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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 SOCIETE HELVETIQUE 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. Schneiter, 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

want to vote for things for which we don't pay and also, it would be awful to have party politics introduced in our Colony".

Mrs. Meier concluded: "*Hand in hand with rights go duties, and first and foremost lies that of furthering the image of Switzerland abroad by personal deed and behaviour. Individually it is up to each one of us. Collectively, we, the London Group of the NSH try to do our share with your help*".

It was Dr. Weitnauer's duty to say a few words after this lofty exhortation. On a much lighter note, he rejoiced at having just relished something so close to his favourite dessert: blueberry crumble. He added that the NSH had unknowingly served him what Swiss business intelligence had indexed as his favourite vegetable: Green Peas. Dr. Weitnauer explained that in his negotiating days, a large watch firm, which kept files on all the personalities it dealt with, had one on himself stating: "*Aime les petits pois*". Our Ambassador ended his address by making a brief reference to the problems facing Switzerland and the vital role which the Nouvelle Société Helvétique had and would play in solving them.

Dr. Bolliger, who had come from Manchester to be with us, replied for the guests. He referred to the work of the Commission of the Swiss Abroad and the progress achieved towards federal social security schemes for the

Swiss Abroad in need. But his main theme was the question of political rights to expatriate Swiss. Dr. Bolliger fervently enjoined us to take a stand *against* the idea of partaking in the homeland's political life. Despite the pressures of the Swiss community in France for political rights, this was both wrong and impractical. The speaker strongly felt the injustice inherent in the immensely varying distances which Swiss abroad had to travel to return home. Speaking both as a Swiss and as a Swiss abroad, Dr. Bolliger found it intolerable that Swiss from neighbouring France, Italy and Germany should vote on issues with which they were not financially and practically concerned.

Dr. Bolliger's address closed the official part of the evening. A few members stayed on for drinks, but most set about finding the exit of the Prince of Wales Hotel through a maze of carpeted corridors.

(PMB)

CITY SWISS CLUB AGM

The City Swiss Club 1972 AGM kept up its reputation of liveliness and controversy. Attended by about thirty members, it took place at the Stanhope Room of the Dorchester, a distinctly familiar venue, on 25th April. Members arrived at 6.30 for 7 p.m. and enjoyed drinks, before sitting down to a Swiss dinner.

Shortly after toasting to the Queen and to Switzerland, the President, Mr. Walter Bion, rose and opened the proceedings of the evening. Mr. L. F. Ackermann, the Secretary read the minutes of the February meeting, during which 28 members had turned up to listen to a Scotland Yard expert speak on counterfeit stamps, and those of the 1971 AGM. Mr. Bion then proceeded with summing up the year's activities. These were as follows: Card Evening (May 1971), Summer Ball (June), Card Evening (September), After Dinner speaker (October), Annual Ball (November), Christmas Dinner (December), Card Evening (January 1972), After Dinner speaker (February) and Family Evening (March).

Mr. Bion said that membership stood at 214 and that attendance had in the main been kept up. The Club had lost some members through death during the past year. These were: Mr. Ch. Inglis, Mr. F. Streit, Mr. O. Bruhlard, Mr. A. Corbat and Mr. O. Béguin. The one comment on the President's report was raised by Dr. C. Iselin, who was deputising for the Ambassador. He asked whether it would not be a good idea for the City Swiss Club to devote some of its monthly meetings to the visit of Swiss factories or businesses in Great Britain. Although a member pointed out that there was a time factor militating against such a suggestion, and that offices couldn't be expected to stay

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