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SWISS MEDIÆVAL TAPESTRIES.

By Frédéric Gysin.

Published by B. T. Batsford Ltd. Net Price 18/-.

By way of contrast with modern materialism there is a peculiar fascination in the works of art created in bygone ages by the hands of our ancestors. Not the least attractive among the many beautiful things they have devised are the colourful tapestries produced during the fifteenth century in the region of the Upper Rhine. These mediæval tapestries form the subject of an interesting monograph by Frédéric Gysin, now published in an English translation and handsomely illustrated by means of large-sized plates in colour and in black-and-white.

Considering that the Swiss were by origin husbandmen, traders and fighting soldiers and that they have had to struggle and work for their existence as perhaps no other country in Europe, it is surprising how many masterpieces in the realm of the Arts they have managed to produce and to what heights, particularly in the towns, their cultural achievements have risen. But the mediæval Swiss, if not great creative artists, were above all craftsmen of the first rank. The craft of tapestry weaving, as cultivated in the district of Basel during the late Gothic period seems to have been their special gift. These tapestries, worked in coloured wool on linen, represent religious subjects, scenes of mediæval life, kings, statesmen, warriors and mythical beasts, with backgrounds of delightful scroll-work and foliage. The author of the models are unknown and the weavers were probably women in convents or in bourgeois households.

Unlike the large ornamental tapestries of France and Burgundy — such as the Bayeux — the Swiss tapestries are known to have been objects of daily use in the houses of Basel patrician families, though it is possible that some of them served as altar pieces. Many have been lost but a hundred or so are preserved in the historical museums of Basel and Zurich. Ten of the finest specimens are described and illustrated in Mr. Gysin's book.

No technical knowledge or artistic training is required to appreciate the timeless beauty of these works of art. Their colours have mostly faded, some are incomplete and others have been darned, but such as they are, their high artistic standard is undeniable and as historical documents they possess great value.

SWISS BANK CORPORATION,*(A Company limited by Shares incorporated in Switzerland)***99, GRESHAM STREET, E.C.2.****and 11c, REGENT STREET, S.W. 1.**

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The author's introduction and analytical notes are most helpful to the reader's understanding of the subjects, and of the allegorical allusions so popular with the artists of the middle ages.

Printed in Basel, and published in London by Batsford's, this slender quarto volume with its beautiful plates is an outstanding example of the printer's art and a valuable contribution to the cultural history of mediæval Switzerland.

J.J.F.S.

COLLEGE OF THE SWISS MERCANTILE SOCIETY LTD.

We wish to inform you that the new term of Evening Classes, held at "Swiss House," 35, Fitzroy Square, W.1, will start on the following dates:—

English, Elementary:

Wednesdays, from 6—7.30 p.m. beginning on 28th

April, 1948;

or

Thursdays, from 6—7.30 p.m. beginning on 29th

April, 1948.

English, Lower Intermediate:

Wednesdays, from 6—7.30 p.m., beginning on 28th

April, 1948.

English, Higher Intermediate:

Tuesdays, from 6—7.30 p.m., beginning on 27th

April, 1948.

English, Advanced:

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or

Wednesdays, from 6—7.30 p.m., beginning on 28th

April, 1948.

English Shorthand, Elementary:

The Students must have a good command of the English language.

Thursdays, from 6—7.30 p.m. beginning on 29th

April, 1948.

Fees £1 per course of 12 evenings. Applications (from Swiss only) are received at the office of the College on the First days of the courses between 3.30 and 5.30 p.m.

CONCERT NEWS.

We wish again to direct the attention of our readers to the concert of the Swiss Male Choir, Swiss Orchestral Society and Swiss Accordion Club, which is taking place on Friday, April 23rd, 1948, at Conway Hall. (See Advert.)

Albert Ferber, the well-known Swiss pianist, will play works by Chopin, Albeniz, Granados and De Falla, whilst the orchestra will perform works by Mozart, Schubert, Beethoven and Puccini.

The Choir has on the programme songs by Keldorfer, Abt, Bovet and Fehrmann and new homely tunes will be played by the accordionists.

It is hoped that members of the Swiss Colony and their friends will turn up in large numbers, they will not be disappointed.