

# Notes and gleanings

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I shall certainly never forget a day when five of us, out on one rope behind the driver, were returning from Andermatt. The horse was going at a good pace, and our energies were concentrated on directing our skis along the polished surface of the road, when—suddenly, a shout! the rope had broken, and the last two skiers on it had tumbled over into the snow. The driver pulled the horse up with a sudden jerk, and away went the rest of us into the snow, even the driver himself. By the time we had picked ourselves up, quite unhurt, the horse had plunged into deep snow. Having dragged, and coaxed, till he got him out, the driver handed the reins to me while he fixed up the rope again.

I passed a horrible moment imagining a sudden start, and myself as sole ski-jörer! However, the horse stood perfectly until, at the sound of his master's voice, he set off once more and pulled us up to Hospenthal without further mishap.

#### *Ski-ing over the St. Gotthard Pass.*

My most memorable day was when, with several others, I went over the St. Gotthard Pass on skis.

We left Hospenthal at 9.30 a.m., and after a stiff climb of about thirteen kilometres in the blazing sun, we reached the Hospice at 1.30 p.m. We were hindered several times on the way up by meeting companies of soldiers ski-ing round the most awkward corners at lightning speed!

At the Hospice we renewed our strength by eating our packed lunches (we had carried these in our rucksacks), and drinking the steaming hot chocolate one can get there.

After a short rest we decided to go down to Airolo, a village at the entrance of the St. Gotthard tunnel. Having been told we should reach Airolo in less than two hours, we hoped to get the 4.30 train through the tunnel to Göschenen, and, from there, the mountain train back to Andermatt. The descent, however, proved most difficult owing to weather conditions affecting the path, so that it was 6.30 before we reached the barracks above Airolo, where, after much persuasion, we were permitted to phone through to Hospenthal to tell our party we could not get back that night.

#### *Italy is reached.*

By this time a silvery moon had risen and lighted us on our winding way down to the village. About half an hour later, as we were going through its main street, one of our party slipped on its icy surface, and a small native onlooker exclaimed sarcastically: "*Ecco! bene!*"—which reminded us that we had left the German-speaking Canton on the other side of the pass. I therefore, as interpreter, had to readjust my tired brain to *la lingua italiana* as we set out in quest of a resting-place for the night.

It was a long search, for most of the hotels were closed, but we finally found shelter at a small hotel opposite the station. After an excellent dinner we felt somewhat revived, and were extremely proud of our achievement, especially as one of our number had only put on skis for the first time five days before! He was a man, and young, and exceptional! I would not advise other novices to emulate his exploits.

Having slept the sleep of the healthily weary for over eleven hours, we spent next morning exploring the village shops; our train to Göschenen did not leave till 11 a.m.

Our first visit was to the watch makers, where we bought ski badges to commemorate the occasion. The watchmaker addressed us in Italian, but on learning that we were English, and had crossed the St. Gotthard the day before, he aired his few English phrases in expressing his great surprise and admiration. When we left he accompanied us outside his shop door, rang a bell till his good wife popped her head out of an upper window, and with much gesticulation he shouted to her—also, in fact to the whole village—to look at "*gli Inglesi*" who had come over the pass from Hospenthal.

After journeying by train through the tunnel we reached our hotel in time for lunch, after an enjoyable and never-to-be-forgotten adventure.

One day I made friends with the local priest, who was an accomplished organist, and he generously invited one of our party, also a talented musician, to play in the church.

Some of us joined in the beautiful German carol, "*Stille Nacht, heilige Nacht!*" and another day at the request of one of the Kloster sisters, we brought our English hymn-book with us, and sang a few well-known English hymns. She joined in our singing, and on parting we wished each other God's ever-present blessing.

In the evening the village children came to the hotel to yodel, and each day there seemed to be some new joy awaiting us. It might be the rosy morning glow on snow-capped peaks, or silvery moonlight behind the pines as we re-

turned from Andermatt at evening. It might be a letter from home that awaited us when we got in, or the enjoyment of new friendships formed—the sunshine on the snow, the tinkling of sleigh-bells and the cheery "*Ski-Heil!*" of the passer-by. All these things combined, send us home so absolutely fit that having had our playtime, we return with abundant energy to our different tasks.

For the rest of this week's GLEANINGS, there is nothing of importance, or appeal to me, or of a nature to interest many. There is a letter, for instance, in the *Western Morning News & Mercury*, January 12th, signed "Schoolboy," which deals with the question of Swiss Silk Stockings competing with British Stockings. That "schoolboy" is for taxing the Swiss stockings, because:

To compare the value of these two articles is grossly unfair. The English manufacturer before he makes a single pair of stockings has to pay employer's liability, sick and unemployment insurance, to pay his employees a minimum trade union rate, in addition to rent, rates and taxes.

The Swiss manufacturer has none of these liabilities and obviously he can produce identically the same article as an English manufacturer at a much lower price.

#### SCHOOLBOY.

I have made a note of this because I am going to ask some friends of mine who are Swiss manufacturers to let me join them in their business. I have often longed to have a business which would be free from employer's liability, sick and unemployment insurance, minimum trade union rates, rent, rates and taxes! No wonder people here often think that our Swiss brethren have a lovely time to spend in a lovely country in lovely pursuits! A pity only that that article in the said paper was signed by "schoolboy."

### NOUVELLE SOCIÉTÉ HELVÉTIQUE. LONDON GROUP.

#### PRESIDENT'S ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1930 READ AT ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING ON FEB. 28TH, 1931.

The short survey of the life and activity of the London Group of the N.S.H. during 1930 which I propose laying before you to-night will, I hope, give us food for thought and point the way in more than one direction. On the whole, it is certainly a pleasant story that may be unfolded of the calm but active period behind us. There have been few decisive changes; we have at no time been called upon to step outside our accustomed path of intention or profession, but it is not without a certain pride that I can speak of an increased activity, of a greater determination and of a keener interest which have characterized this past year in our Group. You may remember that a few years ago I was frank enough to advise the London Group to "lie low" for a while, to collect and re-organize the remnants of its forces and to re-build its financial strength. We have quietly done all this with the result that 1930 is likely to have seen the end of this quiescent period, permitting us to re-emerge strong and healthy from the reaction of our boom years of 1919-1922.

But before I speak of the increased activity of the Group, I would once more refer to the curious mental attitude of the major portion of our membership. They appear to regard themselves evidently as honorary members since they do not in the least wish to participate in the active life of the Society, but pay their subscription with commendable regularity. Some may stick to us in memory of greater times; others may regard it as good taste to be a member; others again may do so out of regard for a friend, or because they have been recommended to belong to the movement. Yet this abstention from active participation, needless to say, is a serious point of weakness and produces a curiously anomalous state of affairs in our Group. We are almost like a Mexican army, all generals and no privates; for it is the Council and the Council alone who takes an active interest in the affairs of the Society.

The Council according to the Statutes consists of a maximum number of 14 members, but for the above stated reason I would wish to see this number doubled and shall revert to the matter at a later stage. There have been nine meetings during the past year at this address. These monthly meetings are advertised in the *Swiss Observer*; no direct invitations are sent to the members, but since the meetings have been held with unflinching regularity on the third Wednesday in each month for many years past, we are not conscious of committing a breach in the omission of direct invitations. The administrative part of the Council has experienced a serious loss during the period under review. Miss Crawford who has been our able Secretary since the abolition of the standing Secretariat has been obliged to retire during last May on account of health. She left England, joining her mother in Canada. Her work has been taken over and very conscientiously carried on by Mrs. Clara Muller who, as you all know, is also re-

sponsible for the clearness and correctness of our accounts as well as for the promptness with which members' subscriptions are remitted.

The activities, other than administrative, of the Council may suitably be described under four headings, viz.

- (a) Causeries
- (b) Film Shows
- (c) Official participations
- (d) General activity.

(a) Five causeries were presented to the Group in the course of the year, all by members. They proved to be of great educational value, being given by distinguished experts in most cases, and were followed by prolonged discussions. It is more than refreshing to know that we may rely upon such valuable co-operation and performances among our own members.

March 19th Experiences in Japan, by Mr. Paul Liechti.

May 21st The influence of the League of Nations, the International Labour Bureau and the International Bank on Switzerland, by Mr. Th. de Sonnenberg and Mr. L. H. Micheli, of the Legation.

Oct. 15th Report of the Eleventh Journée des Suisses à l'Etranger à Bâle, August 30/31, by the President.

Nov. 19th The history of the Swiss Church in London, by the Rev. Hoffmann de Visme.

Jan. 21st Psychological influences on Cancer, by Dr. Walter Mons.

(b) As has now become our custom, we have given the Colony two Film shows during the year. They were held, with free admission, at King George's Hall, and drew a large audience in each case. The performances have again been attended either by the Minister himself or his Representative who addressed the meetings and added greatly to the patriotic significance of the movement. I am of opinion that we have every reason to be pleased with our activity in this direction; the N.S.H. film shows have now become an institution in our Colony and are fulfilling their purpose admirably. The two films were

May 3rd. A Travers La Suisse, four separate films of South Western Switzerland and the Bernese Oberland.

Nov. 8th. With the Swiss Mountain Troops in the Alps, a military film of great beauty and patriotic appeal. This film was obtained from the Central Secretariat in Berne through the good offices of the Legation.

(c) We have further participated officially in the following events and entertainments.

Aug. 28th. With the co-operation of the S.M.S. we organized the famous lecture of Prof. Schroeter on the National Park in Switzerland, at King George's Hall.

May 31st. At the Jubilee on the 10th. anniversary of Minister Paravicini's work in London, held at the Rest, Monico, when your President was entrusted with the official speech on behalf of the London Swiss Societies.

Aug. 30/31 Your President officially represented the Group at the 11th Journée des Suisses à l'Etranger in Basle, where he took an active part in the deliberations. Mr. and Mme. Campart were also present, en route from Germany.

We further participated, as per long standing custom, in the Swiss Sports at Herne Hill and the First of August Festivity at Hendon, discharging our usual obligations in the organization and management. At the latter function we carried out the First of August Collection in favour of Swiss Schools abroad and remitted to the authorities in Switzerland the sum of £46-5-0.

(d) Our general activity during the year followed much the usual course of events. It would lead us too far to mention in detail the various interests and occupations, but I can assure you that a good deal of time and work is involved in these matters, month by month. It should be noted, however, that the intercourse between our Group and the various Groups abroad is steadily becoming more active and this is due to a large extent to our initiation of sending Christmas greetings to all overseas Groups. We have also remained in closer touch than ever before with the Central Secretariat in Berne, as well as with our very staunch old friends Mr. Jean Baer and Prof. A. Latt, both of whom were visited by your President, when in Switzerland.

(4) It is a most pleasing reflection that our relations with the Swiss Legation and the sister Societies in London continue to be of the most friendly character. The encouragement and co-operation which we have received during the past year from the Minister and Mr. Th. de Sonnenberg in particular are treasured by us with sincere gratitude and will not fail, I am sure, to evoke in us a greater enthusiasm for our cause and a deeper patriotism. If a further proof of the esteem we enjoy at the Legation were needed, it is easily found in the ready agreement of Mr.