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NOUVELLE SOCIETE HELVETIQUE

An Interesting Lecture

It was not expected that any lecture, however inviting its title might be, would fill the large room at the Swiss Hostel for Girls, Belsize Grove, on an evening in the middle of July. But the unexpected did happen at the meeting of the Nouvelle Société Helvétique on 19th July, when the President, Mr. W. Renz, was able to welcome a large audience and Monsieur J. P. Chapuisat, of Lausanne, who, as he put it, was going to lecture on a "dusty piece of history".

Mr. Chapuisat, who is in London for a short stay to do research at the British Museum Library and the Public Records Office, was speaking on "Relations between England and Switzerland in the Middle Ages".

There are a number of references in the Cambridge Medieval History (and others) of Persons with rather familiarly sounding names, such as various Savoyards, who were prominent at the English court of Henry III in particular, but also at other times. In our own time Londoners and visitors to London are constantly reminded of some ancient connection between the Metropolis and Savoy by the names of the famous Hotel and, adjacent to it, the Savoy Theatre.

We heard from the lecturer that the land on which the two buildings stand was part of an estate which belonged to the Brethren of the Great St. Bernard. It appears that close connections between the House of Savoy and other families of what was then Savoy and Burgundy, but which now is part of Suisse Romande, were fostered under Henry II and Henry III. Savoyards were the closest advisers of the latter King; of some of them, Previté-Orton in the Shorter Cambridge Medieval History writes, "they were efficient men", adding, "although they took too ample a share of profitable favours". Well, who can blame them? Considered from the King's viewpoint they were fully worth their riches.

Mr. Chapuisat explained how the fact that Savoy controlled the passes over the Alps, in particular those of the Great St. Bernard and Mont Cenis, made the friendship of the House of Savoy of importance to the English kings from William the Conqueror onwards. Indeed, merchants and ambassadors had to cross the Great St. Bernard so frequently, that Henry II thought well enough of it to present the Brethren of that Order with large estates in Essex.

We must not repeat more of the details of Mr. Chapuisat's finds in the "dusty" records of ancient history that bound the two peoples, but we may add that even in the sixteenth century there was still an inn somewhere in the Eastcheap area of London which was called "Montegeofys Inn" (Mount Jove's Inn). Here the lecturer reminded us that for centuries the Great St. Bernard was called "col du Mont-Joux". As a by-the-way, we were also enlightened about Dante's mention of the "quattro figlie ebbe e ciscuna reina . . . as referring to the four beautiful daughters of the glorious Béatrice de Savoy, who saw her "quattro" married in due course to four kings — those of France, England, Germany, and Naples-Sicily.

Prolonged applause thanked the lecturer for an hour of very interesting enlightenment.

J.H.B.

ANGLO-SWISS SOCIETY

On Wednesday, 27th July, the Anglo-Swiss Society held an informal luncheon party in honour of the future British Ambassador to Switzerland and his wife, Mr. and Mrs. Paul Grey, at the Dorchester Hotel. The luncheon was presided over by Sir Clifford Norton, the Society's Chairman. He announced with great regret the absence of Mr. Paul Grey, who that very morning had to be rushed to a nursing home owing to incipient septicaemia, but welcomed very warmly Mrs. Grey, who represented her husband in a most charming way.

Sir Clifford, in a very witty speech, equated the relations between Mother Helvetia and Her Majesty's Ambassador to a marriage which, in his own case and any of his predecessors', had become a bond of deep affection. He hinted that too great an attachment to a country might prove detrimental to an Ambassador's work. The attractions of our country were such that no man in his senses could withstand them, and yet he was convinced that in this particular case the marriage would never turn into a "liaison dangereuse". He felt that to-day, as at any wedding or prospective wedding, one could say of bride and groom that they were both equally lucky, and could quite justly wish them every success and happiness.

The meeting was attended by some fifty members, and proved a very pleasant and harmonious gathering. Amongst those present were the Swiss Ambassador and Madame Daeniker, the Earl of Gosford, Sir Lionel Lamb (a former British Minister to Switzerland), Ald. Sir Ralph and Lady Perring, and many other staunch friends of Switzerland.

E.M.B.

PERSONAL.

Mademoiselle Elizabeth Hoeter, of Neuchâtel, was installed as International President of the Soroptimist Association on Thursday, 28th July, at the Royal Festival Hall.

She is the first Continental to hold this office and takes over from Dr. Violet V. Parkes, J.P., of Sutton Coldfield, England.

Mlle. Hoeter is a teacher of French and Foreign Literature at a school for boys and girls of 16 to 20 in Neuchâtel and is the only woman on a staff of 40.

For the last two years she has been President of the European Federation of Soroptimist Clubs and has visited members in the Scandinavian countries and in Greece, Israel and Turkey.

During her four-year term of office she hopes that it may be possible to extend Soroptimism to the Arab countries and particularly to establish Clubs in Damascus and Beirut. She feels that Soroptimism may help the women of Israel and the Arab countries to meet and get to know each other as individuals.

The editor will be abroad from 19th August until 12th September.

Mr. J. Eusebio being away until September, his articles, "Cronaca Nostrana", will not appear until further notice.