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THE 1955 YEARBOOK OF THE N.S.H.

With commendable punctuality, the 1955 Yearbook of the Nouvelle Société Helvétique reached us just as the old year was drawing to its close. Unchanged in outward appearance, with the usual attractive black-and-gilt binding and clear print, the yearbook is slightly different from previous volumes inasmuch as it appears under the direction of a new Editor, Mr. Théo Choppard who has taken over from Professor A. Lätt, the latter having resigned the editorship after twenty-five years' service.

Another slight change is discernible in the innovation of an attempted unification of the various contributions from which the yearbook is made up. The Editor appears to have given his collaborators a "Leitmotif" to serve as a background to their individual essays. This guiding central idea is summed up as "Gewalten und Mächte in der schweizerischen Eidgenossenschaft" and each contributor has elaborated it from his own point of view and related to the special subject of his choice and expert knowledge.

On this concept of "power", political, economic and cultural, twenty prominent Swiss writers have expressed themselves. Their contributions, of which sixteen are in German and two each in French and Italian, cover a wide range and include almost every sociological and political problem in which "power" plays a role. One of the studies is contributed by a lady who writes on the influences of the Swiss women on public life.

The concluding item consists of the usual chronological table of noteworthy events in Switzerland during the past year.

Of special interest to the Swiss who reside in France, West Germany and Great Britain are the three essays in which the comparative exercise of political power in these countries, as viewed from the Swiss standpoint, are discussed. The one dealing with Great Britain is written by Theodor Haller, well-known to readers of the Swiss Observer. His study, entitled "Vom Westminster zum Bundesplatz" brings out in admirably clear and thoughtful manner the fundamental divergences in the political systems of the two democracies. The Swiss conception of liberty, writes Mr. Haller, is primarily one of national inde-

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pendence whereas to the Englishman it stands for personal freedom in relation to the State. Unlike the Swiss Government, British Parliament and the Prime Minister possess immense power, but this power is seldom misused; it is held in check by tradition and public opinion. Tradition and precedent are, in effect, stronger in Great Britain than any legal code could be. On them the whole of the British constitution and much of the judicial system is based, in addition to which the sense of fair play, so deeply engrained in the British character, permeates even politics.

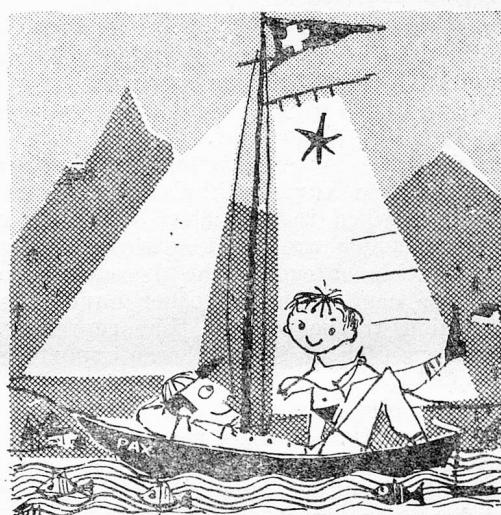
The contrast between the Swiss and British forms of "power" is elaborated by Mr. Haller at some length. He writes with a light touch and not without a sense of humour, thereby making what might easily have been an abstruse and arid subject entertaining and pleasant reading.

The rest of the yearbook comes up fully to the high standard of its predecessors. But we must here confess to having found some of the German essays heavy going. German prose as a medium for the abstract does not lend itself to rapid and easy understanding; it calls in fact for considerable mental effort. We make this remark with no intention of detracting from the value and merit of the German contributions but by way of apology for what we feel to be the inadequacy of our review.

May we therefore congratulate the Editor of the 1955 Yearbook and his collaborators on a very fine performance.

J.J.F.S.

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