

# Nouvelle société helvétique

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president of the Swiss Confederation in 1915, 1920, 1927, 1931, and 1937. During the last War he took over the direction of the Federal Finance Department, and it was largely due to his efforts that Switzerland came out of the War with a comparatively small debt and a strong financial position.

In 1920 M. Motta was appointed Foreign Minister and chief representative of Switzerland at the Assembly of the League of Nations. He was not only one of the outstanding figures at the Assembly, where he always knew how to speak the right words at the right time, but also one of the best debaters in the discussions of the Commissions in which he took part. His speeches were of a high literary standard, though generally unprepared. The speech he delivered as president of the Swiss Confederation at the opening of the first Assembly of the League will be particularly remembered. Though his feelings were in no way pro-German, he repeatedly spoke on behalf of the admission of Germany, his opinion being that the League should include all nations. In 1934 he made a bitter attack on Soviet Russia in opposing Russia's entry into the League.

M. Motta was married and had 10 children.

## Nouvelle Société Helvétique.

### LONDON GROUP.

#### Annual General Meeting.

Saturday, January 20th, 1940.

A nice and informal luncheon preceded the 23rd Annual General Meeting of the London Group of the Nouvelle Société Helvétique, which took place at the Foyer Suisse. Quite a fair number of Swiss with their ladies had gathered for this luncheon and were reinforced later, when the proceedings started.

Mr. A. Fred Suter was in the chair and conducted the business proceedings with his usual efficiency, mixed with good humour, up to the moment when the old Council resigned "en bloc," according to the Rules of the Society. Mr. Henry C. Balser was then asked by Mr. Suter to act as President pro tem, a duty which he discharged with ease and the eloquence of a born barrister-at-law.

The elections resulted in 12 members of the previous Council being re-elected and in adding "fresh blood" to that body in the persons of Mr. Bernard W. Sigerist and Mr. E. J. Bachofen.

Mr. A. Fred Suter was re-elected President with acclamation and unanimity, an honour which he duly acknowledged, and Mr. C. Campart, in spite of his protestations, was re-elected Hon. Secretary of the Society. The two members of the last Council, who, more by mere chance than anything else, were not re-elected, took this result of the polling with good spirit. The accounts, duly checked up by the two auditors — who were in turn re-elected, also in spite of protestations — were passed and the Assembly then had the pleasure of admitting (by acclamation) three new lady members, viz.

Mrs. Clara Muller,

Mlle. Veinig (Marcello),

and Mrs. Gertrude Anna Keller, wife of our journalist member.

Mr. Suter, in reply to a friendly farewell letter of the retiring Swiss Minister, Monsieur Charles R. Paravicini, had drafted a letter of thanks to M. Paravicini, had drafted a letter of thanks to M. Society, and also of good wishes for the future. This letter was read out and afterwards signed by each member present. It is probably already on the way to Berne, where M. and Madame Paravicini are now living.

The business proceedings thus over, after one or two more small items were dealt with, the Nouvelle Société offered a cup of tea and some pastries to everybody present. This was highly appreciated and put all and sundry into the right frame for "things to come."

What followed then was a lecture on

#### *Recent Experiences with the Swiss Army.*

delivered by Captain Bernard W. Sigerist. When Switzerland mobilised in September last, Mr. Sigerist was among those who left England to join up. Being an officer, — he was First Lieutenant when he left England and was promoted to the rank of Captain during his ten weeks stay in Switzerland — he was put in charge of one of the trains which took, altogether, roughly 400 Swiss to their homeland. After a few days he was already high up in the mountains, "somewhere in Switzerland," under very different conditions from those he was accustomed to in his luxury flat in Hampstead — to use his own expression. There followed for him a course of most intense and concentrated training, during which he became acquainted with the latest weapons now in use in Switzerland: the light and heavy machine gun, the infantry gun, the mine-thrower. Mr. Sigerist gave his audience, which had grown to over 50 persons, a lot of interesting information about the range, the firing speed and other details of these weapons, which it may be wise not to reproduce here.

This lecture, which gave the impression of having been most thoroughly prepared, lasted well over an hour, and was enriched by photographs and an occasional drawing on the blackboard. It was so instructive and so well delivered that even ladies told me afterwards that they were completely under the lecturer's spell during the whole talk. There was indeed not one dull moment in it and the Nouvelle Société Helvétique has indeed, as Mr. Suter rightly said afterwards, every reason for being thankful to Captain Sigerist. It was, from A to Z, first-hand information, and comforting information too.

Thus it was nearly 6 o'clock when the meeting broke up and members and friends bade each other "Au revoir," to go out into the dark, home to their frozen water pipes ...

G. J. KELLER.

### PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS

It is once again my privilege to present you with an account of the London Group's activity during the past year.

If, as I have said, 1938 was a year of continuous crises, 1939 produced a succession of war-like acts on the Continent which could not fail in the end to provoke the mobilisation and military participation of the two great Democracies in the West. This tragic event actually came about at the beginning of September,