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85th FÊTE SUISSE

Last year the "Fête Suisse" was held at the Royal Albert Hall in connection with the "Swiss Fortnight", and in aid of the Pestalozzi Children's Village Trust, and was called a "Scottish-Swiss Festival", as a large contingent of our Scottish friends took part in the programme.

This year the "Fête Suisse" will be held — as on many former occasions — at Central Hall, Westminster.

It might be an opportune moment to recall a few facts of this annual festival, which has become in the real sense of the word, a family affair, at which all members of the Swiss community, regardless of class or age, take part.

From small and modest beginnings it has, especially in later years, attained an increased importance. Whilst for many years the programme had been entirely supported by local talent, it was found necessary, especially in recent years, to "import" artists from our homeland. In a way this is to be regretted, as the "Fête Suisse" has thus lost a little of its former more intimate *cachet*, but it had become unavoidable owing to the fact that the flow of young compatriots of ours to this country has almost ceased. Various institutions, such as the Swiss Orchestra, the Swiss Gymnastic Society, and the Swiss Male Choir — to name only a few — have gone out of existence, and performers who formerly supplied the various items on the programme either have become too old or have left us.

This year again it has become necessary in order to present an attractive programme, worthy of the occasion, to fall back on "outsiders" to fill the gap.

In 1949, for the first time, the "Chanson de Lausanne" appeared at the Central Hall and proved a great success. The following year, on the occasion of the 75th anniversary, various soloists from Switzerland appeared on the platform. In 1951 the "Stadt-musik" Solothurn provided the chief items on the programme, and in 1952 that excellent choir the "Chanson du Rhône" gave a memorable performance.

In subsequent years the following choirs have taken part in the programme: "Ländlerkapelle and Jodlergruppe" Wattwil (1953), "Chanson de Lausanne" and "Musique du Folly" (1954), "Röseligarte Chor Bärn" (1955) "Chanson de Montreux" and "Musique de Huemot" (1956), "Chanson de Gruyère" (1957), "Jodlerklub Pilatus" and "Bürgermusik" Lucerne (1958), "Genève Chante", "Appenzeller" Folklore Group, "Ländlerkapelle Ladina", and Lake of Geneva Brass Band (1959).

On Wednesday, 22nd June, we shall have the pleasure of hearing again our old friends, the "Chanson du Rhône", one of the most popular choirs in Switzerland. There will also appear on the programme, for the first time, Miss Annette Weisbrod, pianist, who recently appeared with much success at a piano recital at the City Swiss Club at the Dorchester Hotel. Then we shall be able to greet the "Corale" of the Unione Ticinese, a choir which we always welcome and which we would not like to miss. The "youngsters" of the Colony will be represented by a group of children of the "Schweizerkirche".

We can thus look forward to a really entertaining and enjoyable evening. The catering, which in former years has often given cause for complaints, is receiving special attention, and has been put in capable professional hands. Extra accommodation has been secured, and it is hoped that the service will proceed smoothly.

It goes without saying that the presentation of such an ambitious programme involves heavy expenses, and it is of the greatest importance that the Central Hall should be filled to capacity, and we make an earnest appeal to all members of the Colony and their friends to turn up in full force. By doing so they not only show their appreciation to the organisers for the great efforts they are making, but also pay a compliment to our brethren from the lovely canton of Valais.

We expect, therefore, to see the notice "Full House" displayed at the box office, on Wednesday, 22nd June, and in order to save anybody being disappointed we would strongly advocate that tickets should be applied for as early as possible. It will be a fine show, and well worth the modest entrance fee. Let us all make a great effort to fill Westminster Hall to the last seat.

ST.

NOUVELLE SOCIÉTÉ HELVÉTIQUE (London Group)

On 17th May the Nouvelle Société Helvétique (London Group) had the unusual pleasure of being addressed by a Swiss career woman in the person of Miss Marianne Straub, F.E.I.A., the well-known textile designer and teacher, of Great Bardfield (Essex). Miss Straub, a native of Amriswil (Thurgau), after her initial training in Zurich and Bradford, returned in the early thirties to the United Kingdom, where she has occupied with distinction posts as textile designer, business administrator, and lately as teacher. In her capacity as designer to leading firms she has been responsible for the production of many outstandingly beautiful and successful fabrics used in furnishing homes, ships, etc., as well as for dresses and ceremonial garments. She has recently accepted additionally a teaching appointment at one of the leading colleges, where she has an opportunity, very welcome to her, of passing on her considerable experience to young students and, as she mentioned with great modesty, of receiving new impulses from her pupils, the designers of to-morrow.

Miss Straub spoke with great charm to a very appreciative audience and answered enquiries not only from the ladies, who admired the beautiful samples shown, but also from quite a few men engaged in the textile industries. Switzerland and the United Kingdom can indeed be proud to be the birthplace and adopted home of this outstanding personality.

W.R.