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SWISS MERCANTILE SOCIETY.**A lecture on the Pestalozzi Children's village.**

The October monthly meeting was held at Swiss House on Wednesday the 14th.

There was one application for membership. A transfer from the Basle section by Mr. J. Ackermann which was approved.

Mr. W. Meier presented to Mr. J. H. Ungricht the Veteran Members' Bronze Plaque which had been awarded by the "Schweizer Kaufmännischer Verein" to Mr. Ungricht on his attaining 50 years membership. Mr. Ungricht expressed his appreciation of the plaque and his best wishes for the future welfare of the Society.

The President reported that it had been decided that the next annual function should be an evening dinner and dance and that a provisional reservation had been made at the Dorchester for Saturday, the 20th February, 1954.

After this official business, Mrs. W. Meier gave a most interesting and informative talk on the International Pestalozzi Children's village at Trogen in Switzerland.

To explain the conception of this village it was necessary to go back a good many years. During the second World War some 200,000 children from countries at War were warmly welcomed and cared for in Swiss families. After a stay of a few months they returned stronger and healthier to their own countries. Many Swiss people asked themselves if they could not make a more lasting contribution to alleviate suffering.

Walter Robert Corti, the son of a Swiss scientist from the Ticino, turned to writing when, as a result of tuberculosis, he had had to give up his medical career. Of a compassionate nature, he was particularly disturbed by the thought of the thousands of suffering children in the war-ravaged countries and, in August 1944, he wrote an article in the Swiss Periodical "Du". It was an appeal to build an international children's village in Switzerland for orphans from Europe's war-stricken countries; a village where children could find a new home, where they could get well in mind and in body and where they would be educated until they were old enough to help themselves and to return to their own countries filled with tolerance and international understanding. Corti proposed the village as a kind of thanksgiving by a nation which had escaped the horrors of war.

The response to the article was enthusiastic and spontaneous. Corti recovered sufficiently to return to a normal life and to him this meant the launching of this great humanitarian undertaking. Offers of land came from all parts of Switzerland. One of the reasons why the fields outside Trogen were chosen was that the village could take part in the communal life in the little town with its 2,000 inhabitants.

The altitude, about 3,000 feet above sea level, and the climate were both beneficial to children whose health had been undermined. Apart from the land, the local inhabitants offered a three-hundred years' old farm house in Appenzell style and also contributed nearly £2,000. to build a road from Trogen to the building site.

The first four houses were built with money collected by the sale of little ladybird badges, the

emblem of the village, sold in the streets by Swiss school children. The towns of Zürich, Basle and Winterthur, together with various national organisations, businesses and individuals donated large sums of money. But perhaps the most valuable contributions were made by thousands of individuals; widows, children and poor people, who often gave more than they could afford. During the early years, owing to currency restrictions, gifts in kind were received.

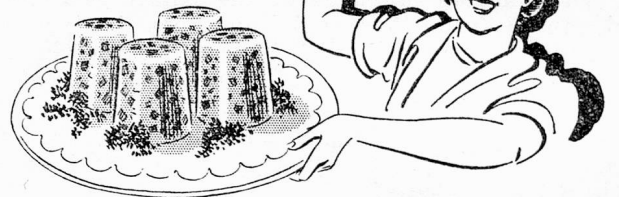
The Zürich architect, Hans Fischli, designed and generally supervised the construction of the village. Building started in the Spring of 1946. During that year over 600 volunteers came from 17 different countries to help in the work.

The centrally-heated houses are of charming and simple design, fitting perfectly into the landscape. Each house is, so to speak, a double house with a covered hall linking the two parts together. On one side there is the living room and kitchen downstairs with a well equipped classroom upstairs. On the other side of the entrance hall are the bedrooms, each to take three to four children. Each child has his own shelf, cupboard, and chest-of-drawers.

The new and original idea of the village was that the children should live in their own national house, cared for and educated by house parents and teachers of their own nationality. That they should be brought up in their own mother tongue, in the religion of their fathers and the tradition and customs of their homeland, free from political bias. But that

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they should, at the same time, get to know each other through everyday communal life and joint lessons, sports, pastimes and excursions.

It was also hoped that the children would learn to appreciate, understand and respect other national customs and, in this way, help to overcome national prejudices. The combination of national and international education would make them good nationals of their own country with a sound international outlook and tolerance.

The first children came in 1946. They were orphans from the South of France. Then followed Polish children, some found by the allies in Merano and sixteen others direct from Warsaw. In the following years, children came from Austria, Hungary, Germany, Italy, Finland, Greece and Great Britain. The first Swiss child came in May 1951.

At the start, children between the ages of 4-14 were accepted, but this was subsequently altered to 6-10, certain exceptions being made in the case of brothers and sisters.

In each house there are about 15 or 16 boys and girls. Under the guidance of house parents the children live a family life within their own house. They get up at 6.30 a.m. and have breakfast at 7 a.m. From 8 a.m.-12 midday they attend lessons based on a national curriculum. After dinner and a rest, work is resumed at 2 p.m. when until 6 p.m. the children are taught international subjects in small classes in the true Pestalozzi spirit.

Music plays an important part, and a Swiss composer has written a special song for the village.

On completing their primary schooling, all the boys and girls from each national house join international classes for their secondary education. These classes are under the guidance of Swiss teachers. They are preceded by a half-year's 'observation class', which gives an opportunity to discover whether a child is more suitable for modern or technical schooling. During the final year of secondary schooling the children have a practical training with a Trogen craftsman or craftswoman.

The common language of the village is German and, apart from those children from Austria and Germany who learn English instead, all the children learn it. German is also used by the house parents at their various discussion meetings.

Once a year, in summer, the children go home for a holiday or, alternatively, they go to youth camps or to a Swiss family.

Once a week the children assemble for a song and address. The young village citizens, the children above 12, have a real say in the affairs of their village. There is a kind of democratic village assembly. In addition, the children produce their own magazine in seven languages.

During the years the village has grown in size. To-day there are 12 houses, two containing Greek children, two Italian, two French, two British, one German, one Finish, one Austrian and one Swiss. Some months ago, it was decided to take Arabian refugee children from Palestine. The Swiss Federal Authorities have offered to pay for the cost of constructing a new house.

The biggest source of financial help is the "God-Parent Scheme". Individuals may become God-Parents by paying a regular annual subscription. The

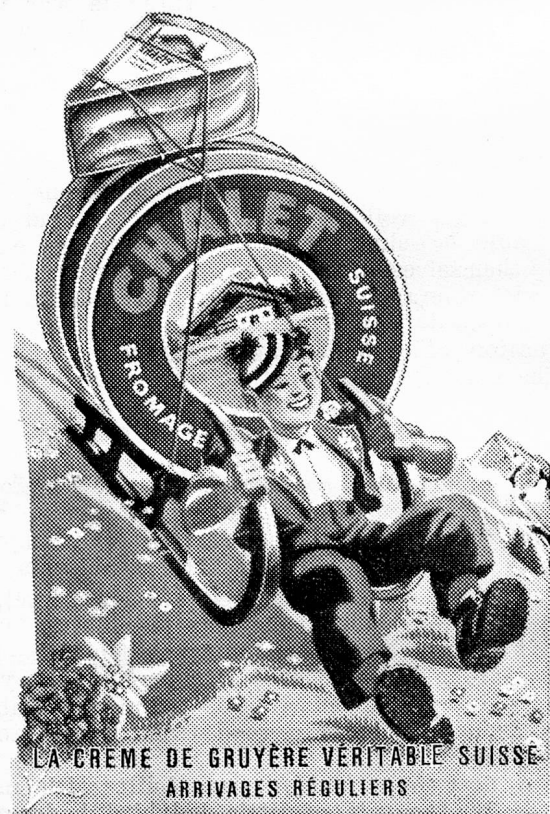
proceeds of many lectures and concerts all over Switzerland are made available to the village. In addition many special collections have been organised by innumerable Swiss Associations.

In 1948, the British Pestalozzi Village Association was constituted. Great Britain, like many other countries, hopes to establish its own children's village. The very active Secretary of the British Pestalozzi Children's Village Association, Mrs. Mary Buchanan, has written an interesting little book about the origin and development of the International Pestalozzi Children's village in Switzerland. (Obtainable from Bannisdale Press, 46/47 Chancery Lane, W.C.2, price 6/-).

Each year before Christmas, boys and girls who have been educated at the Children's village return on a visit. They tell of their experiences since leaving. All of them say that they are happy and it looks as if they are finding their way back into the daily life in their own countries.

There was doubt and scepticism at first as to the wisdom of the whole undertaking. In fact, however, the village has proved entirely successful in the tasks it has set itself. It has developed rapidly from a War-Relief Scheme to a vitally important piece of pioneer international education. The first children were war victims whereas the recent arrivals no longer remember the War and are simply children in need of care.

There is, however, no real peace in the World yet and though the village in itself cannot prevent war, it most certainly contributes towards peace. In every country there is prejudice and a lack of tolerance for



another people, race, class or even religion, a prejudice rooted in ignorance.

The Pestalozzi Children's village in Switzerland is educating only a few in true international understanding. Nevertheless, an excellent beginning has been made and as the idea is spreading to other countries it will help more and more to break-down the barriers of prejudice, hate and distrust and will lay securely the foundation of international solidarity and thus lead to a real and lasting peace. Since Wars are born in the minds of men it is in the minds of children that the foundations of peace must be laid.

J.E.S.

LONDON SWISS PHILATELIC SOCIETY.

It was Ladies Night on October 30th, and the members were entertained by Mrs. Doris M. Green, F.R.P.S.L. with a survey of the Postal History of the Saar for the two hundred years from 1750 to 1950. The lecturer traced the varied fortunes of the district as it changed from German to French rule, back to Germany, and again to France, and so on. The distinguished French soldier, Marshal Ney, was born in Sarra-louis, and Mrs. Green showed a letter, signed by him, dealing with troop movements and postmarked in his home town.

The evening was one of exceptional interest not only to the members but also to the wives. One of the latter, a non-philatelist, remarked at the end of the meeting that her interest had been aroused and held throughout the evening.

PERSONAL.

We are extending heartiest congratulations to Mr. & Mrs. Silvio Gerold, on the arrival, on the 19th of October, of a son, Paul Joseph. Mrs. Gerold is the daughter of Mr. & Mrs. J. Dubs, of the Vienna Café, Berkeley Arcade, Berkeley Court, Baker St., N.W.1.

It may interest readers to hear that "The Young Traveller in Switzerland" by Mrs. W. Meier, (Mariann), — Phoenix House, 8/6, — is being published in U.S.A. The book has been accepted by the well-known publishing firm of E. P. Dutton & Co. Inc., New York, and has been adapted for American readers. This is some achievement as it is difficult for educational books published in England to be accepted on the American market.



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