

Swiss Book Exhibition

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SWISS BOOK EXHIBITION.

The Swiss Book Exhibition, which has been organised under the auspices of the British Council, was opened on Thursday, April 25th, 1946, at the Suffolk Galleries, Suffolk Street, Pall Mall, S.W. 1, by the Swiss Chargé d'Affaires, Monsieur A. Escher.

Miss Ellen Wilkinson, Minister of Education, addressed the gathering.

Among the 3,000 modern books sent from Switzerland, the international character of Swiss publishing is shown by the many works by foreign authors; foreign fiction forms the largest section of the Exhibition. Among them are many translations of English authors, including Shaw, J. B. Priestley, G. K. Chesterton, Richard Aldington, A. J. Cronin, E. M. Delafield, James Hilton, Aldous Huxley, D. H. Lawrence and Somerset Maugham.

Particularly interesting are the sections of illustrated books, the arts and children's books, which for fine printing and reproduction are unequalled in Europe to-day. Switzerland has been fortunate in being able to continue the development of printing uninterrupted by war, and her literary life has been enriched, as it was in the 16th and 18th centuries, by free-thinking refugees from oppressed countries.

Four thousand books are now printed annually in Switzerland, as opposed to half that number before the war. A major work of publishing at present is the first all-Swiss encyclopaedia, in which five leading publishers are collaborating. The first of the seven volumes has recently been issued.

As the first Swiss Exhibition of any kind held in England since 1862, special care has been taken to show the point of view of modern Switzerland, and how the present vitality of literary life in that country has developed from the Swiss tradition of free thinking and free printing throughout the centuries. This background to the intellectual life of Switzerland to-day will be shown by a series of plaques illustrating the development of the Swiss Confederation, from its first Charter in 1240, to a Military Order of the Day dated 1940, when the Nazis surrounded the Swiss frontiers on all sides, and invasion seemed imminent.

A number of the books from the early days of printing are quite irreplaceable, and have a unique place in the history of printing. Lent by the National Library at Berne, the University Libraries of Geneva and Basle, the Central Library of Zurich, and other important public and private collections, these cover the five hundred years of the printing press, while a series of photographs and facsimiles illustrate Switzerland's wealth of illuminated manuscripts from the 9th to the 15th centuries. The earliest printed book in the exhibition is the "Mammothrectus super Bibliam," a

comment on the Bible, published at Beromunster in 1470. Like many other early Swiss books, this was printed in quite a small village, and the original press is still preserved in the little house where its enterprising publisher lived. Many Swiss villages had their own presses from the very first days of printing. The first translation of the New Testament into Romansch, the peasant language of a small proportion of the Swiss population, was published at remote Camogase in the Engadine, and it was the only book ever printed there. Also included in the 300 historical books is Saussure's account of the first ascent of Mont Blanc, which he carried out in 1787.

A special section is devoted to the work of the International Red Cross, and includes a first edition (1862) of "Un Souvenir de Solferino," by the founder of the Red Cross, Henri Dunant, the book which marked the beginning of the great Red Cross organisation.

The Exhibition, which has been organised under the auspices of the British Council, will remain open until May 25th, after which it will tour the principal cities and university towns. All the modern books will finally be donated to English libraries.

ACADEMY CINEMA PRESENTS

"LAND OF PROMISE" (U)

A Paul Rotha Production.

"Land of Promise" is the second of the films on the problems of to-day to be made by Paul Rotha for Films of Fact. The first, "World of Plenty," it will be remembered, was about Food — certainly a primary problem all the world-over to-day. "Land of Promise" deals with a no less absorbing problem — Housing.

Unlike its predecessor, "Land of Promise" confines itself to Britain. Its structure falls into a Prologue, followed by Homes as They Were, dealing with the housing situation from 1918 to 1939; Homes as They Are, what has not happened to housing during the war; and Homes as They Might Be, the homes we can get and the housing problem of to-day. The commentary is spoken by John Mills. Miles Malleon, who collaborated on the script, also takes the part of "Mr. Know-All" in the film.

"Land of Promise" is to have its premier run at the Academy Cinema with the French comedy "Fric-Frac," starring Fernandel, Arletty and Michael Simon, commencing on Saturday, April 20th.

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