

News from the colony

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NEWS FROM THE COLONY

HUGO RAST 80

As mentioned in our last issue, Dr. Hugo Rast became an octogenarian on 6th August. He was born in 1891, the son of a member of the Management of the Federal Postal Services and of an art-loving woman from Herisau, Appenzell AR. Whilst she introduced young Hugo to all things beautiful in music and the arts, his father was a strict disciplinarian. As a young student already, Hugo Rast played the violin and was leader of the orchestra of the "Staedtisches Gymnasium", also of the "Cercle Musical" in Berne, and on occasions he performed with the Berne Municipal Orchestra. He also started to collect old Swiss prints and paintings by old masters, and he has since added Nyon and Dresden China, books, clocks, and other rare objects, and, of course, records.

But Hugo Rast's main hobby has always been medicine. After his schooling in Berne, he studied at the universities of Berne, Lausanne and Paris and took the Federal Diploma as doctor of medicine. His main interest was surgery, and in due course he became assistant to Professors Kocher and De Quervain at the Surgical Clinic of the Inselspital in Berne. Since Dr. Rast was anxious to understand the personality of the patient—a part so often neglected in the medical profession at the expense of pure technique—he enrolled as assistant at the Psychiatric University Clinic. His special aim was to find out whether hypnosis was a true scientific subject or a mere trick. Incidentally, Hugo Rast tries to understand modern art from a psychiatric angle, although he is not keen on contemporary works.

Having been ill with typhoid fever during the first world war, Dr. Rast was granted long sick leave from military service, and he acted as Medical Officer supervising the trains which carried prisoners of war to be repatriated under the Geneva Convention.

In 1919 he took the advice of his teachers who considered the introduction of foreign medical techniques desirable, and came to England. Hugo Rast started as House Surgeon of the German Hospital in London. He attended many post-graduate courses at other hospitals and just for fun he sat for the English Conjoint Examination at the Royal College of Surgeons and the Royal College of Physicians. He was successful and thus privileged to call himself "Mr." and FRCS and LRCP.

After two years, Hugo Rast wanted to return to Switzerland to take up a position which had been kept for him in Berne. But the German Hospital refused to accept his resignation and appointed him Honorary Assistant Sur-

geon, with subsequent appointment to full surgeon at the hospital. During the last war, the War Office appointed him Chairman of the Mixed Medical Commission for prisoners of war and civilian internees of the Allied Forces. In that capacity he had to visit all POW camps in England, Scotland and Ireland. At the same time he was appointed Medical Superintendent of the German Hospital, and when the National Health Service came into being, the North-Eastern Metropolitan Hospital Board elected him Honorary Consultant Surgeon.

Hugo Rast certainly believes in the old Latin saying *Mens sana in corpore sano*, and he has always lived a well-balanced life, and been averse to all excesses. He has kept remarkably fit and still indulges in sport. He started early: when barely 10, he walked with his brother—his senior by only one year — from Berne to Domodossola via Grindelwald, Grosse Scheidegg, Meiringen, Grimsel/Furka, San Giacomo, returning via Simplon, Gemmi to Thun where they took the train for Berne. It took them 10 days and cost them 10 francs each—an astonishing feat for two young boys. He also swam 10 km non-stop in the river Aare from the Hunziker Bridge down to Marzili at a water temperature of 8° Centigrade.

Another sport Hugo Rast loved was horse riding which, in this country, he enjoyed most on Salisbury Plain. He also took part in fox hunting with The Old Surrey and Burstow Hunt. Even today, he goes skiing at Saanenmoeser and climbing at Zermatt and Pontresina. At the age of 70, he climbed the Matterhorn on his very birthday, having accompanied the Zermatt Guide Hermann Schaller on a record climb on 2nd September, 1930, when the party took 3 hours 15 minutes for the climb up and down the Matterhorn (1 hour 45 minutes up and 1 hour 15 minutes down).

In the Swiss community in London and Southern England, he is still affectionately called "Dr." Rast. He is a well-known figure in many societies, Swiss Benevolent Society (where he has held a number of offices), City Swiss Club, Nouvelle Société Helvétique (where he is still one of the most regular members), etc. He has had the privilege of attending every Swiss Ambassador from Monsieur Carlin to the present time, and he has also been Medical Adviser to the majority of foreign Embassies in Great Britain. Naturally, membership has not been confined to Swiss organisations only. Hugo Rast is also a member of the Royal Institution of Great Britain, the British Medical Association, Royal Society of Medicine, International So-

ciety of Surgeons, Société Suisse de Chirurgie, Athenaeum, Alpine Club, etc.

Large numbers of friends, many of them grateful patients, were delighted when Hugo Rast got married in May, 1970, and just as many were thinking of him on 6th August, and they wish him a happy birthday and the very best of health, and to him and his wife continued well-being and happiness for many years to come.

(MM)

BIRTHDAYS AND ANNIVERSARIES

On 22nd August, *Mr. and Mrs. H. Suter*, of 53 St. James's Drive, London S.W.17, will celebrate their Golden Wedding Anniversary.

On 28th August, *Mr. G. Godet* will be 80. He has done most devoted work for the Swiss Church in London and has been a member of the Consiatoire for 52 years.

Mr. A. Schmid, of "Westfield", School Lane, Hatfield, Herts, will celebrate his 85th birthday. Mr. Schmid is well remembered as owner of the Glendower Hotel and caterer at the "Fête Suisse" which used to be held every year at Central Hall, Westminster. He was also a faithful supporter of many Swiss societies, above all the Swiss Rifle Association.

On 7th September, *Mr. C. Fairweather* will be 81, and on 8th, *Mr. J. G. Michel* will have his 63rd birthday. *Mr. P. B. Haberstick* will be 72 on 9th and *Mrs. N. Towers* 74 on 10th September.

We send best wishes and many happy returns to all these and any other readers whose birthdays fall within the next few weeks.

SWISS WOMEN MEET EVERY MONTH

On page 16 of this issue, readers will find details of the Swiss Churches' activities. Amongst others, three meetings of women are listed, one the *Mothers' Reunion* every first Wednesday of the month, the second the *Réunion de Couture* every second Tuesday of the month, and the third, the *Women's Circle* which is a similar group for the German-speaking community as the *Réunion de Couture* is for the French-speaking parish of the Swiss Church. All these meetings are held at the Swiss Church at 79 Endell Street, W.C.2.

There will be a change in the arrangements for the *Women's Circle* as from 7th September. The Church will be open from 12 noon, and refreshments will be served at 1 p.m.

Both the German- and French-speaking groups work for the Swiss Benevolent Society, and new members are always welcome.

SWISS PREMIERE IN LONDON

The Berne Male Choir and the Berne Teachers' Choral Society under the direction of their excellent conductor François Pantillon sang Beethoven's *Mass in C* and Heinrich Sutermeister's *Missa da Requiem* in the Festival Hall on Monday, 12th July.

It was, even to our inexperienced ears, a masterly performance. The hall was 60 per cent full, an occupation factor which was quite satisfactory to the Embassy, who played a great part in organising the event.

It is apparently unusual for this vast hall to be so favourably filled for the performance of modern music, especially for the English premiere of the work of an unknown foreign composer. It may be that much of the public came to listen to the *Mass in C* which was played during the first half of the concert.

However, the rows of seats remained as filled after the interval as before and only a handful of listeners—who were probably incapable of digesting anything composed after Berlioz—left the hall during the performance of the *Missa da Requiem*. It was silly of them because Sutermeister's work was to our mind superior to the *Mass in C*, which is not Beethoven's best and whose cloying romanticism is not as soothing as the mellow harmonies of the *Missa da Requiem*.

The concert had a good review in the *Guardian* and the *Telegraph*. This is what the *Guardian* critic had to say:

German composers we have long welcomed with open arms, and the French are now more tolerated than they used to be: Even figures like Honnegger and Frank Martin are known only through a handful of pieces and to hear their bigger works is something special. Heinrich Sutermeister will be a name known, I suspect, only to the few who in 1953 were occupied with other things than waving Union Jacks. Sadler's Wells put on his "Romeo and Juliet" that year, and this has occasionally been broadcast since. But I recall encountering very little else of his. All the more fitting, then, that his large-scale "Missa da Requiem" (1951-2) should have been heard at a Royal Festival Hall concert in which the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra were joined by the Berne Choir.

The setting offers every evidence of the composer's identification with dramatic values underlying the Latin text, and his setting follows more the intimate example of Fauré rather than Verdi or Berlioz. But it doesn't quite get there. The music's identity is not fully formed. Only in the "Sanctus Benedictus" movement does the music

progress from severe choral counterpoint to a full assertion of lyricism which the two soloists throughout suggest to be the principal objective.

Elsewhere in the work Sutermeister fails to establish proper contrasts to the weighty tonal writing, with its insistent rhythms, that is his usual starting-point. The music becomes still weightier, mushier, and thick wind-chords constantly obtrude. In remaining faithful to the text, also, Sutermeister somewhat subdues his own creative spark and consequently each movement very nearly sounds like the last one.

*The "Requiem" was confidently rendered by the Berne Choir (which comprises the City's Male Voice Choir and Teachers' Choral Society) with the Swiss conductor, François Pantillon in charge. In the first part of the concert, this choir proved just right for the Beethoven *Mass in C*: not full-blooded like many of our own choirs, but with a sonorous range that was equal to the reflective mood of this setting while effectively scaling-down the more portentous outbursts. Occasional details of choral and orchestral balance went awry, but it was still a sensitive reading. Excellent solo-singing—always in tune and perfectly balanced—came from Elizabeth Simon, Norma Procter, Alexander Young and Benjamin Luxton.*

There were probably as many as 150 Swiss in the hall. After the performance a few of them joined the singers in a reception offered by the Embassy in the foyer. A member of the Berne Choir made a most laudatory address to his musical friend and guide, François Pantillon, who himself gave an address stressing what an important event the night's performance had been.

Heinrich Sutermeister was there too, busy signing autographs. He had appeared on the podium at the end of the performance and shook hands with the conductor and the soloists in the midst of a gale of applause. Prizes and congratulations were extended to the devoted organisers of an evening which had first been conceived while Mr. René Keller was Swiss Ambassador in London.

Despite the relative box-office success of the evening, it would not have been possible to defray the cost of such a sumptuous performance without a 25,000-franc injection from the Pro Helvetia Foundation. This supplied us and the many guests of the Embassy with free tickets—and with it a rare opportunity of enjoying the largesse of the Swiss State.

(PMB)

SWISS CHURCH

SERVICES EN FRANÇAIS: à l'Eglise Suisse, 79 Endell Street, W.C.2, tous les dimanches à 11h15 et 19h00.

SAINTE-CENE: le premier et troisième dimanche du mois, matin et soir.

PERMANENCE: chaque jeudi de 15h00 à 18h00.

REUNION DE QUARTIER: huit veillées en automne et au printemps: voir "Le Messager"

CLUB DES JEUNES: tous les dimanches de 12h00 à 22h30, tous les jeudis de 15h00 à 22h30.

REUNION DE COUTURE: le 2^e mardi du mois.

LUNCH: tous les dimanches à 13h00.

VISITES: sur demande.

PASTEUR: A. Nicod, 7 Park View Road, London N.3. Téléphone 01-346 5281.

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SERVICES IN GERMAN: at Eglise Suisse, 79 Endell Street, W.C.2, at 10 a.m. At St. Ann's Church, Abbey Orchard Street, S.W.1. at 7.30 p.m.

HOLY COMMUNION: every first Sunday of the month at evening service only. On major feasts at morning and evening services.

CONSULTATIONS: every Wednesday 4-6 p.m. at Eglise Suisse.

DISTRICT GROUPS (W.4 and S.E.21) and SERVICES OUTSIDE LONDON: see "Gemeindebote".

SERVICES IN ENGLISH: every fourth Sunday at 7.30 p.m.

"KONTAKT" (Youth Group): every Wednesday 4-10 p.m. at Eglise Suisse. Supper at 6.30 p.m. Programme at 8 p.m.

SWISS Y.M.C.A.: see Forthcoming Events.

WOMEN'S CIRCLE: every first Tuesday of the Month.

MOTHERS' REUNION: 1st Wednesday in the Month, 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.

VISITS: by request.

MINISTER: Pfr. M. Dietler, 1. Womersley Road, N.8. Telephone 01-340 6018.

SWISS CATHOLIC MISSION: a St. Ann's Church, Abbey Orchard Street (off No. 25 Victoria Street), S.W.1.

SATURDAYS: Ecumenical Service at 6.30 p.m.

SUNDAYS: Holy Mass at 9 and 11 a.m. (in English). At 6.30 p.m. (mostly in German).

CONSULTATIONS AND CONFESSIONS: preferably on Wednesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays in the afternoon or by appointment.

SERVICES EN FRANCAIS: Notre Dame de France, 5 Leicester Place, W.C.2. on Suns. at 9, 10, 11 a.m. 12.15, 6, 7 p.m.

SWISS CATHOLIC YOUTH CLUB — Meeting every Sunday after Evening Mass (8-11 p.m.) at Westminster Ball Room, 30 Strutton Ground, S.W.1.

CHAPLAIN: Paul Bossard, St. Ann's Church, Abbey Orchard Street, S.W.1. Tel.: 01-222 2895.