

Swiss film show at Manchester

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During my career in the Consular Service I had a few surprises. It was, for instance, a big surprise when, many years ago, I was informed of my transfer to Liverpool and eventually found myself in — Bombay! In the course of time one gets used to this sort of thing but you may believe me that all the former surprises were nothing compared with the one I experienced a few weeks ago, when I was suddenly called to London and informed by our Minister, Monsieur Thurnheer, of my transfer to the Swiss Consulate General in New York. This came as a shock, more so as I never asked for a transfer and quite naturally my first reaction was "No." I shall never forget that lovely June Sunday in London and the anguish I felt at the thought of leaving Manchester and all our dear friends. During the long journey back, I had plenty of time to think. We Swiss are born grumblers and this country and its weather are favourite subjects of criticism. But believe me on that Monday the country looked so fresh, green and beautiful as never before and the lovely scenery gliding along the window of the carriage struck me like a personal appeal not to leave all this. However, if our authorities in Berne think that I can render better services in the New World it is not for me to refuse.

Looking back on the fourteen happy years spent in Manchester, we — and I think particularly I — have reason to be thankful for many things. Coming from the East it was not so simple to adapt oneself to the new conditions. Very fortunately this was made quite easy by the fact that I had the good luck of meeting here, in the person of the late Consul Schedler, a very broadminded and understanding chief. After a short time he left me a free hand in the affairs of the Consulate. Needless to say our relations were of the happiest and his death, just over two years ago, came as a great personal loss. I shall always remember Dr. Schedler as an outstanding chief and a very dear friend.

During all the years I have been here I have been most fortunate in having with me colleagues whose efficient work has been a very great help. Without their willing collaboration it would have been impossible to carry on, particularly since the outbreak of the war and the much increased responsibilities. I shall miss my colleagues and I take this opportunity of thanking Mr. Cattin, Mr. Spargnapani and Miss Rietmann for the faithful and cheerful services rendered under difficult conditions. I am very grateful that I was allowed to stay amongst you for such a long time. This gave our son the chance of growing up in a free and democratic country, with liberal institutions so like Switzerland. This was a great blessing and I feel sure that in years to come he will be glad he has had this chance. Last but not least we are thankful for the friendship, tolerance and the understanding which we found amongst the members of the Colony, not only in Manchester, but also in the outlying parts of the consular district. This was a great help and made things much easier, I would like to thank our President, Mr. Kuebler, our Secretary, Mr. Tenger, and the other members of the Committee for their help and co-operation. I can say that we worked hand in hand as good friends should do and I am very pleased to think that it will be the result of this happy collaboration if our members

shortly have the opportunity of seeing two of the latest Swiss Films. All I have said of the Swiss Club applies in like measure of the Swiss Relief Society. I shall miss the friendly calls at the Consulate of Mr. Steiner and Mr. Bebié. I shall often remember the jolly gatherings of the Swiss Club and we shall certainly think of the very happy hours spent in the Swiss Tennis Club — the hard fought "battles" on the court and the not less hotly contested — and noisier — "fights" around a table with or against such stalwarts as "Amigo" Muller, "Noldi" Guggisberg, "Papa" Steiner, Dr. Brunner and others.

For all this I thank you with all my heart.

I know that I can safely leave the Consulate and the Colony in the care of my successor, Monsieur Pernet, whom I congratulate on his promotion to the rank of Vice-Consul. Monsieur Pernet has a long experience in the foreign service of our dear homeland and whatever I did for you, he can do just as well. I feel sure that he and Madame Pernet can count on your goodwill and support and that you will make their task as easy and as pleasant as you made ours.

It is with a sad heart that I say "Farewell." In doing so I wish you all Good Luck, Good Health, Happiness and Prosperity.

It would be an unpardonable omission not to mention the excellent arrangements made for the party by the Midland Hotel under the sollicitous care of the Manager, our compatriot and newly acquired fellow-member, Mr. E. R. Cottet.

At an Extraordinary General Meeting of the Swiss Club which preceded the Colony's gathering, we had the signal pleasure of adopting eight new members and the honour of electing Mr. Hirs an Honorary Member with unanimous applause.

r. r.

SWISS FILM SHOW AT MANCHESTER.

11th September.

Because we have sometimes grumbled when a special Swiss treat was withheld from us because we are in the Provinces and perhaps of small account beside the powerful metropolitan Colony, we owe it to ourselves now to express our appreciation of the privilege which we have just enjoyed, of seeing two of the latest Swiss films. So we want in the first place to say "Thank you very much" to the Swiss Legation, especially to Minister Dr. Thurnheer himself, for the personal care he took to remember us and to send us these two splendid pictures, one of them even before it was seen in London. Next we want to congratulate those in the homeland who had the happy thought to conceive these films for the express purpose of the Swiss living abroad. They could surely not have been better inspired than to present the real everyday life of the people who are the true heirs and preservers of the spirit which created our nation and sustained it through its long and varied history, withstanding even the sophistication of this modern age. Both "*Terre des Hommes Libres*" and "*Ceux d'en Haut*" are impregnated by that spirit and they show us our country and people in the light which makes them so dear to us and us so proud of coming from their stock.

"*Terre des Hommes Libres*" is perhaps a unique, at all events an outstanding product of the film industry by virtue of its combination of silent, natural unvarnished scenes and figures with a beautifully spoken and wholly sincere commentary, adorned and accompanied by music so aptly and harmoniously attuned that one hardly missed the roar of the torrent, the echo from the mountain, the mooing of the cattle, the swishing sound of the whetstone against the scythe, or the hammer's rhythmic ring on the "Tengel-eisen"; and who had thoughts to spare could imagine, or read on the faces, the dour humour exchanged in the market place and the joyful badinage of the "Chilbi."

"*Ceux d'en Haut*" presents the soldiers' life in the high mountains. It also is unadulterated fact and actuality, a drama between man and nature. It gives away no military secrets since the steadfastness of our alpine troops is as universally famous as the grandeur of their scenes of action. We are not taken underground; the drama is played on the surface and the "enemy" is the ever present hazard of nature's wildness in the heights and depths of our Alps. Views of grandiose scenery alternate with aspects of the soldier's daily round, on duty and in such recreations as a post in remote hamlets can afford. The main attraction lies in the skiing and mountaineering skill of a reconnaissance patrol of which a detachment gets lost in the mist and is overtaken by an avalanche, the beginning and progress of which are admirably well photographed. There are moments of intense suspense: when the storm envelops the men blotting out their view and their path; when, overtaken by night, they sink exhausted in the shelter of a rock but dare not rest for fear of freezing; in the valley below, where at the peal of the alarm bells a rescue party is hurriedly called out and equipped; at the "sermon," simple intimate talk from man to men, lifted above sects, of one creed in the Maker and of one duty: to discipline self for the service of the universe; the interruption of this simple service for the drafting of the rescue party, followed by a fervent prayer fading out in the sublime infinity of space; the struggling ascent of the ski-shod rescuers laden with sack and rifle, pick, shovel and rope, or trailing a heavy sleigh with provisions and fuel up the steep mountainside; the descent by the rope from an overhanging rock to reach the fallen comrade buried in the avalanche with broken limbs; the lovely dog gripping on to the edge of a cliff too high to jump; finally, the rescue accomplished, hope renewed, a new day's awakening by the kiss of the morning sun on a chain of peaks in snowclad purity ringing with the strains of "Trittst im Morgenrot daher," to join in which we were almost afraid at first, so deep was the spell cast on the audience by this wonderful film.

They all said "Thank you for this splendid treat" and some added "let us have more of this kind" whilst others confessed with a lump of humility to pride in our lovely country's glorious heritage. These are but phrases, but if we are to believe that Switzerland has a mission in the world and the Swiss Abroad are the messengers, then we must be nourished from the source of those high ideals which form the cornerstone of our national life and of the peace which is so fervently desired by all the world. We were privileged by seeing these films in the intimacy of our own people so that we were on level terms and had no need of explaining them to strangers. These films are intended for the Swiss and it is to be hoped that they will be

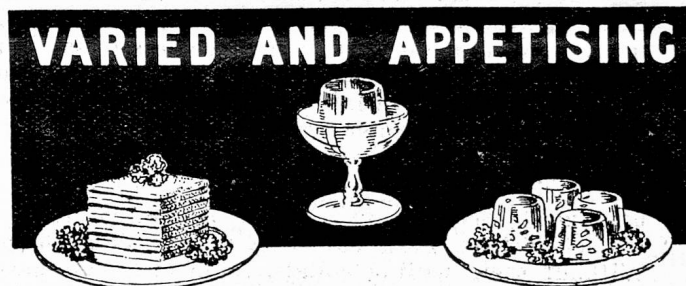
seen by our compatriots all over the world. Few things will do more to keep the flame of our love for the homeland bright, than such gatherings in the sight and sound of our childhood days. Therefore we beg for perseverance of the "Auslandschweizer Werk" in all its laudable undertakings, pledging it our unstinted support. The Swiss in Great Britain are well placed messengers in this auspicious epoch.

It was a great pity that the only theatre at our disposal was so small, as this obliged us to limit our invitations. We were lucky to find a theatre at all and thanks are due to Messrs Warner Bros for placing their private showroom at our disposal for the occasion.

In the interval between the two films, a collection was made in aid of the British Red Cross Society to show our appreciation of the splendid work done by this organisation. It yielded £8.10.0. r. r.

LETTER-BOX.

R. S. Your table is most interesting but omits vital details. Generally speaking, in Switzerland rationing is differently based: the group system under the "points" is not applied which renders it impossible to make a fair comparison. The fact that bread and flour are rationed is not such a hardship when you realise that other necessities such as potatoes, greens, fresh and dried fruit, fish, etc., are free and in plentiful supply. Personally we think there is little difference between the two countries; distribution is certainly better regulated in Switzerland and queues are practically unknown.



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