

# To our readers

Objektyp: **Group**

Zeitschrift: **The Swiss observer : the journal of the Federation of Swiss Societies in the UK**

Band (Jahr): - **(1938)**

Heft 894

PDF erstellt am: **27.06.2024**

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revive the social side of the Society's activities were not in vain and the response must have been a source of encouragement to them.

Mr. M. Schneider, Hon. Secretary, acted as compère and the programme opened with Swiss songs in which all present joined with much gusto. Mr. R. Chappuis very ably acted as accompanist on the piano.

The audience then had an opportunity of admiring the adept tricks of Mr. George King, the well-known conjurer. He constantly baffled the company with feats of his skill.

Mr. W. Mathyer, solo yodler of the "Brienzer Jodler Club," at present a student of the College, needed no introduction for he had already made a name for himself not only in his Society but also in the Swiss Colony. He appeared in his attractive national costume and with his inseparable accordion. He sang, played and yodled "S'Brienzer Burli" and "Chilter Bueb," and the vociferous applause which he received was a proof that everyone present thoroughly enjoyed his songs.

Mr. F. von Bergen, who has earned himself a reputation both as a singer and a yodler, then delighted the audience with two of his specials, "In an old-fashioned Town" and "Negro Spiritual." All present showed their appreciation with a very hearty ovation.

Mr. King once more entertained the audience with his clever conjuring tricks and as an interlude the members had an opportunity of listening to the newly installed wireless equipment, replete with microphone and loud speakers.

The programme was wound up with songs by Messrs. Mathyer and von Bergen and thus brought to a close one of the most successful and enjoyable evenings at Swiss House.

W.B.

#### "DUNANT; THE STORY OF THE RED CROSS."

It is a strange historical paradox that the man who created the greatest of humanitarian institutions — the Red Cross — is, of the world's great men, perhaps the least known. One may ask: who is Henri Dunant?, and relatively few will be able to answer this question; yet thousands are daily comforted by the blessings of his work. Dunant's noble idea had rapidly assumed practical form, and to-day this philanthropic organization embraces the entire civilized world. It was Dunant's wish that not his name, but his work be glorified.

In a recently published book, entitled "Dunant; The Story of the Red Cross," Martin Gumpert describes the life of Henri Dunant, founder of the Red Cross. In his Dunant-biography, Gumpert not only repeats, but even stresses the often circulated rumour, that Dunant, the great friend of man, had to spend the eve of his life in the poorhouse of a little village in Switzerland — forgotten and deserted by an ungrateful world. These statements of Gumpert are pitifully incorrect. Several times, Gumpert refers to the room in which Dunant lived and died, as the cell (!). If this misrepresentation of facts would not be so deplorable, it would be ridiculous. The Truth is, that Henri Dunant did not die in an almshouse, nor had he ever lived in an almshouse. His end came (1910) in the regular county hospital (Bezirks-Krankenhaus) of Heiden, Switzerland. And the "little village" is the famous health and summer resort of Heiden, where he had spent a number of years after his health began to wane.

Dunant was an idealist, rather than a businessman. He had ventured into financial speculations which cost not only his own fortune, but also affected several of his friends and relatives. These sad events nearly crushed him. He was so persecuted by his own conscience, that he decided to leave his home for an unknown destination. After several years of wandering in foreign lands, returned to Switzerland and arrived, in 1887, at Heiden, broken in health and wealth. Soon, however he was recognised as the founder of the Red Cross, and now sunshine again began to enter his life. Here, in this charming mountain-resort of Heiden he felt at home and he concluded a lasting friendship with the distinguished Dr. Altherr, town-physician and owner of the celebrated hotel "Freihof." His close friendship with another Heidener, Wilhelm Sonderegger, unfortunately, was broken up after a few years. Dunant, at first, was living in the small hotel "Paradies," and here he was discovered by Wilhelm Sonderegger. Then, as the honoured guest of Dr. Altherr, he stayed for a few weeks at the hotel Freihof, but in order not to exhaust his hospitality Dunant returned to the hotel Paradies. One day, in August 1895, Dr. George Baumberger, editor-in-chief of a St. Gall newspaper paid a visit to Dunant. After this call Dr. Baumberger published an article in the widely known periodical "Über Land und Meer" and in stirring words he brought Dunant in all

his greatness before the public, reminding his readers that the world still owed a debt of gratitude to this great benefactor. His appeal was heard, and donations began to pour in from all directions so that his material worries were now definitely a thing of the past.

In 1901, Dunant, together with Frédéric Passy, was honoured with the first Nobel-Prize, which brought him 104,000 francs — a little fortune for those days. Also the Swiss government remembered him with the Bonet-Fendit Foundation; and the Dowager Empress Feodorovna of Russia gave him a yearly pension of 4,000 francs. He was, furthermore, offered a pretentious home, but the modest Dunant declined this generous offer, preferring to remain in his cozy room at the hospital, into which he had moved in the meantime, where he was always sure of the best of care and loving attention. In his old age Dunant became progressively afflicted with hallucination of persecution, and as a consequence he confined himself to his room during the last few years of his life.

Heiden, as already alluded to, is a well-known health and summer resort, beautifully situated on a mountain overlooking the serene lake of Constance. As a summer resort it has many hotels, a park and a Casino (Kursaal) where during the summer months the public is daily entertained with symphony concerts. Visitors and convalescents from all parts of Europe come here to spend their vacation or after-cure, and the town is full of life. This writer well remembers the distinguished looking old gentleman sitting in his armchair watching the promenading visitors and listening to the concert while he was greeted with reverence and affection by all who passed him and recognized him. It was certainly far from a poorhouse atmosphere which surrounded Dunant in his eve of life! His declining physical and mental health deprived him of the full benefit of all the kindness and attention which was showered upon him in his later days, and his solitude toward the end of his life was an unalterable condition for which certainly his friends and his contemporaries in general cannot be blamed. The unostentatious departure of the dead Dunant from Heiden was in respectful observance of his own wish. For one who knows the facts concerning Dunant's residence at Heiden, it becomes a moral duty to correct the erroneous impression which Gumpert's distortion of facts is bound to create.

Albert Bartholdi.

#### MISTRANSLATION.

Sir. — In Switzerland recently I came across an amusing example of misrepresentation by mistranslation. A famous religious order were announcing their charity and tolerance in the following words: "The Brothers of Misery harbour every kind of disease and have no regard for religion."

E. D.

Paddington.

#### TO OUR READERS.

The Editor of the Swiss Observer would be greatly obliged if readers would supply him with addresses of likely subscribers, so that specimen copies could be posted to them.

If such addresses supplied should be already included on our mailing list, no extra copies would be sent.

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Tuesday, January 10th, 1938 (Dinner 7.15 sharp) — City Swiss Club — Monthly Meeting, at Pagani's, Great Portland Street, W.1.

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Samedi 31 décembre :

Sh.30 p.m. Culte de fin d'année, avec le concours du Chœur et d'un violoniste. L'arbre sera rallumé. Message de fin d'année. M. M. Pradervand.

Dimanche 1er janvier :

11h. Culte. Message pour l'An Nouveau. M. M. Pradervand.

Pas d'Ecole du dimanche

6h.30 Culte. M. M. Pradervand.

Vendredi 6 janvier, 7h.30 p.m. Réunion mensuelle de la Jeunesse de l'Eglise Suisse, au Foyer Suisse, 15 Bedford Way.

Invitation à tous les jeunes.

#### SCHWEIZERKIRCHE

(Deutschsprachige Gemeinde).

St. Anne's Church, 9, Gresham Street, E.C.2.  
(near General Post Office.)

Samstag, den 31. Dezember.

7 Uhr Abends — Gottesdienst und Feier des Abendmahls, Pfr. E. Bommeli.

Sonntag (Neujahr) den 1. Januar.

11 Uhr morgens — Gottesdienst und Abendmahl.

7 Uhr abends — Gottesdienst und Abendmahl, Pfr. E. Bommeli.

Am Altjahrabend und am Neujahrgottesdienst wird der Weihnachtsbaum wieder angezündet werden.

Anfragen wegen Religions — bzw. Confirmanden Unterricht und Amtshandlungen sind erbeten an Herrn Pfarrer Ernst Bommeli, 12, Bedford Way, W.C.1.

Printed and Published by THE FREDERICK PRINTING CO., LTD., at 23, Leonard Street, London, E.C.2.