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The President then informed us of the Council's proposal to make Mr. Henry de Torrenté Honorary President of our Society, and to confer honorary membership on Mr. F. G. Sommer, now one of our trustees, and on Mr. G. Jenne, one time Chairman of the House Committee and still a member of the Council. These proposals were enthusiastically carried.

It was further agreed to donate £10.10.0 to the Fund for Avalanche Victims, and £5.5.0 to the 1st August Fund.

A monthly meeting followed the Annual General Meeting proceedings to receive as members: Mr. Elmer Baumann, of the Swiss Bank Corporation, and Mr. A. Moser, of the Bank of America.

This concluded the official part of the meeting.

At the suggestion of Mr. Boos, our veterans, Messrs. Gattiker and L. Chapuis, entertained us with their recollections of London life at the turn of the century, and Mr. L. Jobin contributed his share of reminiscences. This was a pleasant round off of an instructive and enjoyable evening.

E.H.S.

"GEMÜETLICHER ABEND" SWISS MALE CHOIR.

Friday, February 23rd, 1951, at the "Schweizerbund".

When I was a student, a good many years ago, and proceedings began to flag at a social evening, we tried to boister up our spirits by singing "Ein Prosit, ein Prosit der Gemütlichkeit!"

There was no need to revert to this practice at the "Gemütlicher Abend" of the Swiss Male Choir, because there was not *one* dull moment throughout the evening.

The President in his short address mentioned, that it is not easy to find an adequate term in the English language for the word "gemütlich". In "Schwyzerdütsch" it has a meaning all of its own, which is difficult to translate, the nearest word I can think of, is "congenial", and yet it does not fully cover it. —

About eighty members and guests sat down to an excellent dinner, which was a credit to the *cuisine* of the "Schweizerbund", and to the stewards, Mr. and Mrs. L. Portman. After the usual loyal toasts, Mr. F. G. Sommer, the popular President of the Choir, extended a hearty welcome to the guests, Mr. and Mrs. A. Stauffer, Editor of the "Swiss Observer" and Mr. and Mrs. A. Gandon, Leader of the Swiss Accordeon Group, including especially the Ladies, and also life and passive members.

He related that the Choir was a happy conglomeration of compatriots in varying walks of life; amidst laughter he said: "Amongst us we are happy to count two Englishmen, who on Friday evenings join us in singing our Swiss songs and who, in fact, behave as if they were our own kin."

Mr. Sommer continued by mentioning that the Choir does not sing for honour and glory, but for the pleasure it gives to them and others. Striking a more serious note, he referred to the approaching departure to Switzerland of Mr. E. Ritzmann, who has been a member for 27 years, and who had rendered the Choir conspicuous services as "Chancellor of the Exchequer". The President voiced his and the members genuine regret for losing such a faithful and loyal

friend, wishing him every happiness and success in his new sphere of activity.

As a small token of appreciation for the services well and conscientiously rendered he proposed to the members, that Mr. Ritzmann, should be, there and then, elected an honorary member of the Swiss Male Choir. Mr. Jaccard, Hon. Secretary of the Choir, seconded the proposal of the President for this nomination, he did this well and his *début* as an orator promises well. This proposal was approved of with great enthusiasm and he was presented with a document certifying his new appointment; as a further mark of appreciation he also received a present in the form of a fountain pen.

The President concluded his address by paying a charming compliment to Mrs. Ritzmann.

To bring a little diversion into the proceedings the Choir sang with great feeling Attenhofer's "Sängerlust" which was much applauded.

Then Mr. Ritzmann, who received a hearty ovation on rising, greatly moved, thanked the President and the members for their expression of appreciation and their generous present. "I shall", he said, "always treasure the memory of my association with the Choir; these long years spent in your company were the happiest of my life and will accompany me wherever I go. (Applause.)"

Mr. Manzoni, a former President to the Choir, recalled an evening in 1924, when the "Doppelquartett Fidelio" of Zurich were the guests of the Society, on which occasion they presented them with a suitably

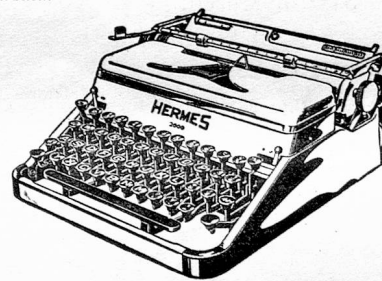
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inscribed painting and a silver cup, which he handed over to the President for safekeeping, but before doing so, he invited the members, who were present at that occasion, to come forward and drink from the "loving cup".

The room was then cleared ready for dancing, the music for which being provided by some of the members of Mr. Gandon's Accordeon Group under his able direction.

The Programme of the 2nd part of the evening was no less enjoyable than that of the first. The Choir sang further songs, with great *eclat* and spirit, no doubt, due in no small measure to the excellent vintages of Fendant, Clos du Mont, Neuchâtel, etc., inbibed earlier in the evening.

Mr. E. Luterbacher, "yodelled" to his heart's content, and Mr. Weiss played on his Zither, with great efficiency, melodies which recalled many a sweet memory of happy days spent in our homeland.

A cartoonist, Miss Peggy Cavell, entertained with chalk drawings of well-known personalities, for this purpose she found it necessary to dress in ballet garb and I for one, did not know whether to admire the skill of her drawings or the fine pair of legs exhibited for the benefit of the audience.

This really pleasant and very "Gemütlicher Abend" of the nightingales of our Colony, came to a close at midnight, and the memory of these all too short and happy hours, will always be remembered with pleasure and gratitude.

ST.

EDITOR'S POST-BAG.

The Editor,
"Swiss Observer",
London, E.C.2.

February 26th, 1951.

Dear Sir,

EXIT UNION HELVETIA CLUB.

It is to be regretted, that in his admirably written article, Mr. P. Lehrian, should omit datas which surely deserve to be mentioned. He passes through 50 years of history and finds no time to relate who were the founders, and the pioneers, who created the Union Helvetia Club; what sort of men were they? Well, they were just ordinary men. Clerks, Cooks, Waiters and Porters, but were possessed of an ideal and had the courage with only small financial means to make this ideal a reality. Surely first honours should go to those men, namely:—H. Wenger, J. Barati, J. Anderhub, Gretener, E. Geel, H. Brüschi, J. Hasler, E. Dubs, J. Heggli, J. Grunenfelder, C. Walthardt, Neuschwander and Däppen, but the moving spirit behind the whole conception, undoubtedly, was the late H. Bieder, the then General Secretary of the Union Helvetia Mother Society in Switzerland and his colleagues in the G.D. Those were also the men who prepared the ground to give the Swiss Hotel Employees, especially the Cooks, a place in the sun in the U.K. Without exaggerating things, the present Union Helvetia, which is to-day one of the most powerful and respected organisations in Switzerland, was built up round that pioneer work which originated in London.

The Club was not exactly a financial success, but these kind of Clubs very seldom are, and are, to my mind, not created for material benefit, the moral and spiritual ends far outweigh the material ends. This conception, however, was not shared by the present G.D., of the Mother Society. True to Swiss tradition, they kept to the motto "pas d'argent, pas de Suisses". Their behaviour can, however, be excused when one considers the heavy financial commitments that were at stake. It is true that the Club became, and was, very useful to the Swiss Colony up to the first world war. Unfortunately, from then on, circumstances willed it otherwise. Restrictions stopped the inflow of young Swiss and left a wide gap which had, in order to be able to carry on to be filled by other nationalities. Consequently the Club lost to some extent its pure Swiss characteristics and became more cosmopolitan.

A great effort was made to interest the Swiss Societies in the property for the purpose of creating a long overdue Swiss centre. After nearly two years of strenuous negotiations, the plan fell through, not through lack of goodwill and energy on the part of the Action Committee, but rather for lack of support from the Colony as a whole. The spirit that moved men to action 50 years ago is missing to-day, the fear of putting a heavy millstone around our necks lays like a horrible nightmare on our chests. It is a great pity, because it is doubtful whether such an opportunity comes our way again.

In conclusion, let us give thanks to the men who formed the various Committees during all these years. They did all the work and received all the kicks. Although the Club is closed, the Union Helvetia Benefit Society carries on its good work. Finally we wish to thank all our compatriots who so loyally supported us to the end.

A.B.

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