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AMONG THE COLONY'S PHILATELISTS.

When discussing with a friend of mine the habit of collecting in general, he said, "collectors are usually cranks", whether he is right or wrong I am not qualified to say, but I have noticed nothing "abnormal" when attending the Annual Luncheon of the London Swiss Philatelic Society, which took place on Saturday, January 29th, at the Glendower Hotel, Glendower Place, S.W.7.

Of course, some people do collect queer things such as match boxes, labels of wine bottles, and boys usually go in for all kind of odd animals. When a small boy, I suddenly felt the urge to collect gold-fish, having won at a Bazaar a small aquarium with two lonely inmates staring at each other.

Whenever a birthday came along, or an occasion arose which I considered deserved some compensation, I asked for a couple of gold-fish. Soon a larger aquarium had to be purchased and my silent colony became quite affluent, but — alas — one day disaster came. It was in mid-winter, and bitterly cold, water pipes became frozen, window panes were thick with frost. Being by nature somewhat kind hearted I became very worried as to what would happen to my gold-fishes should the aquarium become "ice-bound". To prevent such a happening I poured some hot water in the tank, before I went to bed and covered it with a thick blanket. Next morning when I uncovered the tank to wish my friends a jolly good morning, I found them all assembled near the surface of the water but all "upside-down", they were in fact "as dead as mutton". After I had recovered from the shock, and in dire distress, I made a vow never to collect anything any more, not even stamps.

In spite of this resolution, I have always admired people, who, as a hobby do collect whatever they fancy, and for that reason I gladly accepted the invitation of the London Swiss Philatelic Society to attend their Luncheon, especially as I have been their guest on previous occasions, when I enjoyed myself very much.

This annual luncheon has in the past been combined with the General Meeting, this time, however, the latter took place the previous day, and I was

informed that no changes had been made in the committee nor in the leadership of the Society, so everything in the "Garden is lovely".

Before the company sat down to luncheon, they stood up for cocktails in one of the reception rooms, and if the members are as persistent in collecting stamps as they are in swallowing apéritifs there is nothing to fear for the future of the Society.

Not the least enjoyable part of the afternoon, was, of course, the luncheon, consisting of Soup, Fish, Roastbeef or "Blutwurst" and "Schwynigs", sweets, cheese and coffee, a really wonderful spread, and the compliment which the President paid to Mr. and Mrs. Schmid, who are also members of the Society, was well deserved and accompanied by lusty cheers from all the revellers.

When coffee was served, and after the toasts to H.M. the Queen and Switzerland were proposed and honoured, Mr. Streit, the President expressed his pleasure at seeing so many members present. He extended a hearty welcome to the official guests, Mr. and Mrs. Gerold Erskine (Mr. Erskine being the judge of the November competition, whilst his wife is Secretary to the New Zealand Philatelic Society), and Mr. and Mrs. Stauffer, Editor of the "Swiss Observer". Mr. Erskine thanked the Society, on behalf of the guests for the invitation, and emphasized the happy relations which exist between the British and Swiss members. "I for one", he said, "have never felt a foreigner in your midst." (Applause.)

The President mentioned in his short address that the Society was now twelve years old and has a membership of over a hundred, both British and Swiss.

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With a worried expression on his face he said that this year again the Society was faced with a deficit. Much to my surprise this announcement was received with hearty cheers, which proves what a happy go lucky fraternity our Philatelists are, I suppose if they would have had a surplus in their Exchequer they would have wept. But this Society has a happy knack of dealing with deficits, they simply start a tombola, commissioning a few charming ladies to go around selling tickets at 6d. each, and nobody dares to refuse their bewitching appeal for help, the result was, that not only was the deficit for 1954 completely wiped out, but a substantial amount was left for "the next deficit".

The Chairman of the Society belongs to the Banking profession, and amongst the members are a few more prominent Bankers, and I must assume that they agree with this kind of settling deficits. I just wonder whether they would also agree to deal with the over-drafts of their clients in "tombola fashion".

Having thus got rid of their financial worries, they could afford to be generous, and straight away they started an auction for stamps. As on previous occasions this auction was in the hands of Mr. and Mrs. Uehlinger, a most capable pair. If Mrs. Uehlinger is able to get the money as easy out of her husband's pockets as she did from those of the company, then I pity him.

The result of this auction was £10.15.0. of which Dr. Barnardo's Home will get £5.0.0. and the Swiss Benevolent Society £5.10.0. The Hon. Treasurer of the Swiss Benevolent Society, Mr. Roethlisberger,

who was present, thanked the President for their share.

The judge of last year's competition, Mr. Erskine, then presented the silver cup to the winner, Miss Grunberg, a very charming young lady, congratulating her on her achievement and kissing her on both cheeks. (Judging has also its compensations.) Still hot and bothered from the unexpected accolade, Miss Grunberg thanked the members for their presentation.

After a sumptuous tea, the President declared the meeting closed, and thus, once again, a very enjoyable function of the London Swiss Philatelic Society terminated, and I am already looking forward to meeting the Colony's "stamping" fraternity in twelve months time.

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