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UN MOT DE CHEZ NOUS.

Sur la Suisse entière, où que ce soit, le beau temps s'est enfin levé; et des manifestations nombreuses ont pu avoir lieu sous un soleil éclatant, encore que tant soit peu mitigé par un vent violent, aussi bien sur le lac de Constance que sur celui de Genève.

Essayons de tirer pour aujourd'hui les grandes lignes de l'activité suisse dans les différents domaines.

A Berne où le dieu Politique a fini par lever séance, accablé qu'il était par l'été naissant et la difficulté d'une échelle... de traitements... à graver! le Conseil National qui cette année, "traîne" un peu, a continué son étude du Statut des fonctionnaires. Vous devinez combien scabreux est un pareil sujet pour tous nos partis politiques, qui dans cette affaire ne veulent ni se compromettre aux yeux de cette aimable clientèle fédérale, ni à ceux du peuple en général. Et il faut avouer que les deux points de vue sont fort opposés. Un résultat est pourtant acquis. Il est intéressant parce qu'il s'oppose franchement à la récente conception adoptée par nos voisins de France. Chez nous, malgré les socialistes, les partis bourgeois ont fait bloc contre le droit de grève pour les fonctionnaires. On a même et très heureusement intercalé dans la loi un article 23 qui s'exprime ainsi: "Le fonctionnaire doit se montrer digne de la considération et de la confiance que sa situation officielle exige." Une semblable définition, si elle ne reste pas que lettre morte, est une chose admirable que bien des administrés des pays voisins nous envieront.

Notons encore le grand succès remporté par notre vivace Ministre des Affaires Etrangères, qui, répondant aux interpellations socialistes concernant le trop fameux meeting de Plainpalais, a déployé un art tout teinté de l'atmosphère propre aux habituelles discussions de la Société des Nations. Il a blâmé ensuite à gauche, puis à droite, blâmé le peuple, blâmé le gouvernement cantonal, mais le tout avec une dolente et lénifiante douceur et sans sembler y chercher de conséquences. Or la psychologie a déjà démontré que les gens que l'on blâme sont tout de même satisfaits si, avec eux, on blâme également leurs adversaires. L'affaire a donc fort bien réussi et son Excellence a quitté même la Salle des Pas perdus en souriant de son petit air victorieux, tout comme il avait clos naguère la dernière séance de la Commission pour la réorganisation du Conseil de la Société des Nations...

Passons l'élégance, la mode et les sports. Laissez moi cependant vous dire le succès triomphal de la dernière Fête des Fleurs de Genève, qui dépassa tout ce que l'on avait vu jusqu'à ce jour dans notre pays, et même ailleurs à ce que me disait un Américain habitant la Côte d'Azur. Passons la splendide démonstration que donna le même dimanche toute notre aviation militaire suisse, en organisant et courant de magistrale façon la course d'estafettes sur la parcours Thonme-Pâle-Genève à couvrir deux fois. Passons la finale du Championnat suisse de football qui souleva les foules et les arrières foules de Zurich et de partout; passons tout cela et parlons vie historique.

La Suisse entière a fêté ces jours la 450ème anniversaire de la Bataille de Morat. Ces importantes manifestations ont eu lieu à Morat même et à Fribourg. Nos plus hautes autorités, le Conseil Fédéral presque "in corpore" les ont suivies. Toutes les autorités cantonales y étaient représentées, et par dessus tout le peuple nombreux, multiple, heureux, ému, s'est associé à la Fête pour lui donner toute sa valeur de Vérité et de Reconnaissance immuable. A Morat ce fut la troublante réalisation du passé, le long des ramparts antiques; dans la fière petite ville à l'atmosphère d'antan ils ont défilé comme qu'ils étaient autrefois les fifres, les tambours, les chefs et les habitants héroïques, les Envoyés des Fuissants Seigneurs. Ces Messieurs des Liges, et même le Beau Seigneur Charles, surnommé le Téméraire, dont la puissance et la gloire s'effritèrent sous ces murailles en ruines... J'ai vu sur tous les visages une joie intense, une juste fierté un sentiment de fraternité, d'humanité inexprimable mais que seul le cœur pouvait ressentir. Et lorsque vint le soir, lorsque les embarcations sillonnèrent le petit lac au bord de la ville illuminée j'ai senti le lien définitif qui unit tous ces Enfants autour de l'emblème à la Croix Blanche.

A Fribourg ce sentiment fut encore plus saisissant. La cérémonie religieuse le matin avait créé une atmosphère propice aux grands rapprochements, aux moments d'unité, où tout un peuple vibre dans une même pensée. Aussi lorsque plus tard au Théâtre du Livio, l'on sentit monter graduellement l'émotion populaire en entendant l'œuvre admirable de Gonzague de Reynold, on pouvait prévoir une explosion de ces sentiments multiples trop longtemps contenus. Lorsque s'avança le Messager de la Victoire pour clamer son patriotique appel, il marcha hors de cadre du Théâtre, hors de cadre de l'Épopée, hors de cadre de l'Histoire, pour n'être plus que l'Appel intérieur qui bouillonnait déjà au dedans de tous les spectateurs. Ce fut soudain un apothéose unique et vibrant, une unité totale où comme à Morat tout le Peuple Suisse communia dans le même sentiment de reconnaissance et d'Unité! "UN SUISSE QUELCONQUE."

THE ZURICH MUSICAL FESTIVAL.

(By Sophie Wyss, the Swiss Soprano.)

I was naturally pleased that Zurich should have been chosen as the seat of the Fourth Annual Festival of the International Society for New Music, which was concluded on June 24th. And above all, I was proud that the work of two Swiss composers should have been given, and that the programmes should have been filled with the names of many Swiss musicians. Indeed, one may well claim that Switzerland bore the brunt of the whole affair.

I do not think that anyone will pretend that all of this "modern music" was a great success. In fact, I should be rather inclined to say that the only pieces which were really successful were those which took their inspiration from definite literary ideas, and had, as it were, a realistic background formed by words to give them an interest which as music they could have scarcely claimed. The music I heard that was music alone, and had no support from literary associations, did not strike me as being worthy of much attention, and indeed in one particular case was nothing short of an insult to the ears. This was a work by Arnold Schoenberg, the modernist of Vienna, designed for flute, oboe, clarionette and horn. It seemed to me to be a wearysome piece of nonsense, lasting over an hour. For forty minutes the audience of trained composers and critics, drawn from practically every country in Europe, remained quietly polite. Then, when the shrieks and hoots and grumbles of the quartette had exasperated them past all endurance, a shuffling of feet was heard, a coughing and finally a whistling and hissing that must have made it very hard for those five brave musicians to finish their disagreeable task. One of them told me that he had attended twelve rehearsals of this piece. There are heroes in Zurich!

The latest work of Arthur Honegger, born of Zurichois parents, and once a student in its Conservatoire, created a tremendous impression. "King David" is a masterful, devastating work of art. It reflects a musical impression of the life of the Psalm-maker, and it is, one may well say, the spirit of the Old Testament personified. It is brazen, it is fierce, it is exalted. In this spirit Dr. Volkmar Andreae released the forces of the magnificent choir and orchestra of Zurich. One forgot that there was ever such a word as "piano" in the musical language, so lusty was the rendering. Indeed, one or two critics from Geneva rather deplored this, since the Mezières performance had apparently soft points that were quite drowned here. Poor Mia Peltenburg, the Dutch soprano, very much the vogue in Switzerland just now, was sadly rumpled by it. She has a lovely lyrical voice, but perhaps this piece, or at any rate Andreae's version of it, would have been better suited by a dramatic soprano. A spoken commentary on the King's life was recited by Waldemar Staegemann, of Dresden, and this was the real backbone of the piece, well worth hearing, at least once.

On the same evening "A Hungarian Psalm," by Zoltan Kodaly, was given. This was a fine work indeed, utterly untuneful, but nevertheless sincere and gripping, and very similar in ideals to the Honegger work. Karl Erb sang the tenor part. His mannerisms served rather to amuse a most untheatrical audience, but his voice was good enough, and surely he is a very enivable person, this husband of Yvogueu?

Walter Geiser, a young man of Basle, had the honour of having a work for violin, viola and cello performed, but the best I can say for it was that it is so intricate and studied an affair that any sense of real music that it may have had was lost in the elaboration of the score. It was an intellectual rather than a musical success. A charming morning's entertainment was also given at the Marionette Theatre. The piece represented a dream of Don Quixote, who, asleep upon a bench, watches himself recue all manner of ladies in distress from the grip of dragons and steep embattlements. The music of de Falla, the Spanish composer, just brought out that queer blend of the dramatic and the ridiculous wherein lies the pleasure of marionettes.

Later in the Festival there was real beauty of a religious nature in store for us. These were "Le Miroir de Jésus," a poem by Henri Ghéon, music by André Caplet, and "Litanei," by Felix Petyrik. The latter was, quite apart from its beauty, an amazing example in scoring for a comparatively small choir: at one time no less than nineteen different parts were being sung simultaneously! Caplet's work had all the ineffable charm of some early pictures of Madonnas and Saints, executed in faintest blue and primrose, a delightful and roseate affair. Everyone was pleased to hear that consummate artist, Madame Croiza, in the chief part.

Naturally there was a social side to the Festival. As well as the concerts, there were receptions and dances in which one brushed shoulders with people bearing the greatest names in the world of music. Perhaps Posterity will remember this Festival as the birth place of the art of one of these composers whose work we have just heard whom it has since come to regard as a genius. But this I very much doubt.

SWISS WATCHMAKING.

The reports of the two big Observatories in Switzerland—those of Neuchâtel and Geneva—have been published. It is well known that both these observatories have a first-class department for chronometers, to which manufacturers send each year their best time-pieces. So that their annual reports are of great interest to those who would follow the development of Swiss chronometers.

Both observatories record that, as regards chronometers submitted for examination, the year 1925 has been a good year. The Neuchâtel report mentions various exceptional results, and gives one to understand that its activity will extend in the near future to new types of time-pieces. Its installations have been improved and completed in the course of last year. The Geneva Observatory, on the other hand, considers that on the whole there has been in 1924 and 1925 an improvement on the preceding years, and records with satisfaction the various improvements made in the chronometer testing department in the course of 1924.

The general tenor of these reports once more shews the importance attached by scientific circles to the chronometric perfection of Swiss watches. They shew equally well that their efforts are closely followed and approved by the élite of watchmakers. We shall not be surprised, when the results of next year's tests are published, to find quite exceptional results that will redound to the credit of laboratory-men, manufacturers and setters engaged in the production of Swiss chronometers. To such men, the number of whom is increasing year by year, is due the world-wide fame of the Swiss watch.

Such laborious efforts cannot very well remain fruitless. Oddly enough, it is precisely the precision watches of first quality that are least affected by the present difficult situation; for the watch-making industry, as everyone knows, has at present to face a series of difficulties that are by no means nearing a solution. Foreign markets are far from having their purchasing power. On certain markets, the competition of foreign manufacturers is intensely felt. In not a few countries whose exchange has depreciated, remounting workshops have been set up by people in the trade who will import only detached parts of watches, the duty on which is lighter. In consequence, orders are becoming scarcer in many a Swiss firm; the industrial activity is irregular, and future prospects are rather uncertain for a good many second-class manufacturers. The big stocks accumulated in Great Britain, before the McKenna duties came into force, have resulted in a diminution of activity in several firms. In a word, although there is no crisis in the real sense of the term, the situation is far from being satisfactory in various Swiss watch-making circles. It is no better in Germany, where the firms manufacturing watches, clocks and alarm-clocks are going through an acute period of crisis.

In spite of it all, there is no small consolation in the thought that the more serious manufacturers, who by dint of sustained effort have succeeded in producing articles of first quality, are keeping up their activity and looking forward confidently to better times. When the last crisis of 1920-21 had reached its acme, it was the foremost firms that suffered most. They stood fast, however, keeping up the high quality of their products and even improving it in many respects. They took advantage of the period of crisis to perfect their technique and improve their plant. At the present time they are reaping the fruits of their confidence and courage in the past. Whilst the second-class firms, in Germany and elsewhere, are losing their American customers—watchmaking having developed tremendously in that country in the course of the past ten years—the best Swiss firms still keep up their American market. Several amongst them have been even extending it recently. Ever faithful to the maxim of serious manufacturers—Quality First—they are now reaping what they have sown!

(B.I.S.)

JULIETTE WIHL.

A most appreciative and enthusiastic audience greeted Madame J. Wihl at the pianoforte recital given by her at Wigmore Hall, London, on the evening of June 23rd.

It was a pity that this prominent artist should have appeared before us at a time in the year when a large number of the music-loving public are out of town.

To those who had the good fortune to be present on this occasion, Juliette Wihl's interpretation of Chopin was a delight. The rendering of his Sonata B flat minor, Op. 35, especially the Marche Funèbre, made a most marked impression on the audience.

Vivid imagination, combined with brilliant technique, makes it possible for her to render this great master's compositions, as only one who is completely absorbed in their art could do, and we hope to hear Madame Wihl many more times in the near future.