

**Zeitschrift:** The Swiss observer : the journal of the Federation of Swiss Societies in the UK  
**Herausgeber:** Federation of Swiss Societies in the United Kingdom  
**Band:** - (1957)  
**Heft:** 1290

**Artikel:** Law and practice of guardianship in Switzerland and England  
**Autor:** [s.n.]  
**DOI:** <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-687434>

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## LAW AND PRACTICE OF GUARDIANSHIP IN SWITZERLAND AND ENGLAND. An N.S.H. Lecture.

A recent lecture and discussion on the Law and Practice of Guardianship in Switzerland and England, held under auspices of the N.S.H. at 55 Park Lane, proved most interesting and valuable to those attending. Mr. C. Grassi, Amtsvormund der Stadt Zürich, gave a comprehensive account of the numerous problems of protecting the interests of children deprived of one or both parents, of minors generally, of the mentally deficient and of lunatics.

Speaking from his own practical experience as official guardian of nearly 500 wards of every kind, Mr. Grassi was in a position to illuminate the dry legal aspects of his subject with all the humanity needed to help those under-privileged young and older people who according to our progressive Swiss laws have to be taken care of.

It stands to reason that the young orphans, illegitimate children and the unfortunate children of divorced parents are perhaps nearest to the heart of these official guardians, who are devoting their own lives to ensuring their happiness. The guardians' duties are the same as those of conscientious parents. They have to find suitable accommodation and foster parents for the children, obtain the necessary financial means to pay for their keep from whatever source is open for it, sue fathers of illegitimate children for affiliation orders and contributions in favour of the children, they have to watch over a

ward's development and ensure his training in a suitable trade as apprentice. The most unhappy and difficult children are those of disrupted marriages.

Very difficult problems of a different problems arise for the official guardian in cases where adult people have to be put under his care. Their rights of action as adults have to be severely restricted and their obedience to the guardian may have to be enforced by various legal means. But tactful treatment often brings these adult wards to the point of benefiting from the care bestowed on them and of finally being cured of spendthrift inclinations or other irresponsible tendencies.

A Swiss solicitor, Dr. Alfons E. Wissmann, who during a prolonged stay in England has acquainted himself thoroughly with English law, supplemented Mr. Grassi's lecture with an *exposé* of the way England is coping with the same problems. The English law in this vast field of human tragedy is much less developed than our own from the point of view of the protection of the child or the mentally deficient by official exercise of the rights of parents and suitable restriction of personal freedom. Especially the claims against fathers of illegitimate children are much more restricted than under Swiss law. Affiliation orders are much more difficult to obtain and can only be demanded by the mother and not by the child or its guardian. The legal contribution for the child is limited at the most to 30/- a week until the age of thirteen. Unmarried mothers of foreign nationality are entirely dependent on the protection of the English law, unless they are expelled and repatriated in cases where the pregnancy dates from before their immigration.

This warning was reinforced by Miss Margaret Wolfer, our Welfare Officer for Swiss girls in England, who stressed the advisability of returning Swiss girls in trouble of this sort as soon as possible to the home country. It is not possible to give an adequate account of the talks and the subsequent discussion in this short report, but those who attended this interesting meeting have drawn much enlightenment from what they heard on this complicated and extremely important subject.



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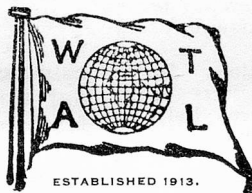
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