

Forthcoming events

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"AS OTHERS SEE US."

Under this heading the Editor will from time to time re-publish, without comment, articles which are supposed to mirror our national characteristics from an observant foreigner's point of view.

Contributions from our readers to this column will be thankfully received by the Editor.

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HOTEL "ACADEMIES."

(By Horace Newte.)

It is a common matter of complaint that wherever one goes in England, one finds foreign hotel keepers, foreign waiters, and foreign hall porters; and the question is often asked, "Why cannot these latter not ill-paid callings be filled by ex-Service men, or the tens of thousands of able-bodied men who are daily flocking to the Labour Exchanges in search of a job?"

The answer is, that they are not properly qualified, and that they would be as out of place in work that requires special training, as, say, an uneducated man as a schoolmaster in a public school.

For, although to the uninitiated it may seem a simple thing to be a waiter, or an hotel boots, or a hall porter, those in the know think and act otherwise, and hence the existence in Switzerland of what are known as "Hotel Academies," where fees are charged for tuition, a long and arduous course of training is entered upon, examinations are held, and certificates are given for those who pass with credit.

"Much ado about nothing," I can hear the practical Englishman exclaim, but the proof of the pudding is in the eating, and the hard-fisted Swiss would not part with his tuition fees, and work as hard and persistently as he does in these "Academies," if there were not something pretty substantial at the end of it.

The "boots" is taught civility; how to handle luggage; the mixing and best methods of using the divers polishes for floors, and the many other things which pertain to his job.

The hall porter is put into the way of obtaining the omniscient information which it is his duty to have on tap for those who are constantly requiring it.

The cook is taught how to market; to buy in large or small quantities; to cater for large or small establishments; and, above all, to cook as foreign cooks only know how, and to put our English cooks (so-called) to eternal shame.

And the embryo waiter enters on a course that, if he can afford the time, often extends over a period of years, for the complete waiter has more than a little to learn.

In addition to the technique of mere waiting, he has to be acquainted with the resources of the kitchen, and must possess a thorough knowledge of wines, their vintages, the districts they hail from, good and bad years, and winelore in general, which, as anyone who knows anything about it is well aware, is not to be picked up in five minutes.

Indeed, so hard do these Swiss work at the career they have selected that the successful candidates at the examinations that are held at definite periods celebrate the event with the feasting and drinking that accompanies proficiency in more exalted callings in life.

And to show how seriously a foreign hotelkeeper takes his occupation, he does not, as would a successful English hotelkeeper, send his boys to a public school and a "Varsity"; but after the ordinary (and excellent) education which obtains abroad, he packs them off to take quite humble jobs in smart English hotels, in order to give them a thorough grounding into the business by commencing on the bottom rung of the ladder.

I was not aware of this until the patron of a Monte Carlo hotel told me his wealthy father had seen to it that he had started his professional career as a page at the Piccadilly Hotel.

But, efficient and significant of thoroughness as are these Hotel "Academies," there is even more in them than at first meets the eye.

For each one forms a large and compact trades union, so that each qualified member has to do his utmost to fill any job that may be vacant with one of his own union.

Now we know all this, it is not to be wondered at that the better sort of hotels are staffed by alien waiters; and if we are not above taking a leaf out of the book of the intelligent foreigner, why on earth cannot we do likewise? It would mean finding well-paid work for tens of thousands of Englishmen; and our patriotism would not be hurt, as it so often is, by the reproach that the vast catering business is almost wholly in the hands of aliens.

(From the "Sunday Chronicle," Manchester.)

NOUVELLE SOCIÉTÉ HELVÉTIQUE.

Dr. A. Latt's farewell lecture, which should have taken place last Friday, the 15th inst., had, unfortunately, to be cancelled at the last moment.

Dr. Latt's presence at the Auslandschweizertag in Basle on Monday, the 18th inst., being imperative, and no definite information being procurable in time as to whether the threatened railway strike would be averted, he was reluctantly compelled to take a precipitate departure for Switzerland on Friday morning, requesting the President, Mr. J. Baer, at a last hasty interview, to be good enough to convey to all the members of the N.S.H. and all his friends in London his sincere regrets at being deprived of the opportunity to bid them farewell at Steinway Hall.

This unavoidably abrupt parting of Dr. Latt also robbed the Committee of the N.S.H., as well as a wide circle of his friends and well-wishers, of the opportunity to take leave of its former Secretary in a manner suitable to the occasion. The Committee had intended to read out, after Dr. Latt's lecture, the letter published at foot and to present to Dr. Latt, out of funds raised among the members of the Council, a gold watch, bearing the following inscription: "The London Group of the Nouvelle Société Helvétique to Dr. Latt as a token of their appreciation of his devotion as Secretary for the years 1917-1921."

On account of these unfortunate circumstances the address and presentation will now have to be conveyed to Dr. Latt in a more prosaic form, which, we trust, however, will not depreciate their value in the eyes of the recipient.

Monsieur le Docteur Latt.

Cher Monsieur Latt,

Au moment où vous vous apprêtez à nous quitter pour rentrer en Suisse, Le Conseil, au nom du Groupe Londronien tout entier, tient à vous exprimer sa profonde reconnaissance pour la manière dont vous vous êtes acquitté de votre tâche pendant les quatre ans et quelques jours que vous avez passés au Secrétariat.

Les rapports annuels du Président ne donnent qu'une bien faible idée de la somme de travail que vous avez fournie au cours de ces années marquées par une activité intense du groupe. Elle est non seulement énorme, mais la qualité de ce travail est de nature à satisfaire les plus exigeants.

Le Groupe tout entier ne saurait trop se louer de l'enthousiasme, de l'intelligence, de la patience, de la bonne volonté dont vous avez fait preuve dans l'exercice de vos fonctions si accaparantes et souvent si accablantes. Soutenu par l'idéal de la N.S.H. vous avez toujours été à la hauteur de votre tâche. Vous avez donc le droit d'être fier de votre oeuvre et quittez Londres en laissant d'unanimes regrets.

Tout en déplorant la perte que nous faisons, nous sommes réconfortés par la pensée que vous gardez l'idéal de la N.S.H. si bien ancré dans votre coeur que la perte du groupe de Londres sera un gain pour la N.S.H. en Suisse, pour la cause des Suisses à l'Etranger en particulier.

Vous avez beaucoup donné au Groupe de Londres, cher Monsieur Latt, vous lui avez consacré, ainsi qu'à l'avancement de l'idéal de la N.S.H., quelques-unes des meilleures années de votre vie. Nous espérons qu'en retour vous avez aussi beaucoup reçu et que vous vous êtes enrichi de précieuses expériences dont bénéficiera toute votre carrière.

Avec l'expression renouvelée de notre gratitude et des vifs regrets que nous cause votre départ et en vous souhaitant de tout coeur succès, bonheur et prospérité, nous restons,

Vos bien sincèrement dévoués,

POUR LE CONSEIL

Le Secrétaire Honoraire.

Le Président.

C. CAMPART.

J. BAER.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS.

Saturday, April 23rd, 7.30 p.m.—SCHWEIZERBUND, 74, Charlotte St., W.1.—ANNUAL DINNER AND BALL.

Thursday, April 28th.—UNIONE TICINESE.—47th ANNUAL BANQUET AND BALL at Gatti's Restaurant, King William St., Strand, W.C.2. Dancing begins 8 p.m., Reception 9.15, Banquet 9.30. Dancing continued after Banquet till 2.30 a.m.

Friday, April 29th, 8 p.m.—UNIONE CHRETIENNE.—Lecture by Rev. R. Hoffmann-de Visme: "Une révolution type: La Finlande et le Bolchévisme" at the Y.M.C.A. Building, Tottenham Court Road, W.1 (2nd floor).

Saturday, May 28th, 2.30 p.m.—SWISS SPORTS at Herne Hill Athletic Grounds.