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THE LARGEST WATER COLOUR PAINTING IN THE WORLD

A reader has recently sent us an old issue of the Valais periodical *Treize Etoiles*, bringing to my attention an article devoted to what is probably the largest water colour painting in the world. This painting, 3.10 metres wide and 70 cm. high, is to be found at the "Chaperon Rouge" tea room at Les Marecottes, a village in the Trient Valley above Martigny. It is the work of a well known Alpine artist, Clara Durnat-Junod (1901-1966), whose landscapes decorate the premises of many European Alpine clubs, including the one in London. To situate her, Clara Durnat-Junod has also written a book, "Pinceaux et Piolet", which was published in 1943 and related the experience of one who loved both rambling and painting in the mountain-side.

The picture to be seen at Les Marecottes represents the view of the Alps obtained from the pastures of La Creusaz, which are high above Les Marecottes. The panorama depicted by the artist stretches from the Grand Chavalard to the Mont Blanc. It required a sheet of paper so vast that it could only be found in Italy. Painting such a grandiose mountainscape was no small feat in view of the tricky properties of water colour, which tend to make the paper swollen and blotched as it dries up.

The Valais has the highest dam in the world (Grande Dixence), it is as much to this canton's honour that it should also have the largest water colour painting in the world.

(PMB)

NOUVELLE SOCIÉTÉ HELVÉTIQUE ANNUAL DINNER

The London Branch of the Nouvelle Société Helvétique held its Annual Dinner at the Prince of Wales Hotel on Thursday, 20th April. This change of venue was due to the Swiss Girls Hostel's inability to resume its catering services. The Dinner was preceded by the AGM, which as AGM's go, was fairly expeditiously dealt with under the chairmanship of the President, Mrs. Mariann Meier.

The minutes of the last AGM were read by the Secretary, Mr. M. Schneider, and approved with minor comments by a member. There was no need for the President to read the Annual Report, since it had been circularised among members. The main activities for the year 1971-72 were as follows: April 1971, talk by Mr. J. C. Nicole on the "Aims and Objects of the Mother Society"; May, talk by Dr. Albert Hunold on the "Dangers facing Switzerland from within and from outside"; June, talk by Father P. Bossard on the "Problems and Pleasures of Swiss Dialects"; July, talk by Prof.

Erich Gruner on "Die Schweiz seit 1945"; October, exposé by Mr. A. D. Ruscoe on "Mountain Flora" and, in the same month, a Church Concert; November, Dr. Ch. Bruggman spoke on "Swiss Economic Growth in Crisis" December, Christmas gathering with music and reading; January, talk on "The Loneliness of Swiss Radio" by Mr. Jöel Curchod; February, Film Show; March, conference on the "Aspects of Social Work in Switzerland and in Great Britain" by Mrs. S. Sharp.

This programme, as Mrs. Meier was to point out, offered members their money's worth. They could hardly claim for more in the way of intellectual stimulation, the cost of which will not increase in 1972-73, since the AGM decided to leave subscriptions unchanged at £1.50.

Mr. L. S. R. Asch, the Treasurer, ran through the accounts rapidly. Total income of the Society amounted to £264.10 (subscriptions, donations and interest) showing a profit of £41.45 (after transfer to Reserve Account of £100). The balance sheet added up to £1,190.28.

The Committee was re-elected. A point had been raised earlier by Mr. Asch regarding the number of persons entitled to sit at the Committee. According to the Constitution he recalled, representatives from other Swiss Societies could belong to the Committee, above the statutory 18 elected from the NSH membership. Since many of those actually on the Committee were already prominent members of other societies, this left room for more newcomers, should there be more than one volunteer for Mr. Grueninger's succession.

The President pointed out that the Constitution referred to representatives from other societies "who wish to join", adding that these persons did not have to be elected by the AGM. Dr. H. Egli said that the ballot slips had already been collected and that time was running short. His point was accepted and the attendance, who had been told that a French-speaking member was urgently required (there being only four of them out of eighteen) voted for Mrs. F. Burri with an overwhelming majority.

Another point raised was the management of the Youth Fund of some £2,000 belonging to the Society but held in Trust by the Embassy. Mr. W. Renz, a former President of the London Group, suggested that this money should be controlled by the Society. This gave rise to a few minutes controversy, which will lead to a review of the situation by the Committee.

The AGM was concluded almost before schedule. Mrs. Meier reminded members of the next two forthcoming events. The theme of the May meeting

"Trade Unions and Peace of Labour" had to be changed owing to the speakers inability to come. An alternative programme will be announced later. The NSH will (at last) hear Dr. Philippe Garraux on 22nd June. Mrs. Meier also stressed the importance of this year's Assembly of the Swiss Abroad, as it will be a Jubilee event.

Drinks and a social preceded dinner. Grace was said by Pastor Nicod. The menu consisted of Grapefruit Cocktail, Chicken Cocotte Chasseur, Rissolées Potatoes with Garden Peas, Apple Pie and Fresh Cream, Coffee—an honest deal for £2.

This lively dinner, which had enjoyed an exceptional attendance, was concluded by three speeches. The President gave a traditional welcoming speech, welcoming by name nearly everyone present. To begin with their was the Ambassador, Dr. A. Weitnauer, whom Mrs. Meier asked us not to call by the title "His Excellency". There was Consul Adams and Mrs. Adams; Dr. H. Egli, Honorary Vice-President of the NSH and President of the Federation of Swiss Societies in the U.K. Other distinguished persons mentioned were: Mr. and Mrs. W. Renz, Mr. and Mrs. H. Baumann, Dr. and Mrs. H. R. Bolliger from the Manchester Swiss Club, and representing the Swiss of the North in Berne, "where he had already left his mark"; the Ministers, the Rev. Dietler and his wife and the Rev. Nicod, who with the Swiss Catholics of London had engaged in "history making" co-operation.

The President mentioned the Auditors, Mr. M. Rothlisberger and his wife, Mr. Bonnet and his daughter. She broke the news of Mrs. W. Schedler's birthday on that very day and was happy to see the presence of old friends: Mrs. Chapuis, Mrs. Weist and Mr. Bleiker, who had recently arrived from Spain, where he spends most of the year.

She referred to a new formula for "The Swiss Observer" worked out in Berne, whereby the paper will be distributed free to all Swiss of Britain four times a year. She addressed words of sympathy to the Editor for the recent loss of his father. She saluted Mrs. Sharp and Mr. Schneebeli from the Swiss Benevolent Society, Mr. and Mrs. Jacomelli from the Unione Ticinese and looked forward to continued co-operation with their societies.

Mrs. Meier ended her speech by referring to the problems that will be raised at the forthcoming Assembly of the Swiss Abroad, namely, the political rights of Fifth Switzerland. "Many Swiss abroad want political rights. We are against it because we lack the same information facilities as our compatriots at home and because we are discriminated against those who live near the Swiss borders and who can vote easily. But specially, we do not