

50th anniversary of the Swiss Y.M.C.A. London

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NEWS FROM THE COLONY.

CITY SWISS CLUB.

La première assemblée mensuelle de l'année 1938-39, précédée du dîner traditionnel, a eu lieu mardi 3 mai, comme d'habitude, au Restaurant Pagani, sous la présidence de M. Louis Chapuis, le nouveau président.

Une quarantaine de personnes étaient présentes, dont quelques invités parmi lesquels le Major Paul de Vallière, éminent officier d'état-major de l'armée suisse, venu à Londres pour donner sous les auspices de la Nouvelle Société Helvétique la conférence sur la Suisse, annoncée pour jeudi 5 mai, ainsi que M. Weil, fils d'un des membres du Club et dont les talents de violoniste ont été plus d'une fois appréciés dans la colonie.

Répondant au toast de bienvenue aux invités, porté par le président, le Major de Vallière, dans une causerie improvisée, parla d'abord d'une caractéristique des Suisses, notamment de leur complexe d'infériorité en présence d'étrangers. L'orateur montra combien l'effacement et la modestie sont dans bien des cas non seulement faux et déplacés, mais encore préjudiciables. La Suisse, dit-il, joue dans le monde un rôle dont les proportions ne se mesurent pas aux dimensions de nos frontières. Pour résister à cette tendance, il faut connaître son pays, son histoire.

Puis le Major de Vallière en vint à parler, bien naturellement, de l'armée suisse, plus populaire — dit-il — aujourd'hui que jamais. Dans un exposé à la fois simple et lucide, il donna un tableau extrêmement intéressant et instructif sur la rapidité de mobilisation, sur la perfection et supériorité du matériel de guerre, fabriqué à présent entièrement en Suisse, sur les mesures prises pour la défense nationale, etc., etc.

L'orateur faisant allusion à un film de l'armée suisse, réclamé par les Américains et les Anglais et en train d'être tourné, déclara qu'il montrera l'armée dans le cadre des beautés naturelles du pays et aussi dans des exercices adreux. Ce film sera prêt à la fin de l'année et constituera de la bonne propagande à plus d'un point de vue.

En conclusion, le Major de Vallière fit part à l'assemblée des dégâts malheureusement très considérables causés à l'agriculture suisse, comme d'ailleurs à celle des pays environnants, par un retour de froid au mois d'avril après un mois de mars plutôt doux. A part cette catastrophe qui pèse lourdement sur le paysan, l'impression que donne la Suisse — dit-il pour terminer — est celle de grand travail, d'aisance, d'ordre, de propreté. Mais il déplora la tendance à la centralisation, qui se manifeste dans certaines parties du pays et qui risque de détruire tant de ses principales caractéristiques et pourrait bien être funeste.

Le président et l'assemblée témoignèrent éloquentement leur appréciation envers le Major de Vallière pour son excellent causerie.

Sur l'invitation du président, M. Weil fils répondit à son tour par l'exécution parfaite de morceaux choisis de violon, accompagné au piano par M. Dick, le populaire chef de l'orchestre suisse; ces productions furent chaleureusement applaudies.

Quant à l'ordre du jour de l'assemblée, il peut être mentionné en peu de mots: deux admissions, une démission; la seule réunion d'été avec dames est fixée au mardi 28 juin au Brent Bridge Hotel et il est décidé de tenir l'assemblée mensuelle du 7 juin au Restaurant Pagani, tandis que, comme d'habitude, celles de juillet et août sont abandonnées.

Ces notes seraient incomplètes sans un mot de félicitation bien méritée au Comité, qui a su procurer aux membres une soirée aussi intéressante et agréable. Elle promet bien pour les assemblées à suivre.

J.Z.

50th ANNIVERSARY OF THE SWISS Y.M.C.A. LONDON. (Schweiz. Christlicher Verein junger Männer.)

The Swiss Y.M.C.A. London is shortly celebrating its 50th Anniversary of its existence. The following is a brief outline of the history of the Association:

The Young Men's Christian Association, founded by Sir George Williams in 1844, soon extended its fellowship to foreigners in London and in 1860 already a number of Swiss young men were placed on the roll of its active membership. As the number of members then rapidly increased, the Germans and the Swiss, always on the best terms, united to form an independent Section of the Association, and in 1872 secured their own premises at 28, Finsbury Square, where for many years they were privileged to work together in a spirit of true Christian Brotherhood and mutual helpfulness. It was not until 1888 that the late Rudolf Horner, who eventually became one of the General Secretaries to the Head-

quarters of the world-wide Movement at Geneva, founded the Swiss Young Men's Christian Association.

The Swiss continued to work successfully alongside their German friends, whom they followed in 1910 to their larger and more commodious Quarters at City-House, City Road. The work was prospering and in full swing when the Great War intervened, dispersing our several groups and painfully severing many happy connections. The Swiss Y.M.C.A., now a self-supporting Association, found its new Quarters at Ashburton Club, Red Lion Square, and though much reduced in members has held the "Fort" and kept through the great crisis its tradition unbroken. From Red Lion Square we moved to the Foyer Suisse in Upper Bedford Place, where we stayed for about 12 years and since October, 1936, we are at our present address, Westgate House, 28/29, Bedford Place, W.C.1, the Home of the German Y.M.C.A.

To-day we are practically in the same position as in 1914/1918, like all the other Swiss Societies in London, we feel the total absence of young Swiss, being prevented to take up positions in England, on account of the restrictions placed on Foreigners, regarding employment. This has naturally caused a curtailment in our activities in some directions, but does not by any means indicate, that we are on the brink of closing down, all earthly institutions have their peak and lean times. However, you may ask, what is the result of our 50 years of labour? Many hundreds of young Compatriots have during these years passed through our Association and proclaim, that their stay in England has not only been of great educational value, but that their association with the Swiss Y.M.C.A. has brought about a great change in their moral and spiritual life. A proof, that this was not only a temporary experience, is the fact, that every year, on the last Sunday in August, our old Members, who have meanwhile returned to Switzerland, are meeting in Zurich for a Conference together with Friends who have passed through the Groupe Suisse in Paris, to commemorate the happy days they have spent in our midst. These Conferences are being held now for over 45 years.

Y.M.C.A.'s of which our Society is a small group, are to help Men young and old, to get to Peace with God, and this has been our endeavour in the past and is for the future. Religious circles have never been and are getting less and less popular, the man's religion is his private affair, and the need of attending bible studies in these modern times, is to-day being appreciated only by a very small number, this applies, of course, to all Nationalities. Our ideals being of a religious character, it is needless to say, that our Association does not figure very prominently in the Swiss Colony in London, even many readers of the Swiss Observer may not know of our Institution. We would therefore heartily invite all Friends who can sympathize with our cause, to attend the following meetings arranged for our Jubilee festival:

Sunday, 15th May, 11 a.m. Service at the Swiss Church (St. Anne's and St. Agnes) Gresham Street, E.C.1, Preacher the Rev. D. Witzig, of Aarau. In the afternoon at 4.30 p.m. we have our principal meeting at Westgate House, 28/29, Bedford Place, W.C.1. We also invite all Men in the Swiss Colony to attend our Bible studies with free discussions, which take place at Westgate House every Thursday at 7 p.m. Occasionally other meetings such as Socials, Lectures, Rambles, etc., are being arranged. Being a self supporting Society, we also appeal to the Generosity of all well wishers to our Association, by sending us a Jubilee gift, many thanks in anticipation.

Swiss Y.M.C.A. Committee.

SWISS ACCORDION CLUB.

It was with great pleasure that I followed an invitation extended to me by the Swiss Accordion Club to attend their Grand Social Supper Dance at 74, Charlotte Street, on Friday, April 29th. I met many people I knew there and was welcomed by the President, Mr. Häusermann. The Dance had already started and, though the evening was young, everybody was merry and bright and waiting for the Concert to begin. — Among the crowd I noticed Mr. Gandon, the smart conductor of the Accordion Players, busying himself efficiently with getting everything ready for the start. This start had to be delayed a little as the patrons and friends of the band were rather late in arriving. At 9.30 the band struck up with a fine Swiss Military March which made you settle down and listen. It was at once apparent that the band had made much progress since their last Concert in February. Miss Niggli and Mr. Gandon followed with a Duet, "Gondolieri," — ah, what a beautiful valse this was, — a couple of gondolieri gliding along softly to the tune of their serenading accordions, — it was really excellent and, of course, "brought the house down." The band continued with an "Appenzeller Ländler," — one of those we are used to hear in Switzerland an ere Chilbi; jolly good!

By now many more listeners had arrived and joined in the dancing which followed. Thus a most agreeable break was made before the Accordionists began their second part of the programme. This consisted also of three pieces: "Turnermarsch," "Ländlermarsch" and the "Filzbacher Ländler," all played with fine rhythm and feeling. The "Ländlermarsch" was played by the young members of the club only and it was grand to see and hear these tiny tots perform as if they had been studying accordion playing for years, yet were those who had not played for longer than six months. I want to attend a rehearsal one day to find out just how Mr. Gandon does it, — he must be a marvellous teacher! —

After a further interval of dancing the band gave us the last part of their performance. "Sonata di Sera," a slow movement, in parts pianissimo and very soothing, easily the best piece of the evening. This was followed by another duet, a Ländler "De Dibi Däbi" (I am still trying to find out what it means, or have we such names in Whitehall?). This duet was played by Miss Heinz and Mr. Gandon, very efficiently, on a piano accordion and Chromatic. And then came the last piece, a well known Swiss March "Durch Wald und Flur" played by the entire band, a splendid performance. —

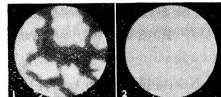
I must say here that throughout the programme the audience was most responsive and gave hearty and prolonged applause which was indeed well deserved. Mr. Gandon is indeed to be congratulated on his success with the band and I would like to wish him luck, courage, perseverance ... but then Mr. Gandon possesses all these already and has the gift of passing them on to his players, hence success upon success! —

Our "table" bought about a million tombola tickets from most bewitching ladies, — but our luck was out! However, we found consolation in some admirable yodels sung by Mrs. Rossier and Mrs. Aebersold who were accompanied at the piano by Mrs. Schaefer. I would have liked to hear many more verses, but I waited in vain for those verses we applied to these famous yodels when schoolboys in the "Mutze-stadt."

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