

News of the colony

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NEWS OF THE COLONY.

A DEPARTURE.

The Swiss Colony has in recent years lost — as the result of deaths and of departures from this country — a large number of members who at one time or another have rendered distinguished services to the Swiss community. With the steady dwindling of the Swiss Colony in Great Britain, due to lack of new arrivals, these losses are giving cause for much anxiety.

We now bid farewell to Miss Marguerite Wolfer, who for nearly ten years has been at the helm of the Welfare Office for Swiss Girls in Great Britain.

For the benefit of those of our readers who are not conversant with the aims and purposes of this office we give herewith some particulars.

The "Social Secretariat" was founded in 1949, and was housed at 31 Conway Street, W.1 (Swiss Benevolent Society) until 1957, and since then at the premises of the Swiss Hostel for Girls, 9 Belsize Grove, N.W.3. Amongst the principal patrons were the then Swiss Legation, especially Swiss Minister Monsieur Henry de Torrenté (now Swiss Ambassador in Washington), the Swiss Benevolent Society London, the "Schweiz. Verein der Freundinnen junger Mädchen", and "Der Katholische Nationalverband des Mädchenschutzverein".

An initial committee was formed, which was presided over by Colonel Anton Bon (now in Switzerland) and consisted of a member of the Swiss Embassy, two representatives of the Swiss Benevolent Society, the clergymen of the two Swiss Protestant Churches and the Swiss Catholic Church, as well as a member of each of the two Swiss organisations and the Secretary of the London Office.

The aim of the Welfare Office is to assist the many young girls and women who are either temporarily or permanently residing in this country, by giving them advice, help and support in case of need.

Since the inception of this Office thousands of our young compatriots have benefited from it. Last year alone, over a thousand persons have asked either for advice or for help. A tremendous amount of correspondence was involved; visits to hospitals and mental institutions had to be made.

Although the Office is receiving grants from the Federal authorities, the Swiss Benevolent Society and the two institutions in Switzerland, the yearly accounts invariably close with deficits. Apart from the costs for the administration, the largest item represents expenses for advances and financial help to applicants, these expenses in 1957 reaching the amount of nearly £2,500.

We noticed — in perusing some of the annual reports — that parents are repeatedly warned of the dangers of sending their daughters (some under 16 years of age) abroad without thorough investigations; quite a number of the girls have been neither mentally nor physically fit to leave the parental home.

The foundation of the Welfare Office has been fully justified, answering a need of the times. It is obvious that the expansion since its inception has involved much hard work — work which has to a great extent fallen on the shoulders of Miss Wolfer, who has performed innumerable services; she has indeed

proved to be a real friend and adviser to many of our Swiss girls, and we on our part wish to thank her for the great social work she has so conscientiously and efficiently carried out.

Her charming personality, her eagerness to help those in difficulties, her cheerfulness and devotion to duty will always be remembered by all those who have been in contact with her.

It is with much regret that we bid her farewell, and in this hour of parting we extend to her our best and sincere wishes for her future.

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