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BICENTENARY OF THE SWISS CHURCH

Concert by Sophie Wyss

Sunday is a special "at home" day in my family. Evening engagements are frowned upon. It was therefore with some reluctance that I left for the Eglise Suisse in Endell Street on Sunday evening, 17th June, to attend a concert arranged by Madame Sophie Wyss in honour of the Bi-centenary of the Swiss Church. Once again Madame Daeniker was patron, jointly with The Rt. Hon. Philip Noel-Baker, M.P., and the concert was in aid of the Swiss Church and of the Pastalozzi Children's Village in Essex.

The programme opened with Handel's Harp Concerto with string quartet. The soloist was the distinguished artist, Madame Maria Korchinska. "Trois Chants de Noël" for voice, flute and organ, by the Swiss contemporary composer Frank Martin, came next. It was unfortunate that these songs had to be performed on the gallery, where the acoustics did not do full justice to either composer or artists (Madame Sophie Wyss, soprano; Mr. John Francis, flute; Mr. Reginald Paul, organ).

Gustav Holst, the Cheltenham-born composer (1874-1934), wrote the "Rig Veda" cycle from which the Orpheus Ladies' Choir under the direction of Mr. James Gaddarn sang four hymns. The harp was again played by Madame Korchinska, whose splendid mastery of the difficult instrument created special enjoyment.

The high-spot of the evening was "La Légende Dorée". The original vast collection of the Saints' Lives was composed by Jacques de Voragine in the fifteenth century. The songs chosen for Sunday's concert were collected by the singer, Yvette Guilbert, and arranged by Leonard Isaacs for voice, harp, flute, string trio and a small mixed choir. All the artists gave an admirable performance, particularly Madame Korchinska (harp) and Mr. John Francis, the well-known flautist. Mr. Gaddarn, the conductor, too, is to be congratulated on the excellent rendering of the beautiful work of art. A special word of praise must be said about Madame Sophie Wyss. Her voice, so familiar in the Colony for so long, came to life in these exquisite songs as I have not heard it for a long time. It dominated the performance and I was not the only one in the audience who was deeply moved.

Thanks are due to the artists, but above all to Madame Wyss for taking the initiative and making all the arrangements. Her efforts were well worth while; they resulted not only in the gratifying sum of over £40 taken in the collection after the concert, but also in a very happy evening for all those attending.

Mariann.

THE WEATHER IN SWITZERLAND

In Switzerland, as in this country, summer has been very late arriving. Frost warnings were repeatedly given and there was great lack of sunshine all over the country. The average temperatures for May were two degrees below normal, which happens only every ten years or so. In Basle the aggregate day temperature on 1st June was 5.5° C, a "low" which had never been reached at that time of the year in the whole of the 208 years since records were first kept.

Snow fell at much lower altitudes than is usual for this season. At the beginning of the month it snowed in Berne for several hours, also in Fribourg and other towns. Snow covered slopes in valleys which are normally free around this time. On the Chasseral, for instance, new snow covered the old layer to a thickness of over four inches. On the Gotthard snow was lying twenty inches

deep, and on 2nd June the pass route had to be closed because of the danger of avalanches. Considerable delay was caused to traffic, as the Swiss Federal Railways were not prepared for this. Many motorists had to spend the night at an hotel. The next day several thousand cars were transported through the tunnel.

The farmers of the Canton of Lucerne complain about extensive damage to crops caused by heavy snowfall. Many trees were bent and broken, and whole rye and barley fields were devastated. In some districts the potato crops have been damaged.

North of the Alps, especially in the north-eastern regions, there was heavy rainfall. Owing to excessive rain in the Valais, there were bad floods. At La Chaux-de-Fonds a circus tent was destroyed in a terrific cloudburst, damage resulting to the figure of Fr. 70,000. Swiss lakes and rivers rose by several inches. Heavy storms caused damage to boats on the lakes of Lugano, Constance and Geneva; the damage to the boats on the Lac Léman alone amounted to several hundred thousand francs. Many trees, too, were uprooted in the storms. Finally, on 3rd June, Zurich Airport had to be closed because of dense fog for seven hours.

But even later, when it looked as if conditions were at last improving, there was still lack of sunshine in many parts. The pass routes were mostly open to traffic over Whitsun, but on the Klausenpass there were snowdrifts on Whit Monday. And the conditions on the Grimsel, Furka and Susten were such that they could not be opened on 15th June as had been hoped.

Owing to cold weather and dry northerly winds the alpine grass in the Bernese Oberland is not growing properly yet. Many a mountain farmer can keep his cattle alive only by purchasing hay.

In the famous Baselbiet cherry regions the early crops are only now beginning to ripen, a good three weeks later than in normal years.

We wonder whether the optimists will be right who now predict a very hot summer here and in Switzerland?

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