

A unique meeting in Basle

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NOUVELLE SOCIÉTÉ HELVÉTIQUE ANNUAL REPORT.



A. F. SUTER

President

of the

Nouvelle

Société Helvétique.

It is my privilege to read to you again the Presidential Report of the Group's activity during 1937. Were it not for the fact that we have the welfare of our Society so much at heart, I fear you might quite likely find the report of little interest, since it cannot differ materially from a good many of its predecessors, and also because the greater number of you have been in regular attendance at the monthly meetings during the session.

Nothing whatsoever unforeseen or untoward has happened to the Group during the year under review:—We have done what we have conceived to be our duty, without much propaganda or show, but holding fast to the principles which have guided us from the inception of the Group.

We have held eight monthly meetings, some at the Foyer Suisse and some at Swiss House, and, since the former are always preceded by a homely evening meal, they usually seem to stimulate discussion and friendly feeling among us. The talks and addresses we were privileged to hear on these occasions are briefly and chronologically recorded below:—

January 15th. Foyer. This was the annual general meeting, at which, I believe, for the first time in his career as Hon. Sec. Mr. C. Campart was unfortunately absent. Most of the evening was taken up by administrative matters.

February 26th. Swiss House. This evening was graced by an excellent talk on certain alpine districts of the Grisons by our member, Mr. E. Wepf, who showed us a fine selection of his photographs in the form of diapositives. It was delightful to follow Mr. Wepf on his wanderings among the Grisons.

March 19th. Swiss House. We had the pleasure to receive our Central President, Dr. P. H. Zschokke, and to enjoy one of his addresses (excellent). This was entitled:—"Schweizerische Selbstbehauptung in heutiger Zeit." The Minister, Mr. Paravicini, and a large audience were present, who took a very active part in the discussion and gave us a wonderful insight into "after-war" diplomacy." The evening was undoubtedly one of the most successful and enjoyable functions we have had.

April 16th. Foyer. The president of the Group presented a paper entitled: "The Swiss in England." This was a meritorious attempt to collect the known historical facts about the Swiss in England into an attractive narrative, and it was received with keen interest.

May 21st. Swiss House. It had been previously decided to have executed an Address of Congratulations to the Royal Pair, King George and Queen Elizabeth, on the occasion of their Coronation, and in the name of All Swiss living in Great Britain. This work was entrusted to our artist member, Mr. Pierre Savoie, it was signed on behalf of the Swiss by the doyen d'âge of the London Colony, Mr. George Forrer, and presented by the President to the Home Office for transmission to Their Majesties. We have the acknowledgement of the Home Secretary, and forwarded a photograph of the document to Berne for incorporation into the Archives. The cost of the document was borne by the various societies of Swiss in Great Britain. Dr. Charles Ferrieres presented a causerie on his visit to a Swiss Planter in Ceylon, which was plentifully illustrated with lantern slides. Being a scientist and trained observer, the lecturer held our interest with a vast amount of new information on the subject.

July 16th. Swiss House. The session was occupied with administrative matters only.

October 15th. Foyer. This was a particularly well-attended meeting. Honour was done to the memory of our departed friend, Mr. Hoffmann-de Visme. Our member, Mr. Henry C. Balsler, read a paper on "The Inns of Court" and gave us a wonderfully attractive account of the organisation and life of the English Bar, of which he is a member.

November 19th. Swiss House. A very large audience, comprising many of the S.M.S. students, enjoyed a paper presented by our member, Mr. Giuseppe Eusebio, on the life and activity of many of the Ticinesi artists who had emigrated to Italy. Dr. Rezzonico represented the Legation and Mr.

Gambazzi the Unione Ticinese. A very successful evening.

Owing to the impossibility of obtaining sufficient film material, it was only possible to hold one Film Show, on November 13th, but this function was held by many to have been the most successful one hitherto. On the other hand, we enjoyed an extra Film Show by Dr. Pozzi de Besta, who spoke to us on "Swiss Folklore." We again participated in the Concert at Conway Hall, October 19th, with the Swiss Orchestra, and this proved a very successful attraction for the Colony. Our Secretariat in Berne sent a large quantity of gentians for sale at the Swiss Fête in June (Alpenrosen not being in bloom owing to the late snows). This gift of flowers is always greatly appreciated. The Swiss Sports were abandoned in 1937 owing to lack of support.

The administration of the affairs of the London Group again ran very smoothly, and in this connection we have of course to be thankful to our ever-ready helper and assistant, Mrs. Clara Muller, the President's secretary. The work entailed in the ordinary development of the Group is much greater than we are apt to think, particularly in connection with certain services, like the distribution of calendars, which are growing every year.

The accounts for the year have been discussed and passed elsewhere. The membership is down by three, being 137 at the beginning and 134 at the end of the year. We have lost four members by death, two by repatriation, and have gained three in their stead during 1937. Unfortunately, this more or less stationary number of members is a proof that our intended drive for new members during the year has not borne any fruit at all—probably because the intention died as such. In this connection, I blame myself as much as the other members of the Council. I feel certain that a fairly large number of Swiss residents here would be prepared to join the group, if the matter could be followed up systematically and with more enthusiasm.

We have not been able to sell any further books ("Mon Pays"), but we imported over 750 calendars, and again were asked for more when they were exhausted. Christmas cards also were sent to every other Group abroad and the greetings were reciprocated by a large number of them.

As your President, I now take particular pleasure in expressing the thanks of the Group to all those who have in the course of 1937 assisted us actively in one way or another. Our Minister and the Staff of the Legation have at all times shown us their appreciation and are always ready to give us assistance; our sister societies in London have co-operated with us in various matters; the editor of THE SWISS OBSERVER, Mr. Stauffer, has granted us a large amount of space in his paper whenever required; the management of the Foyer Suisse has made us welcome and fed us well at our meetings there, and the Swiss Mercantile Society are still the best landlord we could think of. The Swiss Colony at large have again tolerated our existence as a harmless and rather beneficent factor of their well-being, so that we have managed to have few detractors.

With the Secretariat in Berne we stand in the most intimate relationship, and our special thanks are due to them for their constant desire to fulfil every one of our wishes; we have to remember, however, that they look upon us as a model Group and expect performance accordingly. For my own personal appreciation of their work and outlook I would refer you to one of the last paragraphs in the report of my contribution to the *Journée des Suisses à l'Etranger*, printed in the Sept./Oct., 1937, issue of the *Echo Suisse*, the N.S.H. publication which each one of us ought to possess, read, and digest.

NOUVELLE SOCIÉTÉ HELVÉTIQUE

We wish to direct the attention of our readers to the lecture of Major Paul de Vallière (see enclosed handbill).

Major de Vallière has a great reputation as a lecturer, and we feel sure that this lecture will be a big success. Start: 8 p.m. Admission free.

A UNIQUE MEETING IN BASLE.

On Easter Sunday there assembled in Bâle about 40 men who, fifty years ago, in 1888, were together in the same class of the "Realschule."

Similar re-unions had been held before, but special efforts had been made on this occasion to bring together also those of the old boys who reside in foreign lands and who have not been able to attend the previous gatherings.

A number of them came from Germany and France and from England three men, well known in our Colony, made the journey to their native town for the purpose of being present at this, the final meeting.

We all met at 11.30 in the old class room (1D) of the Realschule in the Rittergasse and took the seats we had occupied 50 years ago. Needless to say that many found this difficult, the years having brought about remarkable and noticeable changes. Without wishing to boast, I believe the three men from the City of London were the slimmest and best preserved of all. The welcome extended to them was of the warmest.

In many cases introductions became necessary, the old school fellows being quite unrecognisable. The organiser then proceeded with the roll-call and we replied to our names with "Hier" as of old. To 18 names, alas, there came no reply, these men having passed away in the course of the years.

After a charming speech of welcome, we adjourned in groups to the Restaurant of the beautiful Basle Zoological Gardens, where we sat down to a simple and good dinner. It was nearly 6 p.m. when the meeting broke up.

We were fortunate in having with us two of our old masters, *viz.*: Dr. Weckerli and Dr. Flatt, both of them wonderful men who enjoyed themselves just as much as we youngsters. Many speeches were delivered, many anecdotes told, and we heard again of the many naughty things that we had done when we were boys. Those of us who were present for the first time had to describe their life's history and their movements during the last 50 years.

On one thing all those who spoke were unanimous, *viz.*, they were proud of their old school and grateful to the teachers to whom they owe the beginnings and the foundation of their education.

It was a truly remarkable and most enjoyable gathering which is not likely to be repeated, and the memory of it will last as long as life itself.

H.P.

PHILATELIC GROUP S.M.S. LONDON.

A big National Postage Stamp Exhibition will be held in Aarau from 17th to 25th September, 1938.

This Exhibition has been much advertised in English Philatelic Papers and promises to be very interesting.

The last time for exhibitors is May 31st, 1938.

There will also be a special postage stamp block new or obliterated to the value of Swiss frs. 1.50. plus 0.90 frs. tax, on letters addressed to receiver Swiss frs. 1.60. plus frs. 0.50. post tax.

For full information please apply to The Secretary National Exhibition of Postage Stamps, Aarau (Switzerland).

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Proprietor: A. Widmer (Swiss).