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NOUVELLE SOCIÉTÉ HELVÉTIQUE. (London Group.)

Councils Annual Report for 1951.

Apart from the Annual General Meeting, followed by the Annual Dinner and Entertainment on March 3rd, the London Group of the N.S.H. organised last year 10 *lecture meetings* namely:—

1. Oberst Erb, Zurich, in German: "Sporttraining in der Schweiz. Armee." Vienna Café, March 21st.
2. Albert Welti, Geneva, in French: "Le Patrimoine de l'Art en Suisse." Lantern Slide Lecture. Vienna Café, April 18th.
3. Alberti Welti, Geneva: Reading from his own Works. Swiss Legation, April 20th.
4. Discussion of questions concerning *Journée des Suisses à l'Etranger*. Vienna Café, May 16th.
5. Prof. A. Lätt, Zurich; in English: "Some Chapters from the History of the Swiss Colony in Great Britain." N.S.H. in conjunction with the Anglo-Swiss Society. Vienna Café, June 20th.
6. Prof. Dr. F. Blanke, Zurich, in German: "Columban und Gallus, Irische Missionare in der Schweiz im 7. Jahrhundert." N.S.H. in conjunction with the Swiss Churches. Vienna Café, July 18th.
7. Prof. A. Amonn, Rector of the University Berne, in English, "The Nature and Limits of Democracy." N.S.H. in conjunction with the Anglo-Swiss Society. Vienna Café, Sept. 19th.
8. Dr. H. Clavadetscher, Le Locle, in English: "The Valais." Lantern Slide Lecture. N.S.H. with the co-operation of the City Swiss Club and the Anglo-Swiss Society. Royal Society of Arts, Oct. 18th.
9. Mr. A. F. Suter, Hon. Vice-President N.S.H., London, in English: "As a Swiss sees the English," followed by a Film: "Amidst Powder and Snow in the Jungfrau-Region." Vienna Café, Nov. 21st.
10. Dr. A. R. Lindt, Press Councillor of the Swiss Legation, London, in English: "His work as Swiss Delegate in the United Nations' Children Fund, Lake Success." Vienna Café, Dec. 19th.

We report with satisfaction that several of these lectures were supported specially by other societies, while in one case we were happy to organise a lecture in conjunction with the Swiss Church, given by Prof. Blanke, who had taken on the duties of the Rev. Blum during his holidays. In one instance, that of Dr. Clavadetscher's lantern slide lecture on the beauties, the fauna and the flora of the Valais, we obtained the official support and share in the expenses from the City Swiss Club and the Anglo-Swiss Society. The latter has been supporting several others of our lectures. We wish to record our special gratification with this development of joint sponsorship of important lectures and shows amongst several societies in our Colony. We hope confidently that this practice will continue and extend, thus making it possible to bring over from Switzerland or elsewhere really first rate speakers whom one could not invite without being sure of a sufficient audience.

The greatest credit in connection with these lectures must, of course, go to the *Secrétariat des Suisses à l'Etranger* and the organisations standing behind it for their ever ready help in procuring such lecturers, both by finding them for us and by meeting about half the cost. The *Secrétariat* asks for no better reward

for this help than that as many societies and compatriots as possible may participate and attend these lectures.

The attendances at the lectures varied, of course greatly, ranging over 230 in the case of Dr. Clavadetscher's lecture. It is much regretted that about 30 late arrivals had to be turned away from the doors for lack of accommodation. Mostly the attendances were satisfactory though they could sometimes have been better. We would like to emphasise that these "Open Meetings" are really open not only to our members but also any other Swiss and Friends of Switzerland. Admission has always been free of charge.

The N.S.H. owes a special measure of gratitude to the constant support it continues to receive from our Minister, Monsieur Henry de Torrenté, and his colleagues at the Legation. Their frequent personal attendance at our lectures and other functions constitutes a welcome moral encouragement. Further we wish to express once again our warmest thanks to Mr. Ernst, Manager of the Swiss National Tourist Office, for allowing us the use of the projector, screen and operator as well as of the beautiful films about Switzerland he has been able to let us have from time to time entirely free of charge. Finally, equally warm thanks are due again to Mr. and Mrs. Dubs of the Vienna Café, Berkeley Arcade, for the rent-free use of their hall for our functions whenever it was required.

Most regrettable was the lack of interest shown by members and the Colony at large for the discussion on May 16th in preparation for the *Journée des Suisses à l'Etranger*. Only 16 persons attended. Nor was enough use made of our invitation to send in sugges-

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tions to the N.S.H. for questions to be raised and opinions to be voiced at the Journée. This lack of interest in the preparation for the Journée des Suisses à l'Etranger was no doubt one of the reasons for the contradictory attitude the delegates from our Colony took up in the discussion at Lausanne. Nevertheless our Colony's contribution to the proceedings and discussions of this "embryo Parliament" of the Swiss living abroad has once again made a strong and favourable impression.

Our Society was represented at Lausanne by our President, Dr. H. W. Egli, and our Hon. Secretary, Miss A. Gretener. Dr. Egli was also authorized to speak on behalf of the Presidents' Assembly of Swiss Societies in Great Britain.

A full report on the Journée has been published in the "Swiss Observer" of Sept. 29th and the "Echo" of October. We can further state with satisfaction that the controversy caused in our Colony by the differences of views revealed at Lausanne has awakened a fuller appreciation of the importance of co-operation in our Colony and with other colonies of the Swiss abroad and their joint organisation at home. We are looking forward hopefully to a new area of closer co-operation in our Colony for the sake of the many tasks yet to be fulfilled.

The *Annual General Meeting* and the *Annual Dinner* were held on March 3rd at the St. Ermine's Hotel, Westminster. Both functions were well attended. As in previous years the evening was enriched by a delightful artistic programme. Miss Selma Vaz Dias (Mrs. Egli) was reading some translated passages from Swiss authors. Miss R. Hugenberg played classic music on the piano and Miss R. Pfaendler joined in in the end on the cello. We record our special thanks to these artists.

Once again our Society has carried on the important task of organising *holidays in Switzerland for the Children* of our Colony. Again our Council Member, Mr. A. Boller, ably assisted by our Hon. Treasurer, Mr. M. Schuler, has shouldered the entire burden of this patriotic enterprise, in conjunction with Pro Juventute in Switzerland. This year 12 children took part in the holiday expedition, all of whom will have brought back with them happy and unforgettable memories of their far away homeland. "Swissair" transported the children at a specially reduced fare. The Benevolent Societies in London, Manchester and Liverpool contributed to the fares in several cases.

The *Swiss Youth Club*, formed by ourselves three years ago, we are glad to report, continues flourishing. Thanks to the free use of two rooms at the Swiss Legation premises in Duke Street it is possible to provide a weekly dance for the young Swiss in London at a modest charge and without any incidental expenses. Mrs. Bachofen, assisted by her husband, who has succeeded Mrs. Isacco, in charge of the management of these dances, has been equally successful. The attendances at these Saturday dances have steadily increased to a figure often well above 150. To both Mrs. and Mr. Bachofen we tender our thanks on behalf of the many young Swiss benefiting from their devoted patriotic service.

The preparation of a second edition of the "*Guide to the Swiss Colony in Great Britain*" is nearly complete so that we may look forward to its early publication. Our Hon. Secretary, Miss A. Gretener, has carried the whole burden of the enormous correspon-

dence involved. Our gratitude should also be expressed to all those who have so readily agreed to lend their tangible support again to this enterprise.

The *membership* of the N.S.H. has gone up to 214. There were 10 new entrants as against 3 resignations, due to departure to Switzerland or lack of opportunity to take an active share in the Society's programme. Members and friends are invited most urgently to try and bring other Swiss to our functions with a view to encouraging them to apply for membership. Our ambitious programme of work requires considerable finance, as well as the personal support of the members. While it is desired to maintain the old subscription at 10/- p.a. (5/- for youngsters under 18) the Society depends to an increasing extent on voluntary donations. Members and friends are urged to bear this in mind when sending their subscription.

The *Council* held 8 Meetings during the course of the year. Those elected to the Council at the last Annual General Meeting were: Mr. P. Bessire, Mrs. P. Bessire, Mr. A. Boller, Mrs. A. Boller, Mr. C. Chessex, Dr. H. W. Egli, Dr. A. Gautier, Miss A. Gretener, Mr. Th. Haller, Mr. G. Keller, Dr. A. R. Lindt, Mr. W. Renz, Mr. R. Schneider, Mr. M. Schuler and Mr. H. Wasmer. The Council Meetings were also attended regularly by Mr. A. F. Suter, Honorary Vice-President, and Mrs. Suter, Mr. Berti, President of the Unione Ticinese, Mr. C. Campart, Hon. Member of the N.S.H. and Hon. President of the Société de Secours Mutuels des Suisses à Londres, and Ms. A. Bachofen from the Swiss Youth Club. Unfortunately, again the ranks of councillors were depleted in the course of the year by the much regretted resignation of Mr. C. Chessex and Mr. H. Wasmer. The special offices of the Society were distributed as follows at the first Council Meeting after the Annual General Meeting: Dr. H. W. Egli, President; Mr. W. Renz, Vice-President; Mr. M. Schuler, Hon. Treasurer; and Miss A. Gretener, Hon. Secretary.

On behalf of the Council:

H. W. EGLI,
President.

OBITUARY.

We extend our sympathy to the widow and to the son Carlo of the late Mr. Giacomo Valcherà who recently passed away at his home, 306, Sandycombe Road, Richmond, aged 81 years. The deceased originated from Malvaglia, V. Blenio; came to London over 60 years ago. At one time he owned the restaurant at 30, The Quadrant, Richmond, which he sold some 20 years ago to establish himself as a family butcher. He was a contributory member of the "Unione Ticinese".

The "Ticinese" colony suffered a further bereavement in the death of Mr. Cesare Bassi, owing to his failing health, a few months short of his 80th birthday. Hailing from Dangio, V. Blenio, he came to London as a lad of 20 and worked for such well-known establishments as Gatti's and Monico's. We extend our sympathy to the bereaved relatives, and to his son Frank, a Committee Member of the "Unione Ticinese".

J.E.

NOUVELLE SOCIÉTÉ HELVÉTIQUE.

(London Group.)

Annual General Meeting and Dinner,

on Thursday, 25th January, 1951, at the Dorchester Hotel, Park Lane, W.1.

The attendance at the Annual General Meeting of the Nouvelle Société Helvétique (London Group), was unfortunately considerably smaller than on former occasions, which was, no doubt, principally due to the prevailing epidemic of influenza which is now attacking a great number of members, who would otherwise have been present.

About sixty members were present when the President, Dr. H. W. Egli, opened the Meeting. The Annual Report had previously been sent to all members, and was therefore considered as read. (The report appears on another page of this issue.) A short discussion took place with regard to the future activities of the Society, and several recommendations were put forward, which will, in due course be studied by the Council.

The accounts, showing a small deficit, were presented by the Hon. Treasurer, Mr. M. Schuler, and duly accepted.

Mr. A. Gandon, who acted as President *pro tem* during the elections, warmly thanked the members of the Council for the work which they had rendered during the past twelve months.

Two new members to the Council were proposed, to replace those who had resigned, otherwise there was no change, and all, including the new ones, were re-elected.

The committee was constituted as before, namely President: Dr. H. W. Egli; Vice-President: Mr. W. Renz; Hon. Treasurer: Mr. M. Schuler; Hon. Secretary: Miss A. Gretener.

Soon after 7 o'clock the Meeting was closed, and after a short interval, during which *apéritifs* were served, the company adjourned to the Orchid room where an excellent dinner had been prepared. Towards the end of this repast the President warmly welcomed the Swiss Minister and Madame de Torrenté, thanking them for the continued interest they were taking in the Society, he also greeted the following official guests: Dr. A. R. Lindt, Press Attaché at the Swiss Legation, Mr. and Mrs. W. Meier, President of the Swiss Mercantile Society, Mr. A. Gandon, President of the Société de Secours Mutuels, Mr. and Mrs. St. Townend, Director of the Anglo-Swiss Society, and Mr. Albert Ferber.

The Swiss Minister, who received a sincere ovation from the entire company, expressed his pleasure at once again being a guest of the Society and congratulated the London Group on their success in the past year. He passed in review the various activities of the Society such as sending Swiss children from this country to Switzerland, the Swiss Youth Club, which thanks to the very able management of Mrs. E. Bachofen shows such fine results, the Guide of the Swiss Colony in Great Britain, and the useful collaboration with the Federal authorities, which manifested itself on the occasion of the Journée des Suisses à l'Etranger in Lausanne.

Monsieur de Torrenté concluded his interesting address by saying:

"Mes chers compatriotes,

Je saisis l'occasion qui m'est offerte d'exprimer à nos amis anglais notre vive gratitude pour les multiples témoignages de sympathie qu'ils nous ont adressés à la suite de la catastrophe qui s'est abattue sur notre pays.

Non seulement le Gouvernement britannique a-t-il été l'un des premiers à exprimer au Conseil fédéral la part qu'il prenait à nos tribulations et à nos deuils, mais des messages touchants parviennent à la Légation de nombreux amis et même de correspondants inconnus. Telle la lettre dont je vais vous donner lecture:

"Dear Sir, We feel so very sorry for the Swiss people now in such distress and would like to help in some way. Unfortunately, we have no money to send but we could make up some parcels of clothing, etc., if we knew to whom to send them in London so that these articles could be used and sent to the right people."

Cette attitude n'est pas pour nous surprendre, connaissant les liens qui unissent la Grande Bretagne et la Suisse. Elle n'en constitue pas moins pour moi-même qui ai l'honneur de représenter le Gouvernement fédéral auprès de la Cour de Saint James, que pour vous tous qui bénéficiez de l'hospitalité de ce pays, la preuve la plus émouvante de la profonde affection et de l'estime mutuelle que se portent le peuple britannique et le peuple suisse."

(Loud applause.)

Mr. W. Meier, President of the Swiss Mercantile Society, thanked the Society on behalf of the guests for the generous hospitality that had been extended to them. He did this very humorously and efficiently.

This concluded the official part of the evening, and as the N.S.H. had been fortunate enough to secure such a fine artist as Albert Ferber, the pianist, who has made such a name for himself in the musical life of this country, an hour of brilliant pianoforte playing followed.

He rendered with complete mastery: Variations on Air "La stessa la stessissima" by Beethoven, Chopin's Nocturne C minor, two Préludes by Rachmaninoff and Ravel's Alborado del Grazioso, this as always magnificent recital was loudly cheered by the entire company.

Shortly before 11 o'clock this highly successful and pleasurable evening came to a close.

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