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The Swiss Observer

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HOME NEWS

FEDERAL.

RESIGNATION OF A FEDERAL COUNCILLOR?

Persistent rumours are current in Swiss Parliamentary circles of an eventual resignation of Federal Councillor Haerlin at the end of this year. The name of Mr. J. Baumann, State Councillor (Auser Rhoden) is freely mentioned as a prospective successor.

INTERNATIONAL TOURIST CONFERENCE.

M. Junod, director of the Swiss Tourist Office, has been designated by the Swiss Government, as a delegate to the International Tourist Conference, which will take place at Budapest on the 28th of this month.

NEW DIRECTORS OF THE SWISS NATIONAL BANK.

M. J. Huber, National Councillor (St. Gall) and M. Dr. R. Loretan, Chief of the Finance Dept. of the canton of Valais, have been nominated directors of the National Bank by the Federal Council.

INTERNATIONAL DISARMAMENT CONFERENCE.

Geneva has been definitely selected by the Council of the League of Nations as the venue for the Disarmament Conference, which is to open in February 1932.

LOCAL.

ZURICH.

From Zurich comes the news that Colonel R. Weber, a former army corps commander has died at the age of 82. The deceased enjoyed a great reputation in army circles; he was also a lecturer at the Zurich Technical University.

N.Z.Z.

BERNE.

The General Meeting of the Schweiz. Kaufm. Verein took place at Thun on the 15th and 16th of this month. A great number of delegates, representing over 30,000 members were present, amongst them M. Paschoud and M. Stahelin, delegates from the London section (Swiss Mercantile Society Ltd.).

LUCERNE.

The elections for completing the cantonal government took place last Sunday. M. Frey and M. Ott, both liberals, were elected, the socialist candidate withdrew. The government of the canton consists now of 5 conservatives and two liberals.

N.Z.Z.

BASLE.

M. Walter Zürer, former rector of the secondary school for boys died at Basle at the age of 77.

N.Z.

ST. GALLEN.

State Councillor Geel, has tendered his resignation as a member of Parliament for reasons of health. M. Geel has been a member of the Federal chamber for 35 years.

N.Z.

THURGAU.

The Federal Council has asked the two chambers for a credit of £85,000. For the agrandissement of the military barracks at Frauenfeld.

J.S.

LUGANO.

An explosion took place in the house of M. Gnesa, President of the community of Lugaggia, which caused considerable damage. The cause of this explosion is at present still a mystery, as M. Gnesa assured the authorities that no explosives were kept at his house. The police have opened an investigation.

N.Z.Z.

SWISS SPORTS.

We wish to remind our readers that the Swiss Sports meeting will take place next Saturday week. The programme of events is very attractive and we hope that as many as possible will wend their way to Herne Hill Athletic Grounds on the 30th inst.

CONCERT MISS LINA PUGNI.

The young Swiss pianist, Miss Lina Pagni, who gave a recital at the Wigmore Hall on May 19th, promises to do great credit both to her art and to her country. That she is a finished technician might have been taken for granted, though people have been known to appear before a London audience with an insufficient equipment; what is more important is that she possesses fine musicianship as well as mechanical gifts. That Miss Pagni has a fund of poetic imagination was obvious from her playing of such things as the slow movement of Schumann's G minor Sonata, Debussy's "Clair de lune" and a good many passages in her Chopin group. The poetry does not all come out yet, owing to a certain youthful reticence that can in itself amount to a quality in some types of music, but the hearer is aware of its presence and its possibilities of development.

What is especially attractive in Miss Pagni's playing is a kind of neat fancy that asserts itself in pieces which are all the better for some emotional detachment. The Chopin studies thus had a welcome crispness in her interpretation, and the delicious artificiality of the same composer's "Berceuse" could not have been brought out better. It had tenderness but not a trace of sentimentality, and greater pianists than Miss Pagni, who have been known to overcharge the pretty toying of this piece with feeling, might have learnt something from her reading of it.

What this excellent artist must beware of is the pedal, which she is apt to call too readily to her aid. The fast movements of the Schumann Sonata and the Chopin G minor Ballade were often blurred unnecessarily, for Miss Pagni has certainly no technical uncertainties to cover up. As she has no need to make the pedal her scapegoat, she may devote all her attention to training it to become her helpmate. In the opening group of Scarlatti it was almost her enemy. It is always a tightrope performance to begin a recital with this clear-cut music, which exposes every note and every line mercilessly to the ear. To wrap it up in a pedal haze, an impossible thing to do with the harpsichord for which it was originally written, is like confusing the etcher's art with the painters. But these are small faults to find. All in all Lina Pagni is a capital little artist.

LE VAL DE SAINT-IMIER.

Je suis venu revoir la paisible vallée
Qui, voici soixante ans, abrita mon berceau;
Évoquer, s'il se peut, mon enfance éclose.
En écoutant le vent et le bruit du ruisseau,
Dans le fond du vallon, j'ai retrouvé l'écluse
Qui, contenant le flot, fait bouillonner la Suze.
J'entends, comme autrefois, sur l'aile de la brise
Passer dans la forêt, l'éternelle chanson,
De l'horloge, là-bas, au clocher de l'église
Lorsque l'heure a vibré, j'ai reconnu le son.
Elle a sonné, jadis, l'aube de mon enfance,
Dont je garde toujours si douce souvenance.
Elle a tinté, plus tard, quand, en un jour de deuil,
Meurtre, le cœur brisé, je suivais un cercueil.
Tout près, j'ai retrouvé, dans le vieux cimetière,
L'endroit où mes aïeux dorment depuis longtemps.
Mais il ne reste plus, sur la dalle de pierre,
Que des noms effacés et rongés par le temps.
Longtemps, j'ai voyagé. J'ai connu l'Italie;
J'ai vogué sur les flots du beau Danube bleu;
Puis, j'ai du spleen anglais, su la mélancolie.
J'ai, des monts du Tyrol, gravi les pics neigeux.
Sous un ciel plus clément, j'ai vu la douce France,
Les plaines de l'Ombrie, les palais de Florence.
Mais tout ce que j'ai vu, jamais n'effacera
Mes souvenirs d'enfance, mon amour du Jura.
J'aime ses frais vallons, ses riantes campagnes,
Ses rochers escarpés couronnant les montagnes
Ses pâturages verts où ruminent les vaches
Broutant le fin gazon si propice à la marche.
J'aime ses vieux sapins, ses torrents écumeux,
La clairière où, l'été, a mûri la framboise,
J'aime des habitants le cœur si généreux.
Leur français émaillé de ces mots savoureux
Où s'affirme si bien l'influence gauloise...
Comme il a fui ce temps! Mais le doux souvenir
Du Jura, mon pays, lui n'a jamais passé.
Mon rêve le plus cher était d'y revenir
Et d'y trouver encore des échos du passé.

J. JAQUET LOEW.

NOTES AND GLEANINGS.

By KYBURG.

A very difficult task: The Editor asked me the other day to read and then to comment upon a book entitled

"L'AUTRE HORIZON"

DU CAPT. CHARLES GOS.

which deals psychologically with the question of the desertions from the Swiss Army, during the war, to the Foreign Legion, a question which not only occupied quite a lot of time of some of our Army Chiefs during that period, but which can be discussed from a number of quite different points of view and which is extremely difficult to decide on.

Let me state at once that I have enjoyed reading this book very much, that I have been thrilled and fascinated by the extremely appropriate technique employed by the author—most of the story is in dialogue form—and that the questions raised in its passages have left me, at times, bewildered and feeling very, very uneasy and uncertain.

The story does not deal or contain any actual war horrors, the reader's soul is not harassed, as in "All quiet on the Western Front," etc., by the awful and atrocious scenes depicted. In short, the book may safely be left on the family book-shelf, but—and this is a very large BUT!—the effect on the reader's nervous system is anything but soporifique.

For sheer and acutely sculpted beauty of language, the book is one of the select few to which such description justly applies. This beauty is achieved by great artistry, by which I mean that the author manages his effects with the minimum of words, but that minimum is so extraordinarily well chosen that the reader gets the atmosphere at once, imperceptibly perhaps, but lives and pulsates along with the story. Truly, I think, a remarkable achievement. The story grips, holds, fascinates, wakes wishes and longings in your heart but moves on, inexorably to its logical conclusion. A short story, but a great one.

Pierre, captain in the Swiss Army and son of a Colonel Instructor who is also his superior officer, joins the Foreign Legion, because, as his wife puts it:

"parce que Pierre estime que dans cette guerre où les plus grands principes de la morale sont en jeu, ses devoirs d'homme passent avant ses devoirs de citoyen. C'est pour une croisade que Pierre part et voilà pourquoi je puis accepter son départ."

The Colonel, Pierre's father has tried in vain to impress on his son that the soldier's oath must prime any other consideration, that one's simple duty, to serve one's own country, must come before the dream-vision of Pierre "to serve humanity at large." To this, Pierre replies that "un autre horizon m'appelle" only to be told by his father looking out over the Jura-Hills "this one must suffice!"

Pierre deserts, joins the Foreign Legion, and, after severe fighting, which earns him the Cross of the Legion of Honour and three mentions in despatches, is blinded by shell splinters.

He returns, blind.

During his absence he had been court-martialled and condemned to two years prison and to degradation.

A new court-martial now acquits him and reinstates him into his rank as Lieutenant of the Swiss Army.

Back in his home, Pierre hears a Swiss Regiment pass along, is taken to the window by his father—who till then had forgiven him as father but not as a soldier—and there, when the Flag passes, Pierre salutes it and a great awakening takes place in his soul, so that, he too recognises, at last, that "to serve one's country well, is also to serve humanity at large."

The above gives a very short general idea of the story underlying the great and grave discussions in this remarkable book.

These discussions are worth reading, and will, as I have no doubt whatever, leave you unsettled and uneasy.

Soldiers, like Col. of Army-Corps Wildbolz and Col. of Division Sonderegger who have both written prefaces to this book, are agreed that Desertion is always and in any case wrong and their sympathies are with the Col. father of Pierre.

Col. Sonderegger enounces a very interesting theory of his own, "le rythme de l'Histoire" in

order to explain the uneasiness, the agitations and conflicts which, from time to time assail Nations and peoples and force them to wage wars or induce them to join such wars, or desert from their own peaceful ranks in order to participate in the fighting going on elsewhere..

Let me, to conclude, give one or two examples of what I call the disturbing, but beautiful arguments of this book abounds.

Marie-Louise, Pierre's wife speaking to the Colonel, father, after her husband's acquittal:

"Ne croyez-vous pas, mon père, que ce n'est pas dans sa condamnation par contumace ou son acquittement, en Suisse, non plus que dans ses blessures et ses citations en France, qu'il faille chercher un dénouement décisif... mais bien, plus haut, plus loin, au-dessus des lois humaines, au-delà des contingences matérielles et des jugements faussés par l'habitude, les préjugés et la tradition, dans la communion mystérieuse des âmes et des choses, domaine spirituel où la raison n'a point d'accès..."

And finally this wonderful little pen-picture:

"Le drapeau passe, tranquille et souverain sur la baie sombre des fusils... Il Passe, tout enveloppé de poussière... ardent comme une flamme qui troue la fumée..."

"L'AUTRE HORIZON" by Charles Gos. Un volume in-8 couronne fr. 4.50, relié fr. 7.— Editions Victor Attinger, Neuchâtel.

PROMINENT SWISS COLONIST IN GOAL. Mme. WYSS IN WORMWOOD SCRUBBS.

It was raining dismally and the clock on the prison tower had just struck the half-hour after 4 o'clock when the door beneath was opened to release our compatriot, Mme. Sophie Wyss from Wormwood Scrubbs prison last Saturday afternoon upon a dark and dreary world. Her incarceration was unusual, since Wormwood Scrubbs does not extend its hospitality to women. And if she had been guilty of theft, the crime was committed inside the walls where she has certainly perpetrated the by no means petty larceny of stealing the hearts of about a thousand inmates. Mr. W. H. Kerridge of His Master's Voice and the British Music Society had arranged with Mme. Sophie Wyss to give a concert in the chapel of the prison with the governor's consent. She sang songs of Elizabethan England, and when she turned to the songs of France and Germany, she prefaced each song with an explanation that made its aims clear to all. No wonder they lost their hearts to her!

CK's CORNER.

In our recent number 495, ck offered a prize for the first correct solution, which reaches the office of the S.O. of the following devinette:

Mon premier est une partie du corps. Mon second ne convient guère à une Sainte. Mais mon tout est très convenable pour un Saint.

The solution is "Courage" and the prize offered has been won by our reader and friend M. Dénier, Wormit, (Fife). Further correct solutions have since reached the Editor.

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THE FOYER SUISSE.

The annual meeting of the Foyer Suisse was held on Friday the 15th May, 1931 at No. 15, Upper Bedford Place, W.C.1., the Swiss Minister, Monsieur C. R. Paravicini, Hon. President of the Trust being in the chair.

The agenda consisted of the ordinary statutory business: Annual report, Financial report, Election of 1 member and of the Council of Management and Auditors.

The accounts were presented by Mr. R. J. Dixon, F.C.J.S., F.L.A.A., F.C.W.A., and passed unanimously.

The following gentlemen were elected to manage the affairs of the Trust for the ensuing year: Rev R. Hoffmann-de Visme, President; Mr. G. Hafner, Vice-President; H. Barth, Treasurer; C. Bertschinger, Secretary; Rev. C. T. Hahn, H. Joss, A. Muller, F. G. Sommer and J. Weber. Mr. R. J. Dixon being also re-elected auditor for 1931/32.

As a new member to the Trust Mr. M. Pradervand being proposed, seconded and duly elected.

The annual report prepared by the secretary (printed below) was read, fully discussed and also approved unanimously.

The meeting terminated with a hearty vote of thanks to the chairman.

XIII Annual Report of the Foyer Suisse.

Mr. Chairman, Gentlemen, It is my privilege for the 13th time in succession to put before you, the Trustees of the Foyer Suisse the annual report of the working of the Trust. I may again be permitted, for reasons of clearness to divide this report into two main parts: (a) business section, (b) social section; or as some of our friends generally put it, the making section and the spending section.

Business Section:

For every branch of industry except monopolies the year 1930/31 belongs unquestionably to the most difficult years on record. The Foyer Suisse cannot altogether expect to escape the effects of such times of strain and stress. Nevertheless, there are many occasions for being grateful for the result obtained, and D. M. we have been spared accidents and losses during the year. The Council has met 4 times during the year to receive the report of the House Committee and manage the ordinary business. Our statistics show that the total number of visitors has been 1154 during the 12 months of which 706 were of Swiss nationality. Most of these come to us through personal recommendation, but many of the students come through the intermediary of the Swiss Mercantile Society and the Student Christian Movement House in Russell Square.

The donations which your Council has voted amount to the sum of £585, out of which Swiss societies benefited to the extent of £419 4s. 2d., and other charities £165 15s. 10d. It must be pointed out, of course, that these figures are abnormally high and due to the fact that some of the charitable appeals of the last 12 months were exceptional and will not be repeated again soon.

Special thanks are due to Mr. R. J. Dixon, our accountant, Mr. F. Inehen who assists him in that department as well as our manager Mr. W. Meyer, our housekeeper Mrs. M. Koelliker and our chef Mr. F. Koelliker.

Social Section:

The only direct contribution of the Trust under this headline is the preparation and publication of the Swiss Girls Sunday programme. Every 4 months we print and distribute many hundreds of copies. Some are regularly forwarded to the British Consulates in Switzerland for distribution among girls coming to England, and one Consulate has actually asked for a fresh supply. No restrictions on immigration appear to slacken "der Zug nach England" among our young compatriots and the Foyer Suisse London has acted as a place of refuge for large numbers of them. The chief aims of the Sunday gatherings are:

1. to provide an open house for every Swiss girl.
2. to create social intercourse between the girls as well as the various sections who come together during the week.
3. to initiate mutual service and to broaden their outlook on life in general by holding talks and lectures on every subject of special interest to them.

During these last 8 months this hall has been filled, and on most of the Sundays some member of the Trust or of the Swiss Church has been in attendance. Without such a most generous help and co-operation of our friends it would have been quite impossible to carry through these varied programmes. The very best thanks are due from the Trust to all the lay helpers as well as the lecturers.

Besides these direct services of the Foyer there are the various separate organisations to be mentioned:

Réunion de jeunes filles every Thursday afternoon.

École du Dimanche et Anciens chatehumes every month. Directed by Pasteur Hoffmann-de Visme et Mr. Pradervand.

Schwyzerkraenzli directed by Pf. Hahn every Wednesday.

All these activities are in a most healthy and flourishing condition as you have no doubt already read from the report of the Swiss Church just issued.

The 2 nominal tenants of the Trust:

Union Chretienne de Langue française,
Swiss Y.M.C.A.,

are both continuing their work among young men in this city and they meet regularly once or even twice a week. A great deal of good work is done in a quiet way by both groups.

The Réunion de Couture and the Naehverein are both maintaining their faithful services to the poor at their monthly meetings.

This year the Old Folks Christmas luncheon was also held, and we again had the pleasure of having our hon. President the Swiss Minister with us at this function. The old people very much appreciate these gatherings during the long Winter months, and therefore they were brought together a second time in February last when your secretary had the pleasure of showing them about 100 lantern slides taken from the Adelboden sport film "Glueckfahrt im Schnee." As many of the old friends will never see the snow mountains again, they were highly delighted and must have felt the spirit of youth coming back once again.

At the initiative taken by our president, Monsieur Hoffmann, the Foyer offered a Luncheon on two occasions to all the protestant foreign pastors in London. This sign of Christian unity has already resulted in the publication of a special poster. All the details on it will prove of great help to hospitals, hotels and boarding houses in and around London, and it should help the foreign Churches in London materially.

Reviewing the afore mentioned visible social services rendered by the Foyer Suisse during the 12 months, we have been filled with great thankfulness to God for permitting us all to work in his vineyard. The chief work however, the hidden influence on the mind and character of the hundreds of young people passing through the Foyer year by year can never be tabulated.

For the Foyer Suisse.

C. Bertschinger, Hon. Secretary.

A CONCERT OF CLASSICAL MUSIC AT THE EGLISE SUISSE.

Nearly three hundred coins were found in the offertory bags at the crowded Swiss Church in Endell Street after the silver collection for Swiss charities at the concert given on the 14th by Madame Sophie Wyss, with Monsieur Franz Walter, the cellist and Mr. Spencer Shaw at the organ. As it is re-built the church seems to be even better for acoustics than it was before, and Madame Wyss' soprano voice seemed to sound freer, more spiritual and truly ethereal here than perhaps anywhere else. Also, the great music which the artists played and sung is surely most at home in a church.

One hears the piano version of J. S. Bach's 'Toccato and Fugue in D Minor' undertaken by so many capable pianists that to hear it played with majesty and power by Mr. Spencer Shaw came as a pleasant reminder that the organ is its proper instrument. M. Franz Walter then played an 'arioso,' by John Sebastian and a 'Largo' by W. F. Bach. The young cellist from Geneva produces a true and beautiful sound; his phrasing and his style is impeccable. The difference of his attitude towards the 'Suite in D' of the 18th century composer Caix de Herveolis, which he next played, proved his sense of atmosphere. One felt safe with his musicianship, and he can lull with the beauty of his tone. Mme. Wyss sang Haydn's famous air 'With Verdure Clad' from 'The Creation' rather faster than she usually takes it, as if each lovely phrase trod a little impatiently upon its predecessor. Mr. Shaw then introduced an impressive and little-known 'Marche Funèbre' by Guilment.

In the second half of the programme Mme. Wyss sang 'O Come unto Me' from Handel's 'Messiah.' A certain mood of white fire which infused her song this evening (and which had perhaps over-hurried the stately tread of the Haydn air) gave inspiration and brilliance to the 'Hear Ye Israel' of Mendelssohn, which followed.

The cellist and the organist more than realised the fine impression they had created in the first half with interesting works by Boellman and Boccherini. (But why the tremoli in the accompaniment to the latter?) and all three artists combined in Brahms' song 'Wiegenlied,' which is in itself as beautiful a parting as ever artist celebrated in song, word or painting.

The concert, which was Mme. Wyss' inspiration, was organised by M. René Hoffmann de Visme with characteristic energy. Apart from the material benefits to the charities concerned, it provided the Colony with another opportunity of hearing the lovely voice of the singer whom M. Motta has described as 'the symbol of Swiss womanhood,' and of presenting to us a young cellist whose career we shall watch with sympathy and interest. As for Mr. Spencer Shaw, we certainly wish that we could claim so fine an organist as a compatriot also!