

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: - (1945)

Heft: 1038

Rubrik: Swiss Mercantile Society

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SWISS MERCANTILE SOCIETY.

The Society held its Monthly Meeting at Swiss House on Wednesday, July 11th. Mr. J. J. Boos, President, was in the Chair, and a large number of members and friends were present. Amongst the visitors was Mr. Blaesi, past President of our sister section in New York, who is an Officer in the U.S.A. Forces at present stationed in this country.

The meeting was pleased to learn that Monsieur Mordasini, Vice-Consul and Chancellor of Legation, had applied for membership, and he was duly elected with acclamation.

Mr. L. W. Krucker, Vice-President, who had just returned from a visit to Switzerland, brought greetings from the Central-Secretariat, particularly from the General Secretary, National Councillor Schmid-Ruedin and Mr. L. Fritzsche, Chief of Administration. The latter will be remembered by many as the genial leader of a party of S.K.V. members who visited London some years before the war.

News was also received from our old friend, Mr. M. Paschoud, Hon. Member and past President of the S.M.S., whom Mr. Stahelin met on a recent business trip to France. He found Mr. Paschoud, who lived in Paris during the whole of the war years, in comparatively good health and spirits, but regretted to inform the meeting that Mrs. Paschoud passed away early this year after a protracted illness. The President was asked to convey to Mr. Paschoud the members' sympathy in his bereavement.

From an announcement in the "Kaufm. Zentralblatt" of the 29th June, it was learnt that Mr. Arnold Schimpf, who has been President of the Basle Section for over 25 years, will retire shortly, and that Mr. Alfred Gasser, until recently Secretary of that Section, has been appointed as his successor. The meeting decided to send suitable messages to both gentlemen.

The meeting further decided that as in previous years, no Monthly Meeting be held in August and the next Meeting will therefore be held on Wednesday, September 12th.

This concluded the official part of the Meeting, following which our Member, Mr. A. Bleiker, who is a Director of Messrs. Roura & Forgas (African and Eastern) Ltd., gave a most interesting talk on his business trip to the Near East and Africa. It was a singular opportunity for Mr. Bleiker as a Swiss to be able to travel some 25,000 miles during war time. His journey took about seven months and he covered vast tracts of land and sea, by boat, plane, and at times in most primitive conveyances. From the outset, the lecturer had the undivided attention of the audience which eagerly followed his vivid descriptions of the countries visited. These included Palestine, Syria, Egypt, Madagascar, Réunion, French West Africa, the Congo, etc. Mr. Bleiker described in great detail the many picturesque places visited, the strange customs and modes of living in the darker parts of Africa. Despite the unusual length of the lecture into which he packed the whole of so tremendous an undertaking, he constantly kept the interest of the audience alive with a narrative full of exciting experiences and adventures. In the course of his travels, he met numerous of our countrymen, some holding important appointments, traders, hotel proprietors, etc., and spent many happy hours in their midst. The good reputation enjoyed by Swiss business men was evidenced by the fact that he was able to enjoy high priority both as regards accommodation and transport. He related some of the hardships suffered by those less fortunate, who found themselves stranded in some lonely spots far from civilisation.

Unfortunately time did not permit for questions to be asked, otherwise the lecturer would no doubt have been able to elucidate many more interesting points.

In conclusion, Mr. A. C. Stahelin proposed a hearty vote of thanks to Mr. Bleiker for his most interesting and instructive address, which all present heartily endorsed with prolonged acclamation.

By way of a pleasant surprise, the lady members served tea and refreshments following the meeting, and the members' thanks are due to them for providing for such a large gathering in so excellent a manner.

WB.



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