Fuesilier Wipf.

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" Fuesilier Wipf."

Film Show arranged by the N.S.H. (London Group) at the Gaumont Theatre, Film House, Wardour Street, W.1, on Saturday, March 4th, 1939.

Und ob es regnet, ob es stürmt
Ob hoch die Wolkenwand sich türmt,
Ob lacht uns der Tag, ob senkt sich die Nacht —
An Biaufond's Brücke steht die Wacht.

Den Kaputt fest geschnüret, das Gewehr in der Hand,
So blicken die Getreuen in's Frankenland.
Heilige Nacht ist's, — doch klingt kein Ton
Zu denen die da stehen bei Biaufond.

Manch einer der spähet heut' in die Nacht hinaus
Hat Weib und Kind, hat Vaterhaus,
Und sehnsuchtsschwer blickt er zurück
Nach jenem traumverlornen Glück.

Und ist es hart zu ertragen, und ist es schwer
Es ist für Vaterlandes Ehr' und Wehr.
Und blutig zahlen wir dem den Lohn
Der wagt zu passieren die Brücke von Biaufond.

These lines were written by me nearly 25 years ago at the Frontier in the Jura. Little did I then realise, that many years afterwards, I should see a Film in a Foreign country, depicting episodes connected with the Frontier occupation, which would awaken memories of hardship as well as of true comradeship. —

The Nouvelle Société Helvétique (London Group) deserves the sincere thanks of all those 250 Swiss who attended last Saturday's presentation of the excellent film " Füsilier Wipf."

I noticed amongst the audience a number of those, who left London with me on that memorable 1st of August, 1914, to join our respective regiments. Others present may have answered their country's call from more distant lands or received their calling up notice in Switzerland.

With a heavy heart, we then departed, but also with a firm determination to defend our country against any invader; and the same spirit we found prevalent at home.

Everyone realised that at any moment we might become involved in the greatest struggle the world had ever witnessed; with awe we read about the battles which were raging all around our frontiers, day and night we could hear in the trenches the thunder of heavy gun fire, blowing to pieces the manhood of a world gone mad.

Who can ever forget those days? Trains packed with soldiers going to the various " Sammelplätzen," all the roads leading to the different frontiers packed with troops, guns and lorries.

Column after column of soldiers singing, bands playing, colours unfurled, all imbued with a grim determination to fight to the last to protect that precious land of ours. The air was pregnant with rumours, it was whispered from man to man that a big invasion by one of our neighbour's was iminent, with a firmer grip we held our rifles and from mouth to mouth went the solemn vow: They shall not pass! —

All these exciting days were recalled during the Film show of last Saturday, once again we lived through those days of immense physical and mental strain. —

The " Füsilier Wipf " film is an excellent film, and do not let us forget, it is a 100 per cent. Swiss production.

The film is adapted from the novel of Robert Faesi and produced by the " Praeseus Film, A.G." Those who expected to see a film portraying the life and work of the Swiss Army, must have been disappointed, — such a film is at present in the making, and I hope will be shown through the good services of the N.S.H. at a later date.—

No, — " Füsilier Wipf " depicts the experiences of a simple soldier, who was called up, and taken out of a *milieu*, which could hardly be expected to have any connection with warfare. He was an assistant in a barber's shop, and through his clients, he first heard of the call which the country was making to protect its frontiers.

Most amusing was the scene in which the " big noises " of the village aired their views about the mobilisation and its eventual consequences, one German-speaking Swiss asking a French-speaking Swiss whether he was " German neutral " or " French neutral." (!!)

Step by step, we follow " Füsilier Wipf " in his Army career, which somehow seems to be a bewildering experience to him.

As no film would be a box-office draw without a love interlude, same is produced, and it might be said that the producers, much to their credit, have not attached to it any of the usual Hollywood glamour.

Bullied into an engagement with the daughter of his " boss," — who had his eye on business, and was out to find a partner willing to entrust him with his hard-earned savings — Wipf at last revolted, and when he met " Vreneli " a sweet little peasant girl, he gave, his first love, what, in vulgar language is called, " The bird."

From the moment, when the hero meets this little fair haired lady, a tremendous change comes over him, having been previously most awkward in executing his duties, he now becomes not only an excellent soldier, but a real man.

Space only prevents me from giving a more exhaustive description of the film, and I have to be content with picking out at random some of the many scenes thrown on the screen.

Very impressive was the taking of the oath, which no doubt many of those present will have remembered:

" Ich schwöre, der Eidgenossenschaft Treue zu leisten, für die Verteidigung des Vaterlandes und seiner Verfassung Leib und Leben aufzuopfern, die Fahne niemals zu verlassen " etc., etc.—

Then again those jolly times in the various billets, the sing-songs and accordeon playing by " Füsiliers " Meisterhans and " Schatzli," those hours which we all remember; — we have long ago forgotten the hardships and fatigues, but those golden hours of real comradeship have remained engraved in our memories.

Vividly portrayed was the chasing of some fugitives who sought sanctuary within the borders of the Confederation. Shattered in body and soul by the terrors of war, they, as a last hope, set out to find peace and rest in a country which opened wide its arms to help to heal some of the ravages which a bloody war has caused.

There were times of depression even amongst those who did not have to do any fighting, as month after month of the same routine work tend to strain the nerves and make tempers run high. We all went through it, it was called the " Grenzkoller." How often had we asked ourselves the question why had we to watch day and night for apparently nothing, not realising how fortunate we were not to be dragged into this inferno.

Very sweet was the scene of the meeting of " Füsilier Wipf " with Vreneli, when they decided they would go through life together loving each other in a world where there was so much hatred and misery.

The views of some of the scenes were sublime, take for instance the village scene in the Ticino, with the school-children singing and dancing around the soldiers, and the picture when " Füsilier Wipf " and his friend " Meisterhans " meet on one of the sun-kissed heights somewhere in the valley of Blenio, when amidst the splendour of nature they ask themselves why mankind should fight each other and make a hell of earth, when God has given us so much to admire and to love. Have we not all, at one time or other, asked ourselves the same question?

" Füsilier Wipf " is not only a patriotic, but essentially a human film, and a true expression of the spirit which animates our people.

ST.

CITY SWISS CLUB.

Another highly successful monthly meeting took place on Tuesday at Pagani's Restaurant. Members turned up in great numbers as they were fully anticipating an exciting evening. Everybody was pleased to see the President in his place again, and gave him a very cheery welcome. The key-note of the evening was 'harmony.'

A new member, Mr. Filliez, was unanimously elected, and felt honoured and moved at being received a member of our Club.

Mr. Boos, the new Chairman of the S.M.S., was heartily congratulated by our President on his new appointment, and all members present wished him a happy and successful tenure of office.

The question of the 1st of August celebrations by the whole Colony was raised on the suggestion of the Swiss Mercantile Society, and it was hoped that arrangements would be made to celebrate this important anniversary in an adequate manner, the whole Colony to join in a patriotic demonstration.

A few more items of topical interest were discussed in the official part of the meeting and unanimously agreed.

Mr. Dick took advantage of the 'harmonious' atmosphere prevailing to remind members that the Concert of the Swiss Orchestral Society will take place on the 29th of this month at Queen Mary Hall, Gt. Russell Street. I feel sure that all members who had the pleasure of attending the February meeting and enjoyed the performance given by the Swiss Accordion Club and the Swiss Orchestral Society, were so delighted that they made up their minds right away to book the 29th instant, and support our sister societies in their musical efforts. No doubt they will all flock there in great numbers with their families, and take English friends, so that they may join in the delight of this Swiss musical treat.

The assembly was eagerly awaiting the surprise of the evening. This took the form of a most interesting talk on 'Harmony in Business' by Mr. P. B. Tustin, an old friend of the Secretary.

Mr. Tustin, former chief of Food and Dairy Division at Winnipeg, Canada, was during the late war Chairman of nine Committees, representing different branches of the Food Industry. At present technical adviser to United Dairies Ltd., Lecturer on Nutritious Subjects to the London School of Hygiene, Honorary Member of the Royal Institute of Public Health and Hygiene, etc. He has travelled all over the world, and gained such wide experience that it took him no time to magnetise his audience into the secrets of successful commercial life.

He started by reminding us of the great impression created by a military band marching past: it makes you throw out your chest and join in the vigorous rhythm and unison of the march. The main theme of his talk was the mutual confidence which should exist between employer and staff, thus turning our business life into successful team-work where full 'harmony' and happiness prevails similar to that of the military band under the leadership of its conductor.

Mr. Tustin acted like a tonic to all those who had the privilege of being present, and when he had finished with the serious part of the business he gave us some of his personal experiences accompanied by the usual jokes connected particularly with country life, which were keenly appreciated by the audience.

Mr. Tustin was cheered to the echo after his very inspiring talk, and was not allowed to leave until he had promised to come again.

I gathered afterwards from all our friends that not only were they delighted with the intellectual treat provided, but that the inner man glowed under the satisfaction of a fine meal well-served by Messrs. Pagani's, who went out of their way to make us feel really at home.

Some of our 'golden-voiced members,' at the request of Mr. Tustin, gave one or two Swiss yodels which he greatly enjoyed, and that closed another successful evening of the City Swiss Club.

Bee.

SECHZEHN MONATE BANDITENLEBEN IN CHINA.

Von Ernest Walter.

(Aus, " Mit Schweizern rund um die Erde." Verlag H. R. Sauerländer & Co. Aarau.)

(Fortsetzung).

Diese unverhohlene Anerkennung, die ich da fand, blieb sichtlich nicht ohne Wirkung auf unsere Wächter, von denen sich auch ein zweiter noch eingefunden hatte. Als wir in dunkler Nacht mit ihnen allein den Rückweg über das Gebirge zurücklegen mussten, zeigten sie sich uns gegenüber merkwürdig versöhnlich. Jener Wächter, den wir um seiner Triebhaftigkeit willen unter uns nur den Fresser nannten, sammelte glühende Kohlen auf unser schuldiges Haupt, indem er bei einer Rast etwa um Mitternacht von süssen chinesischen Brötchen, die er sich hatte kaufen können, auch meinem Freund und mir abgab. Wenn ich nicht Gott zugetraut hätte, dass er Wunder tun kann und nicht gewohnt gewesen wäre, alles aus seiner Hand zu nehmen, dann, wäre mir diese Freundlichkeit unheimlich gewesen. Daneben merkte man unsern Wächtern ihre Schadenfreude schon an, dass wir mit unsern wunden Füssen auf dem steinigen Weg nur unter empfindlichen Schmerzen gehen konnten.

Mit recht gemischten Gefühlen sahen wir im Morgengrauen des andern Tages unsere Schilfhütte wieder, die wir am Abend zuvor eigenmächtig verlassen hatten. In eiserne Ketten, mit denen schon in den ersten Tagen eine junge Intelligenz dieser Kommunistenregierung uns gedroht hatte, wurden wir nun gelegt. Eine aus Angst und Befriedigung gemischte Erregung hatte sich unserer Wächter bemächtigt, als sie uns zum erstenmal die Ketten um den Hals legten und möglichst eng mit einem schweren eisernen Schloss zuschlossen. Dass ich in ihren Augen als der Anstifter der Flucht galt, bekundeten sie damit, dass sie mir auch noch mit Stricken die Füsse so eng als möglich zusammenschnürten. Uns in dieser Weise Gewalt antun zu dürfen, deckte bei ihnen noch andere niedere Instinkte, deren sie sich bisher vielleicht aus einem Gefühl der Kameradschaft geschämt hatten. Während unsere früheren Wächter das Verpflegungsgeld, das sie für uns erhielten, auch redlich für diesen Zweck verwandt hatten, begannen die, denen wir entflohen waren, uns um einen Teil des Geldes