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## MR. BERNER CONVALESCING

A telephone call to Mr. Willy Berner, now taking the firm of Giron Freres at Accrington into his good care, reassured us of the good health of Mr. *Ermanno Berner*. The Swiss Observer's Northern correspondent is recovering in Italy after a series of three operations. To have sustained them at past 70 is quite some feat and we wish Mr. Berner a complete and speedy recovery.

## FORTHCOMING EVENTS

**CITY SWISS CLUB.** Dinner with speaker on Tuesday, 19th October (see notice above), Dorchester Hotel. Dr. Frank Ellis, consultant surgeon at Guy's Hospital, will speak on "spare parts surgery". 19th November: *106th Annual Banquet and Ball*.

**NOUVELLE SOCIETE HELVETIQUE.** Open meeting on Thursday, 21st October, at 7.45 p.m. Talk with slides on Mountain Flora by Mr. A. D. Ruscoe.

**SWISS MERCANTILE SOCIETY.** Monthly meeting on Wednesday, 13th October, at 7.45 p.m.

**SECOURS MUTUELS.** Monthly meeting on Wednesday, 3rd November, at 35 Fitzroy Square.

**SWISS CLUB EDINBURGH.** "Kaffeeklatsch" at Mr. Hansjörg Wirz, 10 Kirk Brae, at 8 p.m.

## CULTURAL EVENTS

Saturday, October 9. Queen Elizabeth Hall. Ballade by Frank Martin included in the programme played by Paul Tortellier (cello) and Maria de la Pau (piano).

Wednesday, October 20th. Wigmore Hall, 7.30 p.m. Recital by the

pianist Bernhard Billeter (eight Preludes by Frank Martin and works by Beethoven, Brahms and Debussy).

Friday, 29th October. Eglise Suisse, 79 Endell Street, W.C.2. Concert in aid of the Swiss Church under the

patronage of the NSH and the European Liszt Centre. Works by Liszt and Bach. L. Rabes at the organ. Other performers include a cellist, a harpist, a soprano and members of the Royal Choral Society. Silver collection.

# AN UNTOLD LIFE STORY

The people with the most interesting lives are not always those who can show the most visible trappings of material success. But then, what is an *interesting* life? The notion of "interesting" is conventional and every life is interesting, even if it is spent in a wheel chair. By that token, who knows the wealth of existence belonging to the old people who come to the Swiss Church, or to any other church for that matter? They have the memory of a story which is never told, not only because it lacks in romantic lustre, but because most of the cast of those who played a role in it have already vanished.

The traditional biography is concerned with a remarkable story of success and romance appealing to the idealism of the reader and inspiring him with a wish of emulation. But such a story pertains more to romanticism and the adventure epic than human truth. The really true biographies should be that of a totally unknown person, the absolute average, one who has never achieved anything worth recording in print.

However, the story of *Mrs. George Herbert*, a frail 85-year-old regular doyen of the Swiss parish in London, is not of this kind, because she has by no means had an "ordinary" existence and is fortunate enough in having a circle of friends who know of it. It is through one of them that I learned that Mrs. Herbert had been Lady-in-waiting to the mistress of Edward VII. This conjured up such a glowing and different chapter of history that I resolved to write her story with her kind permission.

Mrs. Herbert was born in Orvin, in the Jura, in 1886, of a farmer family. She decided at 19 to leave for England, "*pour s'épanouir*" and worked as an "au pair" in an aristocratic family dwelling at Sherborne Castle, with two daughters from whom she learnt English.

In 1914 she entered the service of Mrs. Newhouse, the wife of an American millionaire and one of King Edward VII's last woman friends. Mrs. Newhouse was discreet regarding her five years of association with the then Prince of Wales, and Mrs. Herbert could not therefore enliven this anecdotal chapter of history from any personal angle. All she could say was that Mrs. Newhouse had accompanied the Prince of Wales for many seasons at Baden Baden, had followed him to the Ritz hotels of Paris and other glamorous places, while the life-loving Prince left Princess Alexandra at home, ignoring his Victorian background.

With Mrs. Newhouse, she went to America twice. It was a gay life. In New York, they stayed at the Ritz Carlton, sharing an apartment (for her mistress) and a three-room suite for herself. In the "Lusitania", the ill-fated liner which they took on their westward bound journey, they had a State Apartment.

Mrs. Herbert followed her wealthy mistress across America to Utah, where Mr. Newhouse had started his fortune, and Salt Lake City, where he owned the majestic Newhouse Hotel. There, she had an insight of Mormon life. She visited the Tabernacle and the harem where Brigham Young, founder of the

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