

Anglo-Swiss Society

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ALBERT J. WELTI READS FROM HIS OWN WORKS.

It always surprises me anew to find comparatively few people taking advantage of lectures and concerts by Swiss artists specially arranged for the Swiss Colony. Such events seem a welcome opportunity to get a breath of cultural air, and it seems a great pity that the efforts of the Nouvelle Société Helvétique who have in recent years gone to a great deal of trouble and expense to get well-known artists and lecturers over from Switzerland, should not meet with more response. How is it that whenever an event in the Colony is preceded by a dinner there are scores and scores of participants, but when there is merely food for the spirit, though at little or no expense, it seems difficult to get a few dozen together?

As far as I am concerned I gratefully took the opportunity to hear a well-known Swiss author read from his own works. The Swiss Legation had kindly put a room at the disposal of the New Helvetic Society on Thursday evening, 20th April, and some 30 people assembled to hear Mr. Albert J. Welty. He is both a writer and a painter of repute. He originates from Zurich, but has lived at Geneva for over 30 years.

Mr. Welty began the reading with the last act from his play "Servet in Genf". Michel Servet was a Spanish doctor and theologian who was burnt alive at Geneva in 1553 at the instigation of Calvin. In this act the Spaniard and the Reformer discuss their doctrines prior to Servet's arrest, a fact which Calvin comes near to regretting.

Following this serious and sad act Mr. Welty read the first few pages from his novel "Wenn Puritaner jung sind." How well the audience responded to the humorous and realistic description of the three boys and their experiences during the first weeks at school! Finally, Mr. Welty read from the "Steibruch", his famous play in Swiss dialect which was performed at the Landesausstellung in 1939. The audience liked the first act so much that Mr. Welty had to read on. It was a pity the Chairman, Dr. H. W. Egli, had to remind us all of the late hour, so much we all enjoy Mr. Welty's play, not only its stark, human action over the problem of uncertain fatherhood, but also the lively, dramatic way in which he read it. For the benefit of those who would have liked to hear the end of the play I want to say that it is a happy one with "Murer" and his two children "Näppi" and "Meiti" coming together as a family.

It was a pity that some of the audience had already

left by the time the lecturer arrived, but he had been delayed on his journey, and through no fault of his own or of the organisers the reading could not be started until 8.15. Mr. Welty had gone to Leeds to give a lecture to the Swiss Club there, and I am sure they and we are extremely grateful to him for giving up to his compatriots so much of his time. He has undoubtedly stimulated in some of us the wish to learn more about his works. MARIANN.

ANGLO-SWISS SOCIETY.

Annual Luncheon, Dorchester Hotel, May 9th, 1950.

The Anglo-Swiss Society will be holding its Second Annual General Meeting and Annual Luncheon in the Ballroom of the Dorchester Hotel on Tuesday May 9th.

Readers will remember what a great success this enjoyable function was last year, when the Society entertained a Delegation consisting of eight members of the Swiss Federal Assembly, led by M. Joseph Escher, President of the Federal Assembly, and M. Gustav Wenk, President of the Council of States. On that occasion, Dr. Wahlen, famous as the author of the Wahlen plan for feeding Switzerland during the war, made a brilliant reply in English to the Toast of The Guests.

This year the Toast of The Anglo-Swiss Society will be proposed by the Society's President, The Rt. Hon. Philip Noel-Baker, and the Toast of Switzerland will be proposed by The Hon. Kenneth Younger, M.P., Minister of State, to which His Excellency The Swiss Minister will be replying. Seating at the Luncheon will be by round tables grouped according to the 22 Swiss Cantons and, it is hoped, there will be a large attendance.

The Anglo-Swiss Society has made remarkable progress since its inauguration in February of last year. The membership has risen steadily to over 700, reciprocal arrangements have been made with the various Anglo-Swiss clubs in Switzerland, a Centre has been established at La Tour de Peilz on the lake of Geneva, and members are kept informed of the ever increasing privileges of membership by the receipt of the Anglo-Swiss Leaflet.

Every month lectures are held in the famous lecture hall of The Royal Society of Arts, and the future programme includes a lecture by Professor Straumann of Zurich University on September 12th, and by Admiral Lord Mountevans on October 3rd. The lecture by Admiral Lord Mountevans will be on his experiences in the Antarctic, when he was second in command to Captain Scott on his last and ill-fated expedition. Arrangements are well advanced with the lectures to be given during the winter by well-known and distinguished people.

The main object of the Society is to maintain and develop the existing friendship between the Swiss and British people, and to foster a closer unity to the mutual advantage of the two nations. The activities of the Society are strictly non-political. The annual subscription is only £1 covering 12 months membership and it is hoped that all those who support its objects, and who are not already members, will join. Particulars can be obtained from the Society's Headquarters at 145, Palace Chambers, Parliament Square, Westminster.

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