

**Zeitschrift:** The Swiss observer : the journal of the Federation of Swiss Societies in the UK

**Herausgeber:** Federation of Swiss Societies in the United Kingdom

**Band:** - (1943)

**Heft:** 1009

**Rubrik:** Nouvelle société helvétique

### **Nutzungsbedingungen**

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist die Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften auf E-Periodica. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Zeitschriften und ist nicht verantwortlich für deren Inhalte. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern beziehungsweise den externen Rechteinhabern. Das Veröffentlichen von Bildern in Print- und Online-Publikationen sowie auf Social Media-Kanälen oder Webseiten ist nur mit vorheriger Genehmigung der Rechteinhaber erlaubt. [Mehr erfahren](#)

### **Conditions d'utilisation**

L'ETH Library est le fournisseur des revues numérisées. Elle ne détient aucun droit d'auteur sur les revues et n'est pas responsable de leur contenu. En règle générale, les droits sont détenus par les éditeurs ou les détenteurs de droits externes. La reproduction d'images dans des publications imprimées ou en ligne ainsi que sur des canaux de médias sociaux ou des sites web n'est autorisée qu'avec l'accord préalable des détenteurs des droits. [En savoir plus](#)

### **Terms of use**

The ETH Library is the provider of the digitised journals. It does not own any copyrights to the journals and is not responsible for their content. The rights usually lie with the publishers or the external rights holders. Publishing images in print and online publications, as well as on social media channels or websites, is only permitted with the prior consent of the rights holders. [Find out more](#)

**Download PDF:** 13.12.2025

**ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, E-Periodica, <https://www.e-periodica.ch>**

## NOUVELLE SOCIÉTÉ HELVÉTIQUE.

### London Group.

The Society held its Annual General Meeting at the Dorchester Hotel, on Saturday, January 9th.

The Meeting was preceded by a luncheon and was attended by about 120 members and friends.

The President, Mr. A. F. Suter, bade a very hearty welcome to the Swiss Minister and Madame Thurnheer and expressed to them the Society's appreciation for having honoured the meeting by their presence. He also extended a cordial welcome to Dr. H. Revilliod of Montreux, who, although perhaps not known to many of the members present, had been very closely connected with the N.S.H. in his capacity of President of the Montreux Group. Unfortunately, Madame Revilliod, who is a daughter of the late President Masaryk, was unable to be present. The President then welcomed the Heads of our three Churches, the Rev. M. Pradervand, the Rev. E. Jornot and Father Lanfranchi, as well as the Presidents of the sister societies, viz.

Mr. C. Campart	—	Société de Secours Mutuels.
Mr. L. Chapuis	—	City Swiss Club.
Mr. J. J. Boos	—	Swiss Mercantile Society.
Mr. A. Indermaur	—	Union Helvetia.
Mr. F. G. Sommer	—	Swiss Choral Society.
Mr. W. Pellet	—	Swiss Orchestral Society.
Mr. G. T. Kummer	—	Société Culinaires Suisse.
Mr. J. Scheuermeier	—	Swiss Y.M.C.A.

The President regretted the unavoidable absence of some members and guests, notably Col. Bon, President of the Swiss Benevolent Society and host of the assembly, and M. Haccius, London Delegate of the Committee of International Red Cross.

Mr. Suter then read a telegraphic message received from the Secretariat of the Swiss Abroad in Berne which he had received in response to a New Year Greetings telegram, as follows: "Secretary and Home Groups deeply touched by your telegram send to London Group warmest wishes and congratulations for their splendid attitude hope with you for Peace in 1943 (signed) Briod."

The Swiss Minister, Dr. W. Thurnheer, then addressed the gathering. Following is the text of his speech:—

Last year I had just come home from Switzerland when we met here and quite naturally I spoke to you about what I had seen and heard in Switzerland. This year I want to tell you something about our neutrality and about many things which result from it.

To mention neutrality in a country at war is as a rule not very popular. I say purposely "as a rule" because I do not think that any amongst you had to suffer here for belonging to neutral Switzerland. There are many reasons for this. First of all, we have the good fortune to live in a country where perhaps more than anywhere else each man's opinion is respected as long as it is sincere. Secondly: the people of this island do not connect Switzerland in their thoughts with war, but with peace. For them Switzerland and peace is somehow one and the same idea. You might think that this is due to the great number of English people who come or used to come since many decades to our country for restful pleasure or recovery from strain and sickness. For others the serene beauty of our mountains stands out as an emblem of unalterable peace.

Perhaps some amongst you do not fully know what are the political reasons for our neutrality and its connection with the thought of peace. We find them when we go back in our history, when we fought many big battles, most of them in defence, some in the cause of other people, some aggressive ones. But even then there was already a certain current against any kind of aggression. The battle of Marignano is a turning point in our history as far as our foreign policy is concerned. We lost then, it was in 1515, a great battle, but not our honour, and we won something too. We won the wisdom of keeping out of other people's war. From thereon this tendency developed more and more till it was by and by first tacitly and finally officially recognised not only in Switzerland but by the other countries too.

It was after the Napoleonic wars at the famous Congress in Vienna in 1815 that the European Powers, Great Britain included, decided with the consent and wish of Switzerland that it was in the interest of them all that Switzerland should remain perpetually neutral and that this neutrality should be respected by them. From thereon our country has kept the neutrality till to-day, from thereon our neutrality has been recognised and remained in principle mostly respected by the others. It was so in the German-French war of 1870 and in the first world war. The Swiss neutrality was again recognised by the League of Nations and finally its recognition was renewed by the Great Powers at the beginning of this world war. Through all these times from 1815 Switzerland has kept its neutrality unwaveringly, protected by its own strong army to the advantage of all Nations.

Neutrality in the Swiss sense means before all that we will not attack any other country and that we will not tolerate an attack against us. The nations who declare that they will recognise our neutrality accept thereby an obligation as well as we; the obligation is to respect our neutrality and not to attack us. The Nations can do so, they know that they can rely on us. Our more than a century old neutrality which has during this time never changed is an expression of Switzerland's deep love of peace, which is a thing to be proud of.

This long period of peace is probably the deeper reason why other peoples connect the thought of peace with our country. We are grateful for our fortunate destiny. Naturally nobody sensible in Switzerland thinks that we owe this entirely and exclusively to our own effort, to our neutral policy and to our brave army. Happy circumstances independent of us play a very big role in it. To these and finally to Providence we owe the fact that we are still at peace.

In full recognition of this fact we have always tried to do our best for the countries at war. In 1870 we sent a delegation to Strasbourg to fetch from the burning unfortunate town the children; a beautiful monument in Basle given by the French commemorates this action. During the battles for Belfort, we took over in the midst of a very cold winter the great Army of General Bourbaki and looked after their wellbeing during the rest of the war.

The fact that Switzerland remained neutral for such a long time made it naturally a safe and stable territory for international institutions. Amongst

these I want to mention the International Telegraph Union, the Universal Postal Convention, the United International Offices for the protection of industrial, literary and artistic property and the Central Office for International transport by Railroad.

Everybody realises the immense importance of these organisations being able to function in the middle of a great war. Every single person with relatives, business or other connections abroad appreciates that wires, letters and parcels still go on from here to other countries, so also to Switzerland, thanks to the upkeep of the international postal and telegraph service, to the international railway connections. Specially businessmen will be glad to know that even patent rights and the payment of the necessary fees, even that service is respected to a great degree but of course the financial revenues are frozen.

Another side of our neutrality is to a certain extent the institution of asylum, whereby the State allows political fugitives to enter the country. This does not therefore mean that we are obliged to receive all who wish to seek refuge within our borders, nobody can insist on admission as if it were a right to do so. We have our legal border control just as other States and we wish this control to be respected by those desiring to enter. But due to extraordinary circumstances we have during the past years extended our hospitality to many thousands who did not enter by the right way, but naturally for us as for any other country there is a limit to our capacity of such hospitality; we have to look after our refugees to the best of our abilities; they are fed and clothed according to our means, they are housed partly in barracks and we try to give them work to keep them occupied. The expenses for the upkeep for most of these refugees come from private organisations and from the State.

There are still in Switzerland thousands of military internees who entered mostly during the fall of France. They are organised entirely on military lines. To enable them to prepare themselves as much as possible for civil life, different educational bodies help them. There is for instance a special school for students, where professors of our universities and of our technical schools or our Polytechnic High School give lectures.

We all know how, due to the lack of food, children in many parts of Europe suffer. We have created a special organisation to help these unfortunate little ones; we receive at regular intervals batches of up to 10,000 children, which each remains a certain period of time. They are distributed all over the country in private families, who have offered to give them hospitality. Because of transportation difficulties the number of these little guests is not as large as we could wish. Those unable to reach us because of such problems we try to help in different ways. We create child centres in their own countries, supplied with Swiss personnel and with the necessities of life. These Swiss child centres in other countries are doing very good work amongst the poor undernourished children.

Finally we have the representation of foreign countries, the number of which exceeds 25. This constitutes a tremendous work for Berne as well as for the Swiss Legations and Consulates abroad. This side of our neutrality, however, as well as the great

work of the International Red Cross in Geneva need no further comments upon their activities, as their important work is so well known to you all.

After having heard about so many Swiss activities emanating from our position as a permanently neutral country, I have no doubt that you all are convinced that Switzerland is doing her duty.

All present were deeply moved by the Minister's stirring address which was followed by prolonged and hearty acclamation.

Dr. Revilliod then rose to reply on behalf of the guests. He said:—

I consider it a real privilege to speak here on behalf of the guests of this meeting. I thank the Committee of the London Group of the N.S.H. for conferring this honour on me, a newcomer to this hospitable and heroic capital.

I am sure to be the interpreter of the feelings of every guest present at these tables by expressing their full appreciation of the aims, the spirit and the work of the N.S.H. London Group.

I suppose that we, your guests, all know the principles and characteristics of your society. It is not my task to recall them here. But you will allow me, as an old member of the Groups of Montreux and Geneva to present to you a few impressions and give you some news of the N.S.H. in our Fatherland.

My first contact with our Society took place at Montreux in 1921. At once I was glad to find in this little town of hotels, in this typical centre of the so-called "Industrie des étrangers," a friendly group into which no personal material pre-occupation was admitted, out of which party-spirit and party-watchwords were excluded in favour of a complete freedom in the expression of the most opposite opinions.

I found the same atmosphere in the Groups of Vevey, Lausanne and Geneva and in the general assemblies uniting delegates from all parts of Switzerland. These big meetings gave me the very appreciated opportunity of seeing and hearing some of the founders and outstanding representatives of our Society. Perhaps some of them are not unknown amongst you. Let us remember Nabholz from Zurich, who knew so well the Vaudois spirit, quoting Alfred Vinet in his speeches, the Basle journalist and Deputy Oeri, whose reports on arduous subjects were always marked by wit and commonsense, the deeply regretted William Martin, the Genevese writers Robert de Traz and François, the economist William Rappard and others.

In those meetings the most important and difficult problems concerning our country, likely to stir-up quarrels and divisions among its citizens, were carefully studied, discussed and often solved in an atmosphere of mutual understanding and devotion to the country.

Among these subjects, I can mention some of them probably still in your memories "The Crisis of Democracy," "The Economic Difficulties of the Population of the Canton of Tessin," "The Genevese Revendications in Matters of Railway Communications," "The Relations of the Mother Country with its Children Abroad," leading to the creation of the "Secrétariat des Suisses à l'étranger" with its various activities.

I want to end by mentioning the last meeting held in Geneva after I left Switzerland, on the 27th



of September last, with a view to facing the present and post-war situation of the working class in our country. A summary of the report presented by the Secretary of the Federation of Workmen in the Watchmaking and Metallurgical Industries evokes a comparison with the attempt made in this country — the Beveridge Plan — for the suppression of unemployment and want, leading towards the establishment of justice in the organisation of economy.

We are glad to see our Society, which performed a remarkable achievement by a useful collaboration of various parts and elements of our country for the benefit of all, is at present striving for the realisation of these two aims :

Security in Work

Insurance for Old Age.

Let us rejoice in knowing that the N.S.H. spirit is at work in our Fatherland as well as in London and in any other place of the world where a group exists.

On behalf of the guests, I offer you, Mr. President, our best wishes for the future of the London N.S.H. Group as a whole and of all its members and their families.

Dr. Revilliods' words were warmly applauded by the meeting.

The assembly then adjourned and after a brief interval proceeded to deal with the official business on the agenda.

The Secretary, Mr. C. Campart, read the minutes of the last Annual General Meeting, which he had compiled in his usual exemplary manner and which earned him a well-deserved tribute from the members present.

The main item on the agenda was the President's report on the activities of the Society during the past year, the full text of which is published below :—

It is with a keen sense of pleasure that I am able to describe the year 1942 as a successful one in the history of the London Group of the N.S.H. We have commenced the year with a membership of 180; we have gained twenty-three members and have lost three who have returned to Switzerland in the course of the year, and our membership therefore counts to-day exactly 200. Of these members 160 are paying members, 22 are "membres de passage" at the Legation, 9 are abroad for the time being and 5 are "donors."

In the course of the year the Group has held twelve monthly council and members meetings, the first one being the Annual General at the Dorchester in January, and the following eleven were held as a rule on the third Saturday afternoon of the month at Swiss House. In response to a unanimous desire not to interrupt the monthly meetings during the summer, we decided to try the experiment and found it to work very well, the attendance being very close to the average of 64 per meeting during the year.

You will agree with me when I say that every one of these meetings was a joy to us. Mr. Gottfried Keller, our own member and, what is a much greater honour, President of the Foreign Press Association in London, has addressed us on not less than eleven out of the twelve occasions, speaking with a masterly grasp and consummate skill on the ever-changing world situation arising out of the war and the war itself. The wealth of information which he, as a journalist, is able to impart, his keen sense of distinction and perspective in historical events, and his

refined and sympathetic oratory, have made him our most valuable collaborator and friend.

The other speakers at some of our meetings were :—

Mr. J. V. HYKA, of the Czechoslovak Ministry for Foreign Affairs in London.

Major MONCKEM, of the Netherlands Army, for some time refugee internee in Switzerland.

Mr. E. A. D. PERRERET, a distinguished Swiss born in Russia, lately returned to London from Persia and torpedoed on the way here.

Apart from the members' monthly meetings which are usually preceded by a council meeting, we were enabled in May by the Legation to show to the colony a series of Swiss Military Films at Conway Hall, when Major Schlegel, the Swiss Military Attaché in London, gave an excellent address. In July we paid our annual visit to the Blind Babies' Home at East Grinstead in honour of our council member Miss Germaine Zingg; this was unfortunately badly attended owing to a heavy storm, but for the few brave ones it turned out to be an altogether delightful outing. In August we collaborated with the C.S.C. and the S.M.S. in the First of August Reunion at Kingsway Hall, a more modest function than the brilliant celebration of the 650th Anniversary in the preceding year. Owing to existing difficulties the showing of new Swiss Films could not be undertaken during the year. In the matter of Press Corrections which used to be an important item on our program during the last war, it is gratifying to note that this has been taken up individually by well qualified persons, notably Mr. G. Keller, Miss Reutiner, also Mr. Charles Fer and others.

The Group's Finances will be dealt with at a later stage, but it is heartening to be able to state in general that we are paying our way and putting aside a little each year, as behoves all good Swiss. Furthermore, we have been happy to make substantial contributions to deserving causes, such as the Don National, the Fondation Giuseppe Motta and others.

I now come to the very pleasant duty of rendering the Group's thanks for happy and undisturbed relations with Berne, our authorities, both here and at home, our sister societies, our churches and with the colony at large. As you must know, war is a great leveller of idiosyncrasies and differences of view and in this respect, with us also, many differences have automatically turned into friendliness.

Our active relations with the Secretariat in Berne have been few and far between during the year, and I need not account for the reasons which are beyond our control. We have, however, sent various cables of greetings after monthly meetings to let them know that we are still at work; we have cabled our felicitations for the Journée S.E. at Neuchâtel in September and again our good wishes at the end of the year. As you know, the answer has been received this week. That is as much as we can do under the existing circumstances; in no case do we want to increase their labour by unnecessary demands. I will cable greetings from this meeting on Monday next.

I wish to render most sincere thanks to our honoured Minister, Monsieur Thurnheer, who has from the first day of his arrival in England shown

us his goodwill and his appreciation in an unmistakable way. Madame Thurnheer's and the Minister's graceful gesture of participating at our Annual Meetings are tremendously appreciated by us all. Our relations with the hard worked Legation in general are also of the happiest and Monsieur Girardet who is with us to-day will surely do us the honour to convey our thanks and greetings to the other individual members of the Legation.

With our sister societies in London we live in perfect harmony, but I may be permitted to make the remark here that we do not often enough see their accredited representatives at our council meetings, as laid down in the Statutes of the Group of February 28th, 1920. So much more can be achieved by close co-operation, for which this provision is expressly designed, for the benefit of our communal activities and the welfare of the colony at large. In our thanks we gladly remember our churches for their beneficial work, and we admire the spirited fight for existence under grave difficulties of our newspaper, the Swiss Observer.

My one regret is that the exigencies of the war have made it impossible for me to keep in closer touch with our other N.S.H. Groups in Great Britain. There is, of course, a constant change, but we know that the Groups of Birmingham, Manchester, Glasgow, Belfast, and possibly Derby and one or two others are still in existence, while new points of congregations of Swiss Citizens have been formed since the war, such as Kidderminster under the able leadership of our member Mr. Seiffert. To them I wish to offer our apologies for the impossibility of rendering them service. While, therefore, I give the thanks of the Group to our sister societies in London for their collaboration (whose presidents are our honoured guests to-day), to our own N.S.H. Groups in the Provinces I express our sincere good wishes for health and happiness in the home and at work, communally and individually.

I close the first part of my address to you by thanking individual members of the Group for their special services and collaboration in the course of the year. In the first place stands our valued friend Mr. G. Keller, our lecturer in chief, for his magnificent and untiring efforts to keep us informed of the ever changing aspect of the world crisis and its consequences; and I couple with his name that of our Hon. Sec. Mr. Campart, whose carefully kept minutes of the proceedings will be the admiration of succeeding generations of London Swiss after we are gone. There has been a story going round that our indefatigable Mrs. Clara Muller was going to give up the work she has done so well for so many years for the Group, but I am happy to tell you that we need fear no such calamity; she has only changed her business out of a sense of duty to the colony, but she could never think of giving up her love for the Group. To her our special thanks.

Lastly I express my own thanks to the councilors for their assiduous attendance and attention to our affairs, for their help in keeping the London Group together in the spirit expressed by our motto:—

*For the Dignity and Security of Switzerland.*

I have thought it best to devote the second part of my address to you to the present activities of our mother society as described in the Annual Report

for 1942 which I have just received from Berne. This will inform you of the anxious pre-occupation, the tremendous efforts and the very tangible achievements of our mother society in holding together the N.S.H. Groups abroad in these serious times, and it ought to prevent us from becoming too deeply immersed in our own Group life. Although we ourselves are in the fortunate position not to have to appeal for material assistance like so many other Groups abroad and, being cut off from contact with our country almost completely for the time being, we shall obtain a better understanding of the seriousness of the times and the distress of so many of our countrymen abroad.

This year of 1942, the Annual Report states, was a year of trial. In the Far East, notably in the N.E.I., our prosperous colonies have suffered as yet incalculable damage and hardship through the extension of the war; on our Continent over vast territories the Swiss colonies have been hit catastrophically, many suffering actual hunger and want, together with the indigenous population of the occupied countries. In such a case, privately organised help, however welcome in individual instances, is like a drop in the ocean, and we are thankful to learn that the Federal Department of Justice and Police has undertaken a vast collection of feeding stuffs for distribution to the Swiss colonies in three of the most afflicted countries, Greece, France and Belgium. Pity, charity and absence of red tape, it is said, has always characterised the work of this Federal Department, doubling the value of their assistance to our unfortunate compatriots.

Hundreds and hundreds of parcels of new and worn boots and clothing have been sent by the N.S.H. to the needy Swiss in very many towns of France, Belgium and Poland through the diplomatic and consular representatives. The Federal authorities are giving close attention to the problem of war damage reparations for the Swiss abroad, a problem which, with the intensification of air bombardments, becomes ever more pressing and serious. It appears that our authorities have been able to arrive at an arrangement with Germany to the effect that the Swiss in Germany shall have equal rights with German subjects during the war, while in other belligerent countries, notably Italy, such negotiations have not been concluded yet.

As might be expected, the deterioration of the material condition of our colonies in the warswept countries harbours a grave danger of a progressive deterioration of the spiritual state, due to want, a steady stream of intensive anti-democratic propaganda, the growing dislike of foreigners, mounting difficulties of communication and transport and many other reasons directly due to the war. Such a state of affairs is certain to exert a grave influence on the moral and spiritual health of these colonies, especially when they are scattered over wide areas. Examples are not missing where individuals or even whole groups have become estranged from their homeland, or have even been misled by traitorous elements. But, the Report states, it has been established in this third complete year of war that the Swiss colonies abroad are in their large majority still sound, morally, spiritually and in their loyalty. The results of the collections in favour of the Don National, the Red Cross, the Fondation Giuseppe



Motta as well as "Das Freiwillige Wehroffer" of the Swiss Abroad are a clear proof of their cohesion and loyalty. In some colonies there appears to have been something like a clear division of the bad from the good citizen, and in such things clarity is preferable to dubious indifference.

Wherever possible, we encourage our colonies in the segregated countries to keep contact among themselves and meet frequently, and we try to assist them with full and correct information regarding the position of the country, the authorities and the people at home. Nothing we have found is of greater encouragement to them than the example of the Homeland.

The degree of achievement in this work of charity and consolation has only been made possible for the mother society by the ever ready assistance of the Federal Authorities and their representatives abroad. Deep thanks are expressed to the Federal Departments of Political Affairs, Justice and Police, National Economy, and to a number of private institutions, such as:—

Schweiz. Zentrale für Handelsförderung  
Schweiz. Zentrale für Verkehrsförderung  
Schweiz. Schul- und Volkskino  
Schweiz. Rundspruchdienst  
Pro Juventute  
Schweizerhilfe, and most of all the  
Arbeitsgemeinschaft Pro Helvetia.

This third year of war has been for us not only one of trial, but also one of justification. From every corner of the world the calls for spiritual and material assistance continue to grow and it is our duty to satisfy them under steady worsening conditions. The war has done frightful damage to our colonies abroad, while the position of our own country has not become easier. But if we are determined to hold out and remain an entity, the hardships of the moment must not discourage us. For the Swiss abroad as well as for us there is only one battle-cry:— *Hold On and Build Up*, so that, when the time is ripe, we may fulfill our task again.

The Report then enters into a review of the activities of the Mother Society during 1942. This provides a long and varied list:— the *Lecture* tours of famous Swiss in Europe and America; the *Film* service to very many colonies, on which ever growing demands are made; the *Radio* service on the selected wave lengths; the *Press* service to the Groups and the Swiss papers printed abroad; the *Echo Suisse*, with books and magazine distribution; the *Journée des Suisses à l'Etranger* to which I will refer in a moment; the *Holiday Home* for Swiss abroad, and lastly *Material Help* to individual colonies of which I have already spoken.

The extraordinary success of the annual *Journée S. E.* in 1941 on the Rütli and in Schwyz encouraged the Secretariat to arrange for the 1942 meeting at Neuchâtel September 12/13th, in the presence of Dr. Ph. Etter, the Swiss President, other Ministers of State, Col. Morand as representative of the General, Church Dignitaries, and numbers of representatives from abroad, presided over by our own personal friend Prof. A. Lätt, President of the C.S.E., who welcomed his august audience in the perfect manner we all know. A large audience assisted to hear the highly interesting and encouraging addresses of our high authorities and other speakers. The whole

scope and extent of the Oeuvre S. E. of the N.S.H. was reviewed and explained during the session, with the result that the meeting was in full agreement with an even more intensive prosecution of the programme to counter the ravages of the war.

We N.S.H. Groups in the British Isles, placed undoubtedly more favourably than those of any European country at this time, would wish to express our deepest admiration to the Mother Society at Home for the untiring and benevolent efforts to relieve the hardships of war among all the Swiss colonies who are forced to ask for assistance. It is not only right that we, thrown back on our own sufficient resources, should not trouble Berne with unnecessary communications and demands, but we should now study the problem of actively assisting the Mother Society in her help for the less fortunate members of our family. I will come back upon this point in a moment.

If anyone can doubt the statement that we are immeasurably better off in this tolerant and hospitable land of England, let me adduce the testimony of Mr. Nussbaumer, the President of the Bankers' Association of Switzerland, who has travelled in every European country with the exception of Greece, Norway and Yugoslavia during 1942, and who has made this statement in London a few weeks ago:— "You Swiss in London and Great Britain can have and do have no conception of the conditions in the other European countries. You are undoubtedly better off than even we in Switzerland. Let me entreat you to go down on your knees every morning and every evening and thank God for the blessings which are still yours."

With our prayers we must also act. I have opened an account at the Swiss Bank in the name of the London Group N.S.H. for a fund in favour of the S.S.E. in Berne, to be used by them and at their discretion for the relief of any deserving Swiss colony abroad. This Fund contains to-day £100, and I am asking you here to contribute to this Fund to the best of your ability, and to continue to do so for the next six months, and to induce your Swiss friends to assist us in the work. When the Fund has reached dimensions worth sending to the Secretariat in Berne, we will approach our honoured Minister respecting the transmission, but even if we have to wait to the end of the war before the money can be transmitted to Switzerland, growing by then, we hope, into a still greater sum, it will remain the practical expression of our gratitude to our Mother Society, our pity for our countrymen in distress, and a further proof, however slight, of our attachment to the Land of our Birth.

The President was accorded a very hearty ovation for his detailed résumé of a year of fruitful activities.

There followed the Treasurer's report and the report of the Auditors. A perusal of the accounts for the period under review, which were closed with a modest credit balance, showed that the financial affairs of the Society were in a sound state. The report and accounts as presented were unanimously adopted.

The President then vacated the Chair and Mr. J. J. Boos, President of the Swiss Mercantile Society, acted as Chairman pro tem. during the election. He expressed the members' gratitude to the outgoing Council for their valuable services during their term

of office, singling out for special mention the untiring efforts of the President, Mr. A. F. Suter, the Hon. Secretary, Mr. C. Campart, and last but by no means least the splendid services rendered to the Society by Mr. Gottfried Keller, whose outstanding qualities as a lecturer had come to be appreciated by an ever increasing number of members.

The election of the Council then took place by poll, Messrs. Dick and Favre acting as scrutineers. The Council for the financial year 1943 was constituted as follows:—

Messrs. E. J. Bachofen, Wm. Beckmann, C. Campart, W. Gamper, Gottfried J. Keller, F. Kibiger, Wm. Renz, Theo. Ritter, M. Rothlisberger, Pierre Savoie, Wm. B. Sigerist, A. Fred. Suter, J. Weber, Miss Germaine Zingg.

The auditors, Messrs. J. Weber and F. Zimmermann were duly re-elected and the subscription for 1943 fixed at 10/-.

Before the conclusion of the official part of the meeting, Mr. Louis Chapuis, President of the City Swiss Club, expressed thanks on behalf of the guests for a thoroughly enjoyable afternoon. He greatly amused the gathering with some humorous asides and finally wished the Society continued success and prosperity. Mr. Chapuis' words were cordially applauded.

The proceedings then terminated and the meeting adjourned to a welcome tea.

There were as yet some pleasant surprises in store. Mlle. N. Meyrat, who is no stranger in the Swiss Colony, delighted the audience with "Elsa's Dream" from "Lohengrin," and "Zueignung" by Strauss. Her superb rendering of these songs earned her a tremendous applause from a very appreciative audience.

The Swiss Choral Society, under the able leadership of Mr. E. P. Dick, then took the stage. They sang "Emmental Grüss Gott" and "Nos Montagnes." The almost tumultuous applause was the best proof that everybody present thoroughly enjoyed these songs.

After a brief interlude, Mlle. Meyrat once more entertained the audience. She sang "Waltz of My Heart" by Ivor Novello, which was followed by "'s Schwyzerhüsli," with which song she, to use an old expression, almost brought the house down. Finally Mlle. Meyrat sang "Der Gärtner" by Hugo Wolf. The audience left her in no doubt that her charming voice and exquisite singing were greatly appreciated by all pleasant.

The Swiss Choral Society then followed with "Sonntag ist's" and "Mein Schweizerland, wach auf!". Both the conductor and the choir are to be complimented on their excellent performance and it is to be hoped that we shall have the pleasure of hearing them on many more such functions in the Colony. Mr. Dick, who has long earned himself a reputation as a versatile conductor and musician, wound up the musical programme with a piano solo by playing a variation of "'s Vreneli ab-em Guggisberg."

Mr. Suter, on behalf of the N.S.H., thanked all the artistes for their fine contributions to a most successful afternoon. As a special tit-bit, he then presented the Swiss Minister with a bottle of wine distilled from grapes from a vine grown in his own garden and originally brought over from Burgundy.

The meeting ended with a hearty vote of thanks to the President and thus came to a close a most successful and enjoyable function.

WB.

## SWISS MERCANTILE SOCIETY.

### Annual General Meeting.

The Society held its Annual General Meeting at Pimm's Restaurant, Old Bailey, on Saturday, February 13th.

The Meeting was preceded by a luncheon, which innovation proved very popular as evinced by the attendance of nearly 70 members.

After the customary loyal toasts, the Chairman, Mr. J. J. Boos, before opening the formal proceedings, addressed the assembly. He said that it was not the first time that the Society had met in the shadow of St. Paul's. Some of the older members could remember the meetings at the Wool Exchange and in Milk Street and, not so long ago, the office in Queen Victoria Street.

The President then extended a hearty welcome to the representative of the Swiss Legation, Mr. Roy Hunziker, Attaché, who conveyed the Swiss Minister's greetings to the meeting.

It was indeed a very representative gathering, including many of the veteran members to whose staunch and loyal support the President paid a special tribute, particularly to Mr. P. F. Boehringer, the oldest member present and a "pensioner" who in a jocular vein replied to the President's crack. The younger generation, including many members who had joined the Society but recently, was also much in evidence.

After a brief interval the Secretary, Mr. J. J. Schneider, read the notice convening the meeting and the report of the auditor.

The accounts for the period under review as submitted were elucidated by Mr. Percy H. Green, F.C.A., the auditor, who said that the Society's finances were in a healthy and liquid state. It was hardly surprising that the year was closed with an adverse balance, but taking all circumstances into account the final result could be considered satisfactory.

A motion to adopt the accounts as presented was passed unanimously.

The Chairman then reported on the activities of the Society during the past year, the 54th since its inception in 1888. The following is a résumé of the report:

*Introduction.* The President briefly alluded to the world situation and the far-reaching effects on all mankind of the globular struggle we are now witnessing. He said how grateful we Swiss could be that our country had so far been spared the horrors of actual warfare and that our Government and people were united in their efforts to maintain the country's independence, to provide food and work for all its citizens and to do whatever lay within their powers to mitigate the sufferings of all belligerents.

In the year under review, the S.M.S. carried on its work on similar lines as in the previous year. All educational activities remained suspended, but a number of instructive lectures were again arranged whilst the social side was not neglected. However, all functions were in keeping with the difficult times through which we are passing.

*Membership.* The Society to-day is composed of:

25 Honorary Members,  
45 Contributing Members,  
40 Contributing Firms and Donors,  
245 Active Members (including 12 Lady Members).  
Admissions: 37.  
Resignations: 3.