

Ageing rapidly

Autor(en): **[s.n.]**

Objekttyp: **Article**

Zeitschrift: **The Swiss observer : the journal of the Federation of Swiss Societies in the UK**

Band (Jahr): **- (1959)**

Heft 1340

PDF erstellt am: **20.03.2021**

Persistenter Link: <http://doi.org/10.5169/seals-688112>

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tion on the occasion of the "Tir Fédéral" in Bienne last year, as the Society has no suitable accommodation available for displaying the clock.

The proposal of the committee was unanimously and with acclamation accepted, and Mr. Magnin — who had been sent "to the Bar" whilst the matter was under discussion — was recalled and acquainted with the fact. He was visibly touched, and warmly thanked the members for this *beau geste*, modestly saying he did not consider he deserved it.

The Meeting then terminated, and members gathered round the Bar to refresh themselves after so much exhaustion. When this was done they adjourned to the dining room for an excellent dinner.

Mr. Schmid, who had had an exacting time during the business part of the evening, gallantly suggested that the Vice-President, Mr. John C. Wetter, should now preside over the dinner, which was accepted. After the usual Toasts to H.M. the Queen and Switzerland, the Neuchâtel clock made its appearance, and was formally presented by the Vice-President to Mr. Magnin, after it was made sure "that it really worked". Mr. Wetter also thanked the family Schmid for the excellent dinner, which he said added so much to the genial atmosphere.

As the Swiss Rifle Association has amongst its members a considerable number of devotees to a card game called "Jass", they indulged in playing until long after midnight.

It was a most successful and congenial evening, enjoyed not only by all members, but also by your reporter.

ST.

AGEING RAPIDLY.

When young people from Switzerland attend some of the functions in the Swiss Colony they often express surprise that most permanent members are middle-aged if not of grandparents' age. They find it strange that usually only a few youngish people are present. For our Swiss visitors this is a curious phenomenon — for us residents, however, a painful fact. Much has been said about the ageing of the Colony and the deplorable lack of new blood. Of course, there are many thousands of young domestic workers, student trainees and students, but few only can be induced to settle permanently in this country and thus swell the ranks of the Colony. Several societies no longer exist, e.g., the Swiss Orchestral Society and the Swiss Gymnastic Society. Others, like the Swiss Male Choir, have difficulty in keeping alive or are compelled to take in members of other nationalities.

At the Annual General Meeting of the Swiss Benevolent Society on Monday, 9th March, at Swiss House, the sad dwindling of loyal supporters was brought to our minds very forcibly when the Hon. Treasurer, Mr. M. Rothlisberger, presented the accounts. He explained that during the last three years the Society had lost forty contributors through repatriation or death. This is indeed a serious matter. Though regular supporters have in many cases increased their donations generously, the deficit for 1958 amounted to £339. Fortunately, thanks to the efforts of the Swiss Ambassador, Monsieur Armin Daeniker, whose absence from the meeting (through illness) was greatly regretted, the subsidy from the


Swiss Confederation had been increased again to Fr. 5200.— and would be put back to the old figure of Fr. 6000.— for the new year. There were also several other increased items on the income side, but expenses also had gone up, and the receipts of £7,969 could not keep pace with the payments of £8,308.

The President, Mr. F. G. Sommer, who was in the chair, was re-elected by the Meeting, together with his Executive Committee. He informed members of the death of Mrs. Dimier, widow of Mr. Georges Dimier, who had died in 1924 and whose legacy had made possible the creation of the Home for Aged Swiss, of which Mrs. Dimier had been Hon. President. On pensions for the old, £3,418 had been spent in 1958, and the number of pensioners was brought up to 69 by the election of three new ones by the meeting. It might appear that most of the work was concentrated on the old, but Mr. Sommer explained that if the young people could only be made aware of the full picture they might realize that a great deal was done for them, too, by the SBS, and they might be induced to give some support. Much of the Society's money and efforts was spent on the young, e.g., the Hostel and Welfare Office, both for Swiss Girls, casual relief and repatriations (1958 showed a record number of 45 cases).


To reach the young would be one way of getting new sources of support. It was felt that the regular subscribers could not be asked to increase their contributions in every case. But there was one way in which a great many donors could produce more money for the Society without extra cost to themselves. The Hon. Treasurer pointed out that the number of *covenanted subscriptions* had gone down by more than twenty over the last few years and had brought in only £430 in 1958, the lowest figure for six years. Whilst this was no mean amount and much appreciated it could, of course, be doubled and trebled if more subscribers signed the covenant for seven years by which the Society could claim back from the Inland Revenue the income tax paid on the contribution. In other words, the SBS would be able to claim 8/6d on every covenanted subscription of £1.

In a short time the annual report will be sent to subscribers. On the back page there will be a specimen form of covenant. It will require no extra expense and little effort to sign it; but to the Society it will mean welcome additional income. If, at the same time, members and supporters can also make the activities of the Swiss Benevolent Society known to the younger generation from the Homeland the outlook for the future need not be quite so gloomy.

MARIANN.



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