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Having told us that he had been instructed in the Other World to visit the City Swiss Club, Father Bossard proceeded with his angels to sing a composition of his in which half the members of the City Swiss Club were portrayed individually. We joined in the singing, and participated in a second of Father Bossard's chansonnier-compositions.

The singing died down, Santa-Claus and the angels left the room, we applauded and Mr. Kuhn congratulated Father Bossard for having helped make the evening so successful.

(PMB)

SOIREE DE L'ESCALADE

The "Cercle Genevois" is probably the most floating and changing Swiss society of London. Members come and go, attendances at "Escalade" evenings change by leaps and bounds. Last year, the Park Suite at the Dorchester was hardly large enough to contain the big crowd Madame Heisch-Dominicé, the Cercle's former president, had managed to gather. This year, the thirty-odd faithfuls and sympathisers who turned up were given the humble Stanhope Suite. But small numbers make for intimate and very friendly evenings.

The Ambassador and Madame René Keller honoured us by their presence, and when the president, Mr. Michael Metford-Sewell, had welcomed

us and wished us a happy evening, Monsieur Keller (a remarkable after-dinner speaker) said a few words off the cuff and mentioned his ties with Geneva and the advantages he had reaped from his Geneva citizenship.

"Escalade" entertainment consisted in listening to a record of the Escalade produced by the *Compagnie 1602*. We sang the Escalade song and stood up to hear the names of the Escalade's 18 victims in respectful silence. The breaking of the *marmite* was entrusted to the writer. Unfortunately the *marmite*, fabricated by the Dorchester's confectioners, was one of massive chocolate, and instead of smashing it to smithereens, he managed to leave it fit for second-use and got himself badly bruised on the hands and arms in the process.

The vice-president, Mrs. Metford-Sewell, asked us all to decline our age and origin. It turned out that we were only five real Genevese. But we were all Genevese at heart, and that was what counted.

(PMB)

SCHWEIZERBUND

The "Nouvelle Société Helvétique" is an intellectual and highly-cultured assembly, the City Swiss Club is an exclusively masculine, and the Rifle Association, virile, institution. The Schweizerbund, on the other hand, is open to all, illiterate and non-male alike, and genuinely Swiss.

Its Annual Dinner, last December, was highly successful and colourful. We sang and sang till our hoarse voices were like dying rasps. Mr. Charles Abegglen, with indomitable energy, conducted the Sing-Song and the whole repertoire of Swiss folklore was surely exhausted.

Mr. Virgil Berti, the president, welcomed us all to an enjoyable evening, expressed his satisfaction at seeing the presence of some old-time friends, among them Adolph Gandon, Adolph Schmid, Ernest Nüssli, Renata and Albert Meyer. He regretted the absence of Mr. Leu, who had to stay at home because of the illness of his wife.

A particularly friendly and agreeable evening.

(PMB)

SWISS MERCANTILE SOCIETY

The Society's December meeting was highlighted by the very interesting colour-slide talk by Mr. Walter Stettbacher on the Engadines. Mr. Stettbacher had recently spent a holiday in the beautiful resort of Sils and recorded the splendours of the Bernina, the Corvatsch, the Silser- and Silvaplannersee and the Maloja on film for our benefit. A highly entertaining evening which doubtless gave to everyone present an ardent desire to be on the snowy slopes of the Alps right away.

(PMB)

THE SWISS OBSERVER 30 YEARS AGO

The following is a résumé of the news that appeared in the December issues of the Swiss Observer in 1939.

On December 9th, the Swiss Mercantile Society held its monthly meeting, presided by Mr. J. J. Boos. There had been no further progress to report over the eventual subletting of the Swiss Mercantile Society's premises in Fitzroy Square. The School had been shut down because of the war. The meeting recalled the arrangements already made for the Swiss Minister's departure and voted a £50 donation to the funds of the Swiss Benevolent Society, as well as a £20 gift to the annual Christmas collection of the S.K.V. To the pleasant surprise of all present, trays full of Neuchatel wine were brought in and everybody drank to the health of Mr. Boos, the president, and his newly-wed wife. Messrs. Oertli and Senn, who had recently returned from military service in Switzerland, were called upon to give their impressions. Mr. Oertli related his experiences as an officer in charge of sentry posts at Bergün, Filisur and Tiefencastel. Mr. Senn related his experiences with his regiment, stationed in the wooded valleys of the Jura and busy working at defence works with spades, pickaxes and saws. He had had a number of adventures on his way back to England. Mr. Max Schneider, Hon. Secretary of the S.M.S. was still in the ranks and the meeting decided to send him a Christmas parcel.

The Civil Swiss Club's December meeting had been held on the 5th. The after-dinner speaker had been Mr. Maurice Thiéry, and the theme of his talk: the French Revolution, and some parallels with current events. The dinner was honoured by a strong representation from the Legation, including Dr. A. Kock, Colonel Zürcher and Mr. Preiswerk, head of the German affairs division.

The Minister, Monsieur Paravicini, was to leave the post that he had held for almost twenty years. He was exceedingly well known and loved in the Colony and, on the 15th, it honoured him with a farewell dinner at Pagani's restaurant; on the 18th, it was for personnel of the Legation to invite him and Madame Paravicini to a farewell dinner at the Dorchester. Monsieur Paravicini's renown extended beyond the Colony and on the 20th, he and the Ambassadors were offered luncheon at Buckingham Palace by the King, and on the 21st, a reception was given in his honour by the Belgian Ambassador, acting doyen of the Diplomatic Corps.

Most of the balls and annual dinners that usually take place in December were cancelled that year (although the Cercle Genevois held its exclusively male Escalade-dinner).

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The Swiss girls of Liverpool had all the same a very enjoyable Christmas Dinner, thanks to the efforts of Mrs. Macquerie and Mme. Davidson. On the 16th, the "old folks luncheon" took place at the Foyer Suisse and was presided by Monsieur Paravicini. Pastor Pradervand, minister of the French-speaking Swiss Church, Madame Elmer, president of the Foyer and Monsieur H. Joss, secretary of the Foyer naturally contributed to the organisation and success of the luncheon.

Now for some of the news that came from home.

Some details of the Swiss Mercantile Fleet were given by the Federal Council: 15 ships with a tonnage of 115,000 had been chartered for the duration of the war. The belligerent powers had given an undertaking not to interfere with this seaborne traffic. The Swiss Cross and the name Switzerland would be painted on the sides of the ships and would, of course, carry goods solely for the provisioning of the country. Two London ship brokers were to act as managers for the Swiss Government and most of the unloading was to be effected at Marseilles.

Swiss anti-aircraft batteries were slackening in their vigilance and the Germans were appearing to take advantage of the situation, one aircraft having penetrated as far as Zug and dropped leaflets intended for French civilians. The people of Basle had spent an exciting December Saturday-afternoon watching German anti-aircraft guns chasing French bombers away. Five members of the "Volksbund" were sentenced to a year's imprisonment by the Federal Penal Court for conspiring against the State. This was another of the scurrilous circles directed by the notorious Leonhardt from somewhere across the border. A Federal vote called through an initiative rejected a Government bill aiming at reorganising the employment of the 54,000 employees of the Confederation. The governmental scheme included a compensation of the accrued deficit (amounting to a billion francs) of the federal pension fund by increased contributions by employees. This was rejected by the people. The offices of the "Neue Basler Zeitung" were occupied and searched by local police authorities. It had been alleged that the paper was selling 80,000 copies a day over the German border, while sales in Switzerland hardly exceeded 1,200. The publication was thought to be animated by a certain Hans Jenni from Zurich, member of the "Bundtreuer Eidgenossen", pro-German Society. The "Weltwoche" issue of 24th November had been confiscated by the military command. A proposal to abolish vivisection in the canton Baselstadt had found 7,415 supporters whilst no less than 23,639 had voted against it. In view of the heavy sacrifices borne by mobilised citizens, the military exemption tax was to be doubled in

1940. Three slightly-wounded German airmen were arrested, and subsequently interned, near the Franco-Swiss border south of Le Locle. Their plane had been attacked and damaged during a reconnaissance flight over the south of France and crashed between Pontarlier and Besançon: the three pilots parachuted without being noticed. After having burnt their parachutes and uniforms they had set out in their overalls for the 70 km. distant Swiss frontier, which, thanks to their excellent maps, they had reached after three days and nights. When questioned during their peregrinations, they had feigned successfully to be English pilots.

The presidency of the Confederation was to change with the new year: Federal Councillor Pilet-Golaz was to become President of the Confederation for 1940, Federal Councillor Oprecht, Vice-President. The marked decrease in the use of private cars mainly due to high taxation was having far reaching consequences. About 50,000 workers were losing their livelihood and had to be supported by the respective communes. The Confederation was foregoing about 25 million francs in import duties on petrol and cars and about half this amount was lost by the cantons in licenses and car taxes. The automobile trade was to approach the authorities with certain proposals to alleviate this serious crisis. A gradual reduction of the car tax was suggested, and this would benefit especially heavy cars.

TO ALL BERNESE OBERLANDERS

One of our subscribers, Mr. B. Fearnley, F.I.I.P., F.R.P.S., of 224 Linthorpe Road, Middlesbrough, Teesside, is writing a book on the Bernese Oberland. He has asked us whether any of our Bernese readers would possibly be able to tell him some of their stories. Perhaps they will be kind enough to get in touch with Mr. Fearnley direct.

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* * *

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SUNDAYS: Holy Mass at 9 and 11 a.m. in English. At 6.30 p.m. for the Swiss community with regard to the different language groups.

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Saturdays: 11 a.m. to 12.30 p.m. and from 5 to 7 p.m. or by appointment.

SWISS CATHOLIC YOUTH CLUB — Meeting every Sunday after Evening Mass (8-11 p.m.) at Westminster Ball Room, 30 Strutton Ground, S.W.1.

CHAPLAIN: Paul Bossard, St. Ann's Church, Abbey Orchard Street, S.W.1. Tel.: 01-222 2895.