

# Swiss Mercatile Society

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obviously no reliance can be placed on the Lisbon route, which, at any rate, is still extremely uncertain.

Apparently, the transit of mails via Lisbon air-mail is now improving, and some members were in the position to state that letters sent from England reached Switzerland within 12-20 days; but the reverse journey still takes much longer.

A discussion followed this interesting talk; and let it be mentioned here, incidentally, that Mr. Girardet would welcome information from interested parties as to their own experiences regarding transit of goods via Lisbon (either way) and experiences in mail delays. He can be reached at the Swiss Legation. Some members thought that an official Swiss convoy system Switzerland-Portugal should be instituted, with the full official weight of the Government, but obviously, until the position of the Vichy Government is cleared up, this is premature. Another member pointed out the situation of Swiss goods in transit seized by the belligerents; there must be a considerable quantity of these and large amounts of money involved. The Swiss Government is trying to take stock of them, but is extremely difficult, since mail and telegraphic communications are often practically impossible. There are huge amounts of goods in transit through France and blocked in out-of-the-way places, also of Swiss goods on Dutch, French and Italian steamers, seized by the British blockade, etc., and although every effort is made to try to help the Swiss owners, progress is very slow.

The conclusion of this very black picture is that we must have confidence in the Swiss Government, which is doing its best under most trying circumstances; and to trust them in their efforts.

The Council's thanks are due to the two speakers whose authentic information is greatly appreciated by all members present at the meeting.

A.B.

### SWISS MERCANTILE SOCIETY.

The Monthly Meeting of the Society was held at Swiss House on Wednesday, August 14th. Mr. J. J. Boos, President, was in the Chair and over thirty members were present. The business part of the meeting was soon dealt with and the members were not at all reluctant to forego their game of cards when the Chairman announced that he had been able to arrange for three Swiss, at present in London, to relate their war experiences. First we heard a moving account of a compatriot who had been residing in Belgium where, until the invasion, he held an executive commercial position. He had to leave home helter-skelter on a bicycle, his wife and child having obtained a lift on a relative's motor car. From place to place they chased each other right into France and the pathetic story of what he witnessed on the way included some gruesome tales of heart-rending experiences. When finally he arrived at a French port, where all bridges had been blown sky-high, he had lost all trace of his family. He managed to get on a Polish steamer, which finally landed him in his country. He is now waiting to return to Switzerland with the special party arranged by the Swiss Legation. We

hope that sooner or later he will be able to trace his family, of whose whereabouts he is at present still unaware. After having heard the story of the civilian evacuee, we heard the soldier's side of the picture. The other two, who some years ago joined the French Foreign Legion, gave us a first hand account of this well-known unit. What we had often heard and read was more than borne out by what these two experienced in North Africa and both were agreed that every young man, however cruel fate might have been to him, should be warned from joining this motley army. When war came to the shores of Norway, the Foreign Legion played an important part in the taking of Narvik and our two Legionaries were right in the thick of it. Parts of their narratives defy the pen and confirmed a lot we had read in the Press. The fighting qualities of the Legion are legendary and both these soldiers did not lack in valour, for one of them was awarded the military cross and promoted to the rank of corporal for bravery on the battlefield. The collapse of the campaign brought them to this country, where with others they still hope to be of service to the Allied cause. On the conclusion of their most interesting narratives, the three compatriots were accorded a very hearty ovation and they related many more experiences in formal chats with members who stayed on after the meeting.

W.B.

### LETTER BOX.

Miss L. D. — We thank you for your cheque of 14/- being one year's subscription for your friend. We wish other subscribers would follow your good example in adding the extra postage.

### FORTHCOMING EVENTS.

Tuesday, September 3rd, at 6.15 p.m. Dinner 6.30 sharp — City Swiss Club — Monthly Meeting, at Pagani's Restaurant.

Wednesday, September 11th, at 7.30 p.m. — Swiss Mercantile Society — Monthly Meeting, at Swiss House, 34/35, Fitzroy Square, W.1.

Friday, September 20th, 1940, at 6.30 p.m. — Nouvelle Société Helvétique — Monthly Meeting to be followed by a talk by Mr. G. J. Keller on: "Three days' Tour in the Southern Defence Areas," at "Swiss House," 34/35, Fitzroy Square, W.1.

### Divine Services.

Dimanche 25 août 1940: à l'Eglise Suisse, 79, Endell Street, W.C.2.  
11h. Culte M. M. Pradervand.

Pour tout ce qui concerne le ministère pastoral, prière de s'adresser à Monsieur le pasteur Marcel Pradervand, 65, Mount View Road, N.4. (Téléphone Mountview 5003). Heure de réception à l'église le mercredi de 11-12h.30.

Sonntag, den 25. August 1940: in der Schweizerkirche, 9, Gresham Street, E.C.2.

11 Uhr. Gottesdienst Mr. B. Segal.

Für alle Amtshandlungen wende man sich z.Z. an Pfr. M. Pradervand, 65, Mount View Road, N.4. (MOU 5003)

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