us. Among the founders of this entirely independent institution were some Swiss nationals, and two of our compatriots are permanent members of its Management Committee. The doors of the French Hospital are open to all, but its French background should attract for the most part French-speaking people, particularly those from the Romandie."

An interesting history.

The original French Hospital opened on 1st December 1867. It was situated in Leicester Place, W.C.2. It was intended for the benefit of distressed French-speaking foreigners of all nations requiring medical relief, and amalgamated with the French Dispensary, founded by Dr. Achille Vintras in 1861. Her Majesty the Empress Eugénie and His Majesty the King of the Belgians were amongst the august founders. Apart from a number of Royal Highnesses of France, there were members of the British aristocracy.

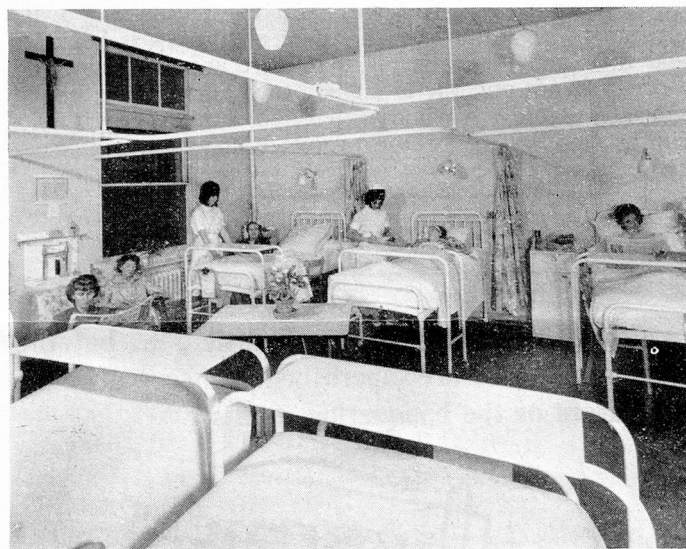
Eleven years later already, the hospital was enlarged. In 1890 the present dark red brick building in London's Shaftesbury Avenue was inaugurated, and again the list of founders, patrons and donors includes an impressive array of persons of exalted rank, headed by Her Majesty Queen Victoria. The French, Italian and Belgian Governments and the "Swiss Conseil Fédéral" are named, and several Swiss nationals figure on the list of eminent patrons. The hospital was further enlarged in 1893 and again in 1910.



Amenities today.

Very nearly a century has passed since the French Hospital was founded. Today it comprises nineteen wards, containing some sixty beds. Mr. Thomas made it possible for me to be shown over the hospital by the Secretary,

Miss S. Weideli, and I was much impressed by what I saw. Walking through the friendly rooms I was struck by the peace and quiet and surprised that hardly any of the hub-bub of West End traffic reached me. Seven wards are private and six semi-private, but whether public or otherwise, the same pleasant atmosphere reigns. Modern and according to the best hygienic principles rooms, beds and treatment may be, but there is none of the impersonal "starchiness" which is so often found in bigger hospitals. The Smoking and Television Rooms are pleasant common rooms where patients out of bed may relax and find companionship.



At the end of 1962, the "Sœurs Servantes du Sacré Cœur de Versailles", the Order which had sent its faithful sisters to the French Hospital in London for eighty years, had to be withdrawn on account of recruiting difficulties by the Order in France and also because of urgent apostolic and missionary work. Fortunately it was possible to enlist the services of the Marist Sisters of Dublin who are doing really excellent work.

The Medical Staff whose services, with a few exceptions, are given gratuitously, include eight consultants, two physicians, three surgeons, as well as specialists in gynaecology, dermatology, psychiatry and pathology. There are radiologists, orthopaedic, ophthalmic and dental surgeons, and, to complete the impressive list, mention should be made of the neurosurgeon, the Oto-Rhino-Laryngologist (who, I gather is the ear, nose and throat specialist), and, of course, several anaesthetists.

I was told that there are no Swiss doctors at the hospital at the moment, but that some are Swiss-trained.

First-class equipment.

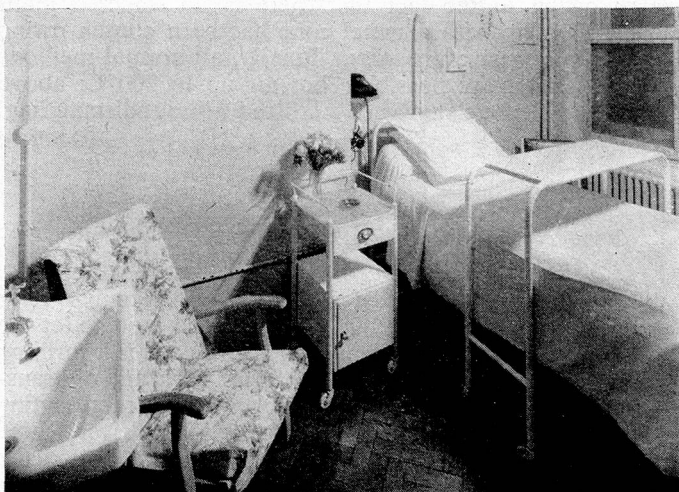
Whilst the wards and common rooms are homely and pleasing, the quarters where the doctors and other experts actually perform their skill have all the appropriate sterilised appearance of a highly efficient scientific establishment. I visited the operating theatre, the laboratory and the dispensary. I went through the ward kitchens and con-



sultation rooms. I was shown the casualty station and the out-patient department, the only part of the hospital which has not yet been modernised. The X-ray department provides for electrical, but not for deep X-ray treatment. There used to be a maternity ward, but not since the 1914/18 war. The physiotherapy department, a gift by the "Comité Interprofessionnel du Vin de Champagne" in 1961, impressed me particularly with all its latest equipment, looking so much like a white-and-chromium-plate torture chamber and yet bringing so much relief to suffering patients.

Famous Men.

In the board room I was able to inspect the tablet inscribed with the names of the founders and also a plaque of illustrious visitors. Monsieur Raymond Poincaré, Premier and President of France, visited the hospital in 1913, Monsieur Gaston Doumergue, first Protestant President of the French Republic, honoured the hospital with his visit in May 1927. In March 1939 and in March 1950 two more Presidents of France, Monsieur Albert Lebrun, and Monsieur Vincent Auriol, were famous visitors. On 4th April 1960, President de Gaulle visited the hospital.



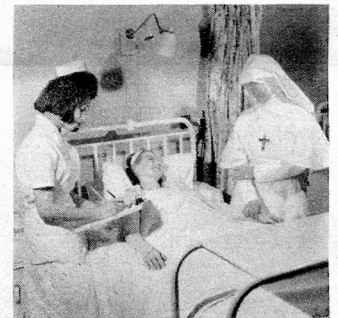
Telltale Figures.

To show you the extent of the hospital's activities, I should like to quote a few figures from the annual report of 1962. The hospital cared for over one thousand in-patients in that year and coped with 142 in-patients through

the Emergency Bed Service. New out-patients in 1962 numbered 4,253, and total out-patient attendances amounted to 14,173.

Financial Strain.

In his message Mr. Thomas goes on to say: "We would like to tell you about the things that go well, but we cannot hide the menacing truth: lack of financial means threatens the very existence of the French Hospital, and this is particularly disheartening as the major modernisation programme has nearly been concluded with great success and the Irish Community of Sisters have settled in well." The hospital is in need of funds. Special windfalls are rare, and the big money raising efforts cannot be staged too often. The Swiss Confederation and the Cantons give support, and the Swiss Ambassadors were patrons at the Anglo-French balls and theatre performances during the past few years. Readers may recall Madame Daeniker's patronage of the cabaret "European Rendez-Vous" in January 1962, which resulted in handsome gifts of money to various charitable institutions within the Swiss Colony, and also in £250 to the French Hospital. Another generous Swiss donor to the hospital was the late Mr. Alfred Renou. He was a member of the committee, as had been Messrs. Baume and Grau. With Mr. Thomas, Mr. C. Nater represents the Swiss Community on the Management Committee today.



Distinguished Patrons.

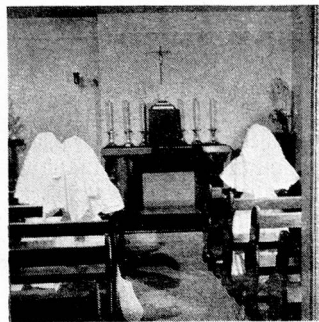
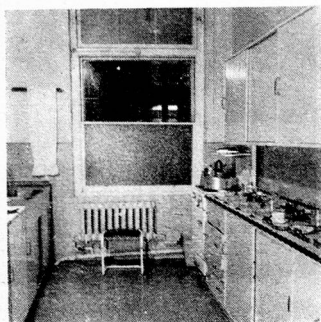
Her Majesty The Queen and His Excellency the French Ambassador are Patrons, and the President is Monsieur le Marquis de Miramon. The Lord Harvey of Tasburgh, Monsieur Roger Cambon and Mr. Graham H. Greenwell are Vice-Presidents. The Hon. Secretary of the Committee is Mr. R. Raulin, whose wife is Swiss and rendering active good services in the Swiss Colony.

It is admirable work which the French Hospital and all who are concerned with it have been doing. At the International Exhibition in Paris in 1900, the hospital was awarded the Gold Medal by the Special Jury on Hospitals and Charitable Institutions. At the Franco-British Exhibition in London in 1908, it was honoured with the *Grand Prix*.

No Time for Miracles.

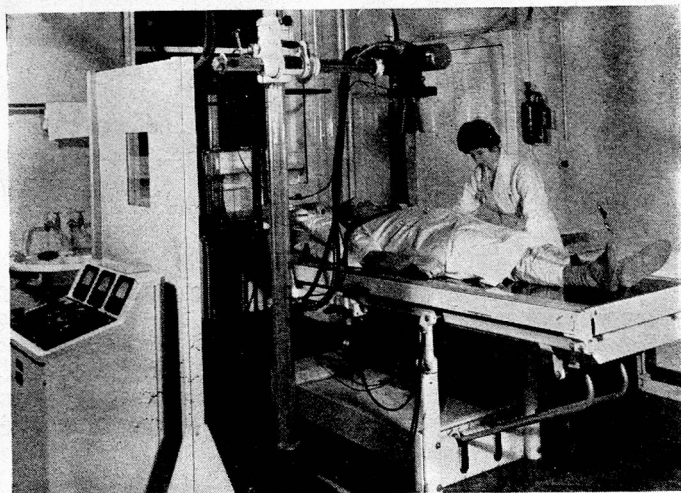
"This is no time for miracles", Mr. Thomas says in his message. "The Committee is well aware of this and is busy looking into proposals for financial help that will permit the useful work of the French Hospital to be carried on.

"All of you can help, too, simply by taking advantage of the facilities offered by the French Hospital in a time of need."



Conclusion.

The unusual aspect of this appeal lies in the fact that it is of two-way importance. We know only too well that there is a shortage of hospital beds in London, and that one often has to wait for admission for weeks. The French Hospital has excellent facilities which are available to everybody. The patients are admitted, not only without distinction of nationality or creed, but also without letters of recommendation — a great advantage to poor foreigners. Friendly relations exist between the Swiss Benevolent Society and the hospital, and S.B.S. pensioners are always readily accepted as patients (all general wards are free). The hospital also runs a convalescence home in Brighton where the Swiss Benevolent Society may send deserving people on holiday whenever beds are free, though generally speaking, the Home is for French Nationals only.



In 1962, the number of Swiss nationals who received care was 28 with an aggregate number of 362 days spent at the hospital. 149 Swiss out-patients attended 339 consultations. From the date of inauguration to the end of 1962, 4,509 Swiss in-patients were cared for at the hospital. Out-patients' attendances numbered 102,331.

Therefore by taking advantage of the easy facilities available at the French Hospital and recommending them to others we may derive great benefit to ourselves and our friends and at the same time support a very worthy cause.

Mariann.

Enquiries may be addressed to the Secretary,
French Hospital and Dispensary,
172/6 Shaftesbury Avenue, London W.C.2.
Telephone: TEMple Bar 5025/6.

AVERAGE LIFESPAN OF MEN AND WOMEN IN SWITZERLAND

According to recently published medical statistics, the average lifespan of the Swiss for the period 1960 to 1962 increased from 69.5 to 70.3 years for men and from 74.8 to 75.2 for women. In 1962 the overall death rate amounted to 9.7 deaths per thousand inhabitants. Deaths of those under fifty represented 14% of the total deaths. In regard to the death rate of mothers during childbirth, it is encouraging to note that for a thousand births, there were only 0.6 deaths. As for infant mortality in the first year, 21.2 deaths per thousand were recorded.

[O.S.E.C.]

A NEW SWISS INVENTION IN THE FIELD OF HYPODERMIC SYRINGES

The traditional type of hypodermic syringe has been in use for a great many years now. It consists of a glass cylinder with a soldered metal tip, a top and a metal piston. Naturally, details of construction have been continually perfected and technological developments have made it possible to improve numerous manufacturing operations without, however, the basic model having been modified to any fundamental extent. But it has long been known that syringes of this type present certain defects inherent in their design. An interesting novelty in this field was introduced in 1954 when a Swiss firm launched on the market a cylindrical syringe with an interchangeable glass.

Today, another Swiss firm has just produced the first all-glass hypodermic syringe with a removable tip, called "Lubrix". The main advantage of this innovation is its strength. In addition, the tip and the tube being two separate parts, in case of damage, only the tube need be replaced, and at a very moderate price. Owing to the precision of the different parts, it is quite unnecessary to number the tubes and the pistons as previously. "Lubrix" is easy to clean and the risks of contamination are very small owing to the fact that there is no soldered joint. The Teflon tip with a metal cone has been chosen owing to its non-adhesive property. Finally, all normal methods of sterilization are possible: hot air up to 200°C; above 120°C, the syringe should be sterilized without dismantling.

[O.S.E.C.]

SHIP ELEVATORS

The power plants set in rivers are blocking river navigation, and therefore big locks must be built to let the ships go on. The passage through such a lock is a thrilling experience in river travel. The Swiss Museum of transport in Lucerne has a working display model, representing the Birsfelden Power Plant and Locks in the river Rhine near the City of Basle. By simply pressing a button the onlooker can set in operation a river barge which then will travel all by itself, up or down the Birsfelden locks. The model, with the lock doors, light signals and turnabout installations works fully automatic, and the barges are propelled by air pressure. Transparent pictures above the model explain each position of the barge while in motion.

(Swiss Transport Museum.)