

Swiss Mercantile Society

Objekttyp: **Group**

Zeitschrift: **The Swiss observer : the journal of the Federation of Swiss Societies in the UK**

Band (Jahr): - **(1951)**

Heft 1154

PDF erstellt am: **22.07.2024**

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SWISS MERCANTILE SOCIETY. Annual General Meeting.

This well attended meeting was held on 14th February at the Swiss Club in Charlotte Street. It was preceeded by an excellent dinner on which the steward and his efficient staff can be congratulated.

In his opening remarks Mr. W. Meier, our President, referred with pleasure to the presence of so many former presidents. He also welcomed with particular warmth Mr. W. E. Gattiker, who joined the London section in 1895, Mr. Louis Chapuis, who followed in 1898, and Mr. F. Dannmeyer, in 1902.

Mr. Robert P. Huxley, A.C.A., our Auditor, explained the balance sheet figures of the London Section and of the S.M.S. Ltd. (by guarantee). The accounts were accepted without dissentient.

Mr. Meier then gave the Council's report for 1950, a year of growing anxiety about peace.

The President referred to the slow but steady fall in members whom we find it hard to replace. Few of those who come here now are permitted to settle down permanently, At most they can stay for a couple of years, As a result the average age of our members is over 50 and we experience difficulty in introducing fresh blood into our various committees.

In April, 1950, we lost our Trustee, G. E. De Brunner, who joined the London Section in 1897, was its President in 1899, and the Chief Architect of our College in 1923. Later in the year Marius Paschoud, President in the late 20's and early 30's, met with a fatal accident near Burgdorf. Just before Christmas we mourned the loss of our honorary member, J. J.

Pfaendler, who joined the section 1904, and who, at the time of his death, had been manager of our Employment Department for 42 years.

In the course of last year we appointed Mr. W. R. Gamper as trustee in the place of the late W. Eichenberger, and Mr. F. G. Sommer succeeded G. E. De Brunner in the same office.

Among the regular meetings Mr. Meier referred in particular to the July gathering, addressed by Dr. Arnold Saxer on the Swiss Old Age and Dependents Insurance. The views of the London Colony on this vital subject were forcibly put forward, yet it is doubtful whether the scheme will be modified at an early date to take account of our needs.

Messrs. J. J. Boos and O. Grob represented the London Section at the Delegates Meeting held at Basle in May. Our Annual Dinner and Dance were held on 6th October at the Trocadero Restaurant.

Last April the Employment Department moved to more spacious offices a few doors away in Fitzroy Square. Mr. J. Zimmermann, who has for some time seconded Mr. Pfaendler in his work, has been appointed to succeed him.

Mr. Meier concluded his report by expressing appreciation of the Swiss Minister's lively interest in our activities and for the help we continue to receive from our numerous and loyal donors.

The Education Committee's report was given by Mr. W. Burren, its Chairman. No drastic changes were made in the curriculum, but an interim examination was introduced which enabled more students with limited periods of leave for studies to sit for examinations. 412 students (321 in 1949) attended college, of whom 141 were continuation students.

651 students attended 28 evening classes in English, against 400 in 1949. Of these 115 were male students (students employees and those with short term service permits) and 536 female students, mostly in domestic service.

Mr. L. W. Krucker, Chairman of the House Committee, reported that the front of Swiss House was repainted last year. New furniture was bought for the school rooms and our secretariat was equipped with modern steel furniture. Swiss House was now being used by the Catholic Choir, Helvetica Lodge, Unione Ticinese, London Swiss Philatelic Society, 1st August Committee.

Mr. J. Frei proposed and Mr. L. Jobin seconded that the reports be, and they were, accepted, with thanks from the rank and file, to the President and the various Committees.

Election of Auditor, Mr. Robert P. Huxley, was unanimously re-elected.

Mr. A. C. Stahelin then acted as Chairman *pro tunc*, for the purpose of the election of Committees and the Council. He gave a masterly exhibition of how to conduct a meeting efficiently with a minimum of words. After Mr. Meier's unanimous re-election as President for 1951, Mr. Stahelin informed the meeting that Mr. M. Heilinger, who had acted as honorary treasurer for 12 years with marked efficiency and ability, had asked to be relieved of his office, but was willing to continue to serve on the Council. No successor being found there and then, it was left to the Council to appoint a new treasurer. There being no nominations additional to those already before the meeting, the Council and Committee members were re-elected en bloc with acclamation.

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The President then informed us of the Council's proposal to make Mr. Henry de Torrenté Honorary President of our Society, and to confer honorary membership on Mr. F. G. Sommer, now one of our trustees, and on Mr. G. Jenne, one time Chairman of the House Committee and still a member of the Council. These proposals were enthusiastically carried.

It was further agreed to donate £10.10.0 to the Fund for Avalanche Victims, and £5.5.0 to the 1st August Fund.

A monthly meeting followed the Annual General Meeting proceedings to receive as members: Mr. Elmer Baumann, of the Swiss Bank Corporation, and Mr. A. Moser, of the Bank of America.

This concluded the official part of the meeting.

At the suggestion of Mr. Boos, our veterans, Messrs. Gattiker and L. Chapuis, entertained us with their recollections of London life at the turn of the century, and Mr. L. Jobin contributed his share of reminiscences. This was a pleasant round off of an instructive and enjoyable evening.

E.H.S.

"GEMUETLICHER ABEND" SWISS MALE CHOIR.

Friday, February 23rd, 1951, at the "Schweizerbund".

When I was a student, a good many years ago, and proceedings began to flag at a social evening, we tried to boister up our spirits by singing "Ein Prosit, ein Prosit der Gemütlichkeit!"

There was no need to revert to this practice at the "Gemütlicher Abend" of the Swiss Male Choir, because there was not *one* dull moment throughout the evening.

The President in his short address mentioned, that it is not easy to find an adequate term in the English language for the word "gemütlich". In "Schwyzerdütsch" it has a meaning all of its own, which is difficult to translate, the nearest word I can think of, is "congenial", and yet it does not fully cover it. —

About eighty members and guests sat down to an excellent dinner, which was a credit to the *cuisine* of the "Schweizerbund", and to the stewards, Mr. and Mrs. L. Portman. After the usual loyal toasts, Mr. F. G. Sommer, the popular President of the Choir, extended a hearty welcome to the guests, Mr. and Mrs. A. Stauffer, Editor of the "Swiss Observer" and Mr. and Mrs. A. Gandon, Leader of the Swiss Accordeon Group, including especially the Ladies, and also life and passive members.

He related that the Choir was a happy conglomeration of compatriots in varying walks of life; amidst laughter he said: "Amongst us we are happy to count two Englishmen, who on Friday evenings join us in singing our Swiss songs and who, in fact, behave as if they were our own kin."

Mr. Sommer continued by mentioning that the Choir does not sing for honour and glory, but for the pleasure it gives to them and others. Striking a more serious note, he referred to the approaching departure to Switzerland of Mr. E. Ritzmann, who has been a member for 27 years, and who had rendered the Choir conspicuous services as "Chancellor of the Exchequer". The President voiced his and the members genuine regret for losing such a faithful and loyal

friend, wishing him every happiness and success in his new sphere of activity.

As a small token of appreciation for the services well and conscientiously rendered he proposed to the members, that Mr. Ritzmann, should be, there and then, elected an honorary member of the Swiss Male Choir. Mr. Jaccard, Hon. Secretary of the Choir, seconded the proposal of the President for this nomination, he did this well and his *début* as an orator promises well. This proposal was approved of with great enthusiasm and he was presented with a document certifying his new appointment; as a further mark of appreciation he also received a present in the form of a fountain pen.

The President concluded his address by paying a charming compliment to Mrs. Ritzmann.

To bring a little diversion into the proceedings the Choir sang with great feeling Attenhofer's "Sängerlust" which was much applauded.

Then Mr. Ritzmann, who received a hearty ovation on rising, greatly moved, thanked the President and the members for their expression of appreciation and their generous present. "I shall", he said, "always treasure the memory of my association with the Choir; these long years spent in your company were the happiest of my life and will accompany me wherever I go. (Applause.)"

Mr. Manzoni, a former President to the Choir, recalled an evening in 1924, when the "Doppelquartett Fidelio" of Zurich were the guests of the Society, on which occasion they presented them with a suitably

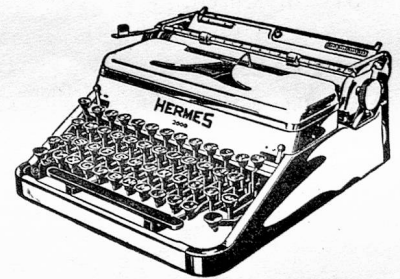
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