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NOUVELLE SOCIETE HELVETIQUE.

"The old City of Berne and its surroundings".

Lecture, Lantern Slides and Film Show.

A large gathering of Members and Friends, amongst them the Swiss Minister and Madame de Torrenté, attended a talk by Mr. Hermann Boeschstein, London representative of Ringier Publications, and formerly "Bundesstadt Korrespondent" of the "National Zeitung" Basel, on "The old city of Berne and its surroundings", illustrated by coloured slides and by a film, on January, 13th, at the Vienna Café, Berkeley Arcade, N.W.1.

In introducing the lecturer to the company, Dr. H. W. Egli, the President, mentioned, that this was Mr. Boeschstein's début in the Colony, expressing the hope, that we shall often have an opportunity and the pleasure of seeing and hearing him.

Mr. Boeschstein, before showing some of the beautiful coloured slides gave a short historical survey of the town of Berne, saying that it was founded in the 12th century by the Dukes of Zähringen, and calling it one of the loveliest capitals of the world; his knowledge, and the love he bears to the capital of Switzerland, is all the more remarkable, as, according to Dr. Egli's introduction, he is apparently only a "Papier" Bernese, which means, that he is originating from another canton, but *we* 100 per cent Bernese, willingly and proudly hail him as "one of us", not the least for the eminent services his father, Dr. K. Boeschstein (happily still alive), for a long period of years, has rendered to the city of Berne, both as a teacher of Mathematics at the "Städtischen Gymnasium" and in the Municipal and Federal administration. (The writer was one of his pupils nearly 50 years ago).

The lecturer showed, to begin with, a general view over the old part of the town, taken from the "Rosengarten", this was followed by a number of lovely coloured slides depicting many of Berne's famous fountains, fine examples of the best Renaissance art. They have survived until the present day thanks to the foresight and care of wise magistrates. The beauty of the fountains is enhanced by the floral decorations which are one of the special duties of the city gardener. Not only are they admirable expressions of their builder's art, they also represent something of the town's cultural history, notably the influence of the Renaissance period.

To this period belong the "Schützenbrunnen" (1527), the "Seilerbrunnen" (1549), the "Ryfli-brunnen" (1540-50), the "Dudelsackpfeiffer" (1507), the "Zähringerbrunnen" (1542), the "Samson-brunnen" (1544) and many others, all creations of the 16th century. Specially noted by the audience was the quaint "Kindlifresserbrunnen", built between 1540-1550, picturing the ogre with a collection of babies in his bag, and a procession of bears around the column.

In succession we saw the Minster, which is one of the most perfect late Gothic churches in Europe. Bernese art connoisseurs and historians are rightly proud of its main portal (showing the last Judgement), the magnificent choir stalls and the stained glass windows.

The view of the Town Hall of Berne, now over 500 years old, was much admired, it has been recently carefully renovated and it remains to-day as a proof of the dinified simplicity of the rulers of old Berne and the City's great past.

Great amusement was caused by the pictures of the various markets, such as the meat and cheese market held in the Kesslergasse, the fruit and vegetable market held on the square before the Houses of Parliament and its adjoining streets.

The arcades were shown which form an essential part of Berne's medieval charm, and of course, the famous "Zeitglockenturm". Berne has achieved fame through the musical chimes installed in the clock-tower around 1530. At the stroke of the hour numerous colourful figures are set in motion, a cock crows, a merry-go-round of bear cubs starts moving, the jester with sharp wriggles of his body rings two bells suspended above his head, and Father Time, turning his sand glass, counts the strokes of the Knight clad in golden armour, who stands at the top of the tower.

Pictures of the Bear pits were most fascinating; all visitors go and see Berne's heraldic animals. The oldest entry referring to the practice of keeping bears in Berne dates from the year 1441.

The many bridges over the Aare were put on the screen, from the modern sweep of the Lorraine bridge to the picturesque charm of the old Nydegge bridge, erected in 1461.

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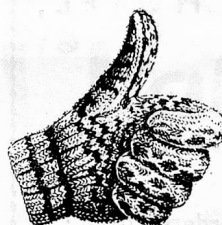
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We also saw the Houses of Parliament, the Federal Library, various monuments, museums, University etc. some of which in more modern style. One of the buildings depicted aroused my special interest, namely the "Burgerspital", it is there, where perhaps one day, as burghers of the town of Berne, my wife and I, may find a haven of rest, and not unlikely with the lecturer himself, who is now also a "Burger". I did not know before the lecturer told us, that the occupants are entitled to half a litre of wine per day, free of charge, which certainly sounds very encouraging.

The film which followed the lantern slides was equally enjoyable, and no less beautiful than the slides, it was mostly a repetition of what was shown in the first part, with the exception of some really fine views on the lakes of Thoune, Brienz and Bienné.

When the lights were switched on again, Dr. Egli, on behalf of the company, warmly thanked Mr. Boeschstein, for his fine performance, and Monsieur Henry de Torrenté, the Swiss Minister, associated himself with the President in voicing his pleasure at the evening, passing some witty remarks with regard to his native canton and the "Bundesstadt".

The *début* of Mr. Boeschstein was certainly a success, and we hope, that the Nouvelle Société Helvétique will be able to "retain" his services for future occasions, he has not only given great pleasure to all those who come from the "Mutzenstadt", but also to those who do not possess this privilege.

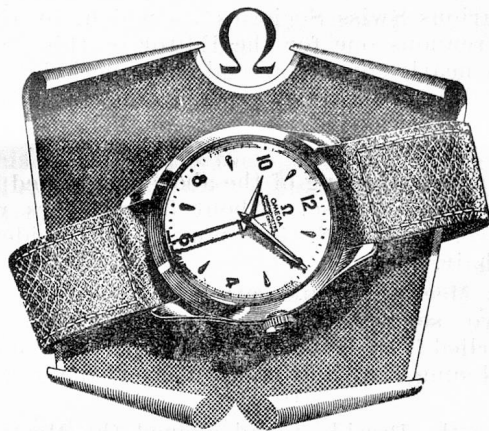
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