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ACTIVE DAYS IN THE COLONY

The autumn and winter season of activities in our Colony and at the Embassy has started this year most promisingly from the cultural and intellectual point of view as well as socially. The serious times in which we live nowadays are clearly reflected also in increasing efforts on the part of our societies to offer their members and friends stimulating food for thought and knowledge no less than the more mundane pleasures of the palate.

The old standard-bearer in this respect, the London Group of the Nouvelle Société Helvétique, no longer stands almost alone amongst our societies in catering for the more intellectual needs of our Colony. At least all our bigger organisations are these days literally vying with each other to do likewise, while the Embassy also is making more use than ever before of its resources and beautiful hall in the services of Switzerland's cultural image in English eyes.

It has already held two literary functions this autumn and enabled Annette Weisbrod, the talented pianist daughter of a former Swiss resident in this country, to play before a distinguished audience at Bryanston Square.

In advance of the forthcoming publication of a new book on our country, intriguingly entitled "Why Switzerland?" its author, Dr. Jonathan Steinberg, was invited to address a gathering at the Embassy on the theme of his work.

Soon after a highly esteemed Swiss-French author of various novels, George Borgeaud, talked in French at the Embassy on contemporary French-Swiss literature ahead of a series of lectures on the same subject at various English and Scottish universities.

Amongst our societies the Swiss Mercantile Society happened to be the first this autumn with a lecture of

unusual interest on "The Origins of the English Language" given by Mr. K. G. Tolan, formerly lecturer at the University of Lausanne and now teaching English and literature at the SMS-College at Fitzroy Square. Its October meeting was devoted to its traditional holiday reminiscences by members such as, especially, Mr. Roland Asch.

Not to be beaten in the stakes for intellectual interest, our oldest social organisation, the City Swiss Club, invited a leading scientist of the British Petroleum Group, Dr. W. J. Clarke, as guest-speaker on "Oil Exploration – what the papers don't say".

In other words he gave the Club a fascinating inside account of the behind-the-scenes work preparatory to bidding for concessions and deciding where to drill, whether to develop or abandon a project and where to site production platforms and pipelines.

For nearly an hour the lecturer answered questions arising from his brilliant talk giving further details of this audacious risk-taking business involving hundreds of millions of pounds on behalf of the nation and mankind as well as the shareholders.

Having held two functions unusually late before the holidays in July, the delightful talk on the Basle Zoo and the concert of the Luzerner Singers, the Nouvelle Société Helvétique rejoined the competition for intellectual laurels only late in October with a meeting devoted to reports on the last Conference of the Swiss Abroad, held in Murten.

In the absence of the Northern Delegate the main task of reporting devolved on the Southern Delegate Mrs. Mariann Meier, whose indefatigable work on behalf of our Colony and the "Auslandschweizerwerk" at large is so highly appreciated both in Switzerland and amongst ourselves.

For the first time our Federation of Swiss Societies in the U.K., headed by Mr. Bernhard Simon, was officially associated with this reporting-meeting at which the presidents of several other societies took part. For its November meeting the NSH was given an illustrated lecture on "The Swiss Chemical Industry and its problems" by Dr. Adolphe Kaufmann, a director of Sandoz AG, Basle.

This first foray of the NSH into the industrial field, justified by its importance to the entire Swiss national development, proved a great success.

In conclusion of this impressive survey of intellectual events in our Colony one more lecture of particularly great interest remains to be mentioned in deep appreciation. It was given in an after-dinner speech at the Anglo-Swiss Society to which numerous members of our Colony are proud to belong along with so many of our British friends.

The speaker was Prof. Denis van Berchem, a historian and former Rector of the University of Geneva, descendant of an originally Brabantian family naturalized in Switzerland for centuries.

Under the title "How the Roman Conquest of Britain favoured the development of Switzerland" he unfolded a fascinating picture in his talk of the historic connections in British and Swiss developments under Roman influence. It is well worth publishing a slightly abbreviated version in the next issue of the *Swiss Observer*.

The Schweizerbund enjoyed a fantastically good "Bernerplatte" at the St. Moritz Club Restaurant and the City Swiss Club held its 111th Annual Banquet and Ball at the Dorchester, while its traditional Christmas dinner is fixed for December 17th.

H.W.E.

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