

News from the colony

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NEWS FROM THE COLONY.

A TRAVERS LA SUISSE.

On Saturday, 19th February, the London Group of the Nouvelle Société Helvétique held their annual Spring show of Swiss films at "King George's Hall." Many members and friends of the colony had accepted the invitation and a large audience attended both sessions.

Mr. Hilfiker, of the Swiss Legation, brought greetings from Mr. Paravicini, our Minister, and thanked Mr. A. F. Suter and the Film committee for their valuable efforts in arranging these shows, as they contribute immensely in strengthening our ties with home. He expressed a hope that should the N.S.H. run out of films later-on, they should substitute a cheap ten day trip to Switzerland for our compatriots over here.

Mr. A. F. Suter, the President of the London Group of the N.S.H. thanked Mr. Hilfiker for his kind words, and assured him that they would never abandon the shows and would always do their best to bring Switzerland to London.

The films began and we, suddenly forgetting the big town around us, found ourselves back in Switzerland among the snow covered mountains seeing the beautiful scenery and old customs of north and south Switzerland.

The first film: "Ueber Winterberge in Frühlingstäl" showed us the great amount of work involved in the keeping open of the Julier Pass for cars during the winter. Expert skiers give warning of possible danger of avalanches to our mountain guards, who set the overhanging snow in motion with mortars at convenient moments.

A young gentleman thinks himself and his car capable of demonstrating to his lady friend that they can cross the Pass even when it is officially announced to be closed by snow. First he seems to be favoured by luck, then suddenly the car is trapped in deep snow. Fortunately for them an S.O.S. telephone box of the Swiss Automobile Club is not far away and they phone for help. Immediately two big motor snow ploughs are put into action to clear the road and to assist our adventurers. One on each side of the Pass, the ploughs like prehistoric monsters creep slowly forward on their caterpillars devouring greedily all the snow which bars their way and throw it with their turbines high up into the air out of the road. Finally the stranded car is reached and pulled out on to the now perfectly cleared road.

Over the opened pass our coaches carry the passengers down to the south. Only a few 100 miles from the Julier and some 7,000 feet lower we find ourselves in a country in full flower: in the canton of Tessin. The recently constructed Gandria Strasse cut into the rocks and passing through many tunnels, gives us views of the magnificent scenery of the lake of Lugano. Looking down on picturesque Gandria and its "campanile" and across the lake to the San Salvatore, we realise once again that Tessin is one of the most beautiful parts of our country.

The second film: "Die Schweizer Landsgemeinden" took us to the cantons Appenzell and Glarus, where we had the opportunity of attending the original form of the plebiscite. All the men of the canton come down from the valleys and hills to assemble at the principal square of the town. In a long procession the magistrate, the clergy and the representatives of the army arrive and the councillors take their seats on a wooden platform around which the voters form a large circle. Among those we discover most interesting types of farmers of genuine Swiss stock, many of them carry swords as signs of their right to vote. The schoolchildren are allowed to stand nearest to the platform so that they may watch the proceedings closely and learn how a free citizen behaves. The assembly carries the motions and makes the elections on the principle of a majority of hands raised.

Two films were shown for the kiddies: "Felix" was the hero of one of them, while "Jerry the Troublesome" had thrilling adventures in and above the sea.

The next film: "Aus dem Lande der Rhätomanen" renewed our acquaintance with beautiful Grisons. Views of the famous monastery of Dissentis and of the lovely village Zuoz in the Engadine bore witness to the high standard of culture, which exists in those remote parts. The old houses in Zuoz in the typical Engadine style show works of artistic handicraft, wrought iron railings, figures and ornamental coat of arms. In these happy surroundings live the healthy and good-looking people, who speak our fourth national language: romansch.

Their children enjoy a privilege which everybody envies. They have the school classes out of doors in the meadows, in the sunshine, looking up to the snowpeaks, where their teachers maintain that they learn as quickly as in their classrooms if not more so. In this part of Switzerland we find the highest cornfields in Europe. In con-

sequence of a very short summer, the wheat is cut when it is still unripe and is ripened therefore on high wooden stands erected on sunny slopes.

The last film: "Tessiner Herbstlied" led us again to our beloved Tessin. Fishing boats on the lake against the dark background of rocks; peasant women doing their washing at the edge of the village pond surrounded by stone barns; all these pictures reminded us of scenes to which we are always longing to return. Rural craftsmanship was represented by the basketmaker, and we watched with interest and pleasure how wine is made. A charming Ticinese girl standing in a barrel full of grapes, stamps out the juice with her bare feet, and I can assure you, the wine will be first class.

Mr. Suter kindly obliged with an impromptu commentary, which made the show a great success. He then told us that arrangements are being made to give sound films on future occasions and concluded this very enjoyable afternoon with words emphasising the absolute necessity for freedom for our country, which must be guarded to-day more than ever.

P.

PERSONAL

We extend our heartiest congratulations to M. P. Hilfiker, of the Swiss Legation, on his promotion to Vice-Consul de 1ère classe.

* * *

We extend heartiest congratulations to Mr. Gottfried Keller, on his appointment as London correspondent of the "Basler Nachrichten," Mr. Keller will continue his work for the "Agence Telegraphique Suisse."

MEDIEVAL LUCERNE PASSION PLAYS WILL BE REVIVED IN 1938.

A revival of its historical Passion Plays will take place at Lucerne from July 9th to September 11th, 1938. The performances will be given on Wednesdays (Thursdays in case of rain), Saturdays and Sundays at 9 p.m. on the impressive square of the Hofkirche, the Cathedral dedicated to St. Leodegar. Tickets are to be had from all Lucerne Travel Bureaux and from the Passion Play Office near the Hofkirche at 1 - 7 Swiss Francs each, plus tax.

Far back in the Middle Ages Lucerne, symbol of scenic loveliness in modern times, was famous for its Passion Plays. Its Passion Play Association, which was founded in 1470 A.D., still exists to-day and thus happens to be the senior by 160 years of the Oberammergau organization.

Weinmarkt Square was the open-air stage of the early Passion performances and exact stage plans of these presentations, which used to last two days, are contained in the town's archives as unique documents of the history of the theatre in Europe.

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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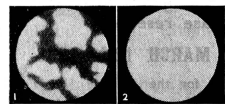
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