

# Swiss Mercantile Society

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from any other quarter, the Committee is there to step into the breach.

Disasters of nature, or the calamitous epilogues of war are dealt with chiefly by the League of Red Cross Societies, and the Committee then resumes its more advisory and legislative character, which rôle attracts no public notice. It is when war returns, disintegrating the lives of men and peoples, that the Committee comes back perforce into the limelight. In a world war all Red Cross roads lead once more to Geneva, and Geneva is the starting point from which they spread out again across the divided countries. The more spectacular departments of its vast activities—the Prisoners of War Agency and actions such as the relief to Greece, in which it works jointly with other institutions, are visible to all. But this great superstructure of concrete service depends upon the soundness of the base, and the base is the two-fold one of the Geneva Convention and the Red Cross idea, absolute and indivisible. What the public can neither see nor be told about is the work of continual vigilance by which the President and members of the International Red Cross Committee keep the foundation intact. The sins of the national societies are visited upon the International Committee, although they are sovereign and independent, and in no way under its control. It is the intermediary between them as long as they are cut off from direct contact through the war, and whenever trouble arises, as it is sure to do in the circumstances and state of mind created by desperate conflicts the Committee must smooth things out and pacify both sides.

The clauses of a treaty do not look the same to the possible belligerent who signed them and the actual belligerent who has to honour his signature in circumstances not altogether convenient. War has a relaxing effect upon scruples and interpretations, and a stiffening one upon perseverance in a breach once committed. It is no sinecure to be the keeper of the Geneva Convention during any general war; still less during the most widespread and ruthless conflict in the annals of mankind.

Had the Geneva Convention been fused or formally identified with the Red Cross movement, the Committee's task would have been less complex and its responsibility shared by all the national societies. But though collateral, the treaty and the movement are not combined, so that the Committee alone, and not the national societies with it, has to assume the difficult trusteeship of both. Always it has sought to carry out its task in a manner worthy of its founders, and in doing so has had to weather many a storm, especially during the past twenty-five years. Public opinion has often misjudged its efforts, overrating some but underrating others, the error in both cases being mainly due to the fact that few people, within or outside Red Cross circles, make the necessary distinction between the National Red Cross Societies and the International Red Cross Committee. A clearer understanding of their nature and function within the movement may enlighten both friends and critics.

T H E E N D .

—oo—

Mentioned in the supplement of the *London Gazette* of August 24th, 1944, in recognition of gallant and distinguished service in Italy, is Corporal L. S. Jobin, of the R.A.S.C. — Congratulations.

## SWISS CLUB, DUNFERMLINE

### 1st August Celebrations.

As in previous years our small colony has come together again on Tuesday evening, the 1st of August, to celebrate our National Day.

We all went to the gathering gay in spirit and full of anticipation. Something was in the air for the last few days, indicating a surprise. Indeed, we have been fully rewarded. One of our compatriots, who has a knack of doing the unexpected, had turned author for the occasion and had provided our dramatic circle with a one-act play suitable for the 1st of August.

The stage was very homely set as a "Wirts-Stube" in a peasant village. It was decorated by the innkeeper's wife with lanterns made by some of our compatriots, showing the various cantonal coat-of-arms. The play itself was well produced by our dramatists, and during the course of the play we saw and heard how Herr Lehrer, Herr Gmeindrat, Herr Hueber the innkeeper, and his wife, and Herr Spengler, a wealthy farmer, celebrated the Swiss National Day in their little village.

The author, although I believe it was his first attempt at a one-act play, is to be congratulated. It was particularly impressive to hear how these simple men felt about the 1st of August. Through Herr Lehrer, the author conveyed to the audience the Swiss people's marvellous and undaunted spirit, their great faith in the destiny of their country and her institutions, and lastly their thankfulness for having so far escaped the worst of this war. If any criticism of the play is to be made, some of the scenes were somewhat lengthy and drawn-out, and consequently a little dull. This particularly, when the worthy members of the village community indulged in a game of cards. However, from the great applause at the end of the performance, the author can be assured that his efforts were much appreciated. He can only be encouraged to further endeavours.

During the remainder of the evening our president gave a short address appropriate to the occasion of our gathering. Naturally our culinary desires were not forgotten by the committee which arranged this evening so splendidly. We were able to enjoy a very tasty supper, which is such an important matter at any Swiss function. With community singing, chatting and music, the evening soon came to a close. We have, indeed, had a real 1st of August gathering, and every one of us felt that night very much nearer our beloved Switzerland.

K.

## SWISS MERCANTILE SOCIETY

Like all other Swiss Societies in London, the S.M.S. had perforce to suspend activities during July-September, but members and friends are invited to a special meeting on Saturday, October 7th, at 2.30 p.m., at Swiss House, when our new Minister will be our guest of honour.

Please, therefore, reserve October 7th; full particulars will be sent to the members in a circular.

It is also hoped to re-start, shortly, the French Circle, the Russian and French Study Classes, and those interested should apply for particulars from the Secretary at Swiss House.

J. B.