

The books of Switzerland

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THE BOOKS OF SWITZERLAND.

Five Hundred Years of Swiss Printing.

The first exhibition to be held in England of the books and the craft of printing in Switzerland will be opened at the Suffolk Galleries, Suffolk Street, by M. Paul Ruegger, the Swiss Minister, on 25th April.

The Exhibition, which will contain over 3,000 modern books and a remarkable collection of historic examples of Swiss printing from the Reformation onwards, has been organised under the auspices of the British Council with the collaboration of Swiss circles interested in international civilisation, and all the leading associations of publishers and booksellers in Switzerland. The distinguished list of English patrons includes the Archbishop of Canterbury, Miss Ellen Wilkinson (Minister of Education), and Dr. Julian Huxley, while Mr. John Masefield has written a short foreword to the catalogue.

Divided into sections covering the whole field of literature, the modern side of the exhibition fully demonstrates the striking development of Swiss publishing during the last decade, while the historical section shows Switzerland's inspiring tradition of fine books from the first days of the printing press.

The rise of the Nazi régime was chiefly responsible for the present renaissance of Swiss publishing, which after its two great periods of the Reformation and the 18th century, had declined as Leipzig developed as the centre of European publishing. The views of the freedom loving Swiss were not acceptable to Hitler's Germany, while the propaganda which found its way into every German publication made no appeal to Switzerland. Swiss publishing was rapidly revived, and to-day books on all subjects by English, American, French, Swedish, Russian, German and Italian, as well as Swiss authors, are being issued. Switzerland has resumed her old position as the centre of free thought and international culture in the heart of the European continent. Particularly interesting are the books by anti-Nazi Germans, some of the manuscripts of which were smuggled into Switzerland at great risk during the war years.

A special feature will be the section devoted to art books, in which an exceptional standard of printing and reproduction has been reached.

The leading museums and libraries of Switzerland have contributed valuable books to the historical section, including a commentary on the Bible printed in 1470, a remarkable collection of early Bibles in all languages from the National Library at Berne, the first translation of Shakespeare's works into German, made by a Swiss in 1775, and a rare copy of the Collected Poems of Goethe, published in Switzerland in 1775, when Goethe was only 27 years old.

A reciprocal Exhibition of English books will be sent to Switzerland later in the year.

ROOSEVELT STAMP COLLECTION.

The first portion of the late President Roosevelt's Stamp Collection, United States and Latin America, was sold at Auction by H. R. Harmer, Inc., 32-34, East 57th Street, New York, on February 4th and 5th. This portion realised £33,637 or nearly double the estimated philatelic value of the whole Collection.

The balance of the Collection is to be offered in New York on April 1st and 2nd and comprises Postage Stamps of the British Empire and of the whole World, excluding those countries covered in the first sale.

Perhaps the most interesting country will be Hong Kong, which was one of President Roosevelt's favourite groups. His interest in these issues is stated to date back to the finding of some of his Grandfather Delano's correspondence in the family attic. In this "find" were some original covers bearing stamps of the first two issues of Hong Kong. These are in the sale together with a few envelopes which were used for postage before stamps were introduced. In all there are 80 Lots of Hong Kong.

As in the first portion, the Collection is rich with Die proofs, notably of Canada and France, and many Presentation Collections are also included.

President Roosevelt's Specialised Collection of Venezuela, which was presented to him by the Venezuela Philatelic Society, a token of appreciation of his services to humanity, comprises 106 Lots including many rare and valuable philatelic items and is especially strong in Airmail Issues.

It would be difficult to estimate what figure this section will realise, as buyers obviously place a high sentimental value on the property. A fair proportion of the crowd of 700 which attended the February Sales were not Philatelists at all but Roosevelt souvenir hunters.

Five items of the Russian Collection comprise a personal gift from Maxim Litvinoff. The Collection is practically complete from 1921 to 1934 and contains many unpriced and unlisted varieties.

There is to be a Public Exhibition in New York prior to the Sale and special Catalogues containing a message from President Harry Truman are in preparation. Although Collectors in Great Britain are not permitted to take part in the Sale, owing to Government restrictions, they will nevertheless be able to buy these Souvenir Catalogues together with the list of the prices realised from H. R. Harmer's of Bond Street, the cost for the series being 15/-.

ALBERT FERBER (SWISS)



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