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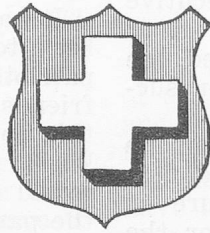
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HELVETIA

MONTHLY
PUBLICATION
OF THE



SWISS BENEVOLENT
SOCIETY IN
NEW ZEALAND (INC.)

GROUP NEW ZEALAND OF THE NEW HELVETIC SOCIETY

18th YEAR.

APRIL, 1954.

AUCKLAND.

NEWS FROM SWITZERLAND

Swiss Plastic Boats

Two Swiss firms have just manufactured and launched the first two boats to be made here in vitro-plastic. This is a plastic substance having for its basis a vitreous fibre manufactured in Switzerland, as well as divers synthetic resins, all of Swiss origin.

The results obtained are excellent; in fact, they are superior to anything which has been made up to now. The hulls of these boats, which are about three metres in length, hardly weigh thirty kilos. In addition to the advantage to be derived from this light weight, the principal merit of vitro-plastic is that it cannot rot, rust or corrode, and therefore does not require any upkeep; it does not dry up in the sun, and is more solid and durable than the hardest kinds of wood and, even, most metals.

NEWS OF THE COLONY

A Commendable Record

A man to whom various sports clubs and organisations owe a great deal is shortly to sever his connection with Pukekura Park, New Plymouth. He is Swiss-born Mr. L. Schonbachler, who, when he retires at the end of next month, will have spent some 25 years at the park—the last 15 or 16 years of which has seen him in charge of the sports ground.

Mr. Schonbachler, slightly built and always hurrying, has been a familiar sight to cricketers, athletes and other sportsmen and sportswomen for so long now that it will come as something of a surprise to see another man preparing cricket wickets, marking out the ground for winter sports, and generally performing the hundred and one tasks that fall to the lot of any groundsman. Sometimes there have been disagreements but whatever the rights or wrongs of the case there can be no doubting that Mr. Schonbachler invariably did his best.

He was not always a groundsman. When he

first came to New Zealand from Switzerland about 42 years ago he was tempted by prospects on the land. Cautiously, he learnt a thing or two in a dairy factory before going share-milking in the Cape Egmont district. But his expectations were not realised and farm life failed to hold him. He tried one or two other positions until, in 1927, he had an interview with the then curator, Mr. T. Horton, and joined the staff of Pukekura Park.

A native of Eisedeln, one of the original foundation canton towns formed in 1291, Mr. Schonbachler has watched the changing face of Pukekura Park with mixed feelings. He has seen a lot of planting and improvements—the Brooklands forest area, the Fillis Street plantation and other major works—but it is his considered opinion that the park has lost something of its naturalness, and almost imperceptibly is tending to become a trifle artificial.

But, he hastens to add, it is still Pukekura Park, one of the best anyone is likely to see anywhere.

Swiss Social Club, Taranaki

About 60 members attended the Club's annual general meeting presided over by Mr. Walter Risi.

The good name of Switzerland as a peace-loving and democratic nation was fully upheld by those present, the rights and opinions of the individual were always respected; some expressed themselves in English, a few in "Schwyzer-dutsch," and a few interjections, with a touch of humour thrown in, had the gathering in a good mood.

In his presidential address, Mr. Risi referred to the vacancy caused in the committee by the death of its most respected member in the person of John Schupfer. Activities during the year included several card parties, the 1st of August celebration and the annual picnic. All were well attended and special thanks are due to the ladies for their generous help during the year.

Due to change of residence, Mr. W. Risi has resigned as president and Mrs. Risi as executive member of the committee. It was with great regret he had to take this step, remarked the president, and he wished the club further success.

Mr. Nolly presented the balance sheet for the year, which revealed that the club reached firm foundations. Mr. Nolly, owing to pressure of work, declined nomination as secretary for the ensuing year.

The club decided that it should have a correspondent who would contribute items of interest for publication in the Helvetia. Several suggestions, relative the Swiss Benevolent Society were discussed during the meeting and certain recommendations are to be forwarded to the committee of the society.

The principal event of the evening was the election of officers for the ensuing year. These elections, conducted in a most pleasant atmosphere, showed the following result:

President: Mr. John Steiner.

Vice-president: Mr. J. Kaiser.

Secretary: Mr. F. Imhof.

Executive: Messrs. C. Chamberlain, W. Fluhler, J. Fohn, A. Kalin (Normanby), E. Kurman, D. Luond, M. Steiner, C. Wyss, and Mesdames Imhof, Schupfer and M. Steiner.

Correspondent: Mr. A. Schicker.

At the conclusion of the meeting a hearty vote of thanks was accorded the retiring president; Mrs. Risi (executive) and Mr. Nolly, secretary. As an appreciation for his outstanding work for the club Mr. Risi was elected as their patron.

The successful and enjoyable evening concluded with a tasty supper, served by the ladies, after which many enjoyed a game of "Swiss Jass."

A.Sch.

"A Little Place"

Home is just a corner of the world
that's sent us to make sweet
A place for smoothing out the way
for tired hands and feet.

A little place for tenderness
As well as joy and song,
A little place to cheer and bless
and help love's song along.

A place for toil, a place for rest
A little place for prayer,
A corner where we do our best
and joys and sorrows share.

A place where everyone can play
his part however small,
But home that is not full of love
is hardly home at all.

—M. Eversley.

Notice to Members

It has been suggested by one of our lady members to commence correspondence among compatriots in New Zealand, with a view to creating friendship and interest among Swiss residing in this country. Those interested are requested to kindly communicate with the secretary, who would arrange the necessary contact between the parties concerned.

WHAT IS SWITZERLAND ?

When tourists arrive in Switzerland, they generally compliment us about the cleanliness of our country, and they realize that people, houses, shops and everything else looks wealthy; they admire the quality of our railway and telephone systems. They see that the standard of living in this country is high, and they may easily believe that Switzerland is not only lovely, but also a naturally rich spot in the midst of Europe.

Unfortunately, this is not true at all. We have no coal, no oil, no minerals. We have only beautiful scenery, rocks, ice, snow and water. Even the soil is not naturally a rich one.

More than 20 per cent. of the country are snow, ice, rocks and lakes; 25 per cent. woods, another 25 per cent. pastures for our cows, goats and sheep and only 28 per cent. of our whole land are meadows, fields and vineyards. If you consider this, and if you compare these figures with our high standard of living, it is quite normal that tourists and even economists speak of a "Swiss Miracle." How is it possible that so many people live so well in such a small and poor land?

If there is no geographical explanation of the fact that this country exists and is even wealthy, may be there is a historical explanation.

Our grandfathers had to cope with one difficult economic problem: although the number of inhabitants was only about one million, it was impossible to feed them all on the products of our soil. There was no industry, they had nothing to sell and nothing to export. But they were good warriors; they exported men and boys, they sold themselves, they became soldiers. And as a matter of fact, for many centuries, there was hardly a battle fought on European soil without Swiss soldiers.

Fortunately, James Watt and many others, by their inventions, gave poor countries like Switzerland new possibilities. Our ancestors realized immediately the importance of these new inventions and introduced modern manufacturing methods. The raw material had and has still to be purchased, but nevertheless the export industry and