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SWISS BENEVOLENT SOCIETY.

The Annual Meeting of the Swiss Benevolent Society took place on Monday, 23rd April, at Swiss House, 35, Fitzroy Square, W.1. As the President, Col. A. Bou, was in Switzerland for reasons of health, the Hon Vice-President, Mr. R. Dupraz, opened the meeting by welcoming Monsieur Clottu from the Swiss Legation. From the accounts presented by the Hon. Treasurer, Mr. Rothlisberger, it could be seen clearly again what excellent work the Society are doing. It is said that figures speak for themselves. They do — and yet even the most powerful imagination can hardly visualize the amount of relief and help which is covered by the figures in the financial report. How much hardship is relieved by the *pensions* paid regularly to over 60 of our oldest compatriots! The sum spent on these alone was over £2,000 last year. A figure nearly as high covered "Casual Relief" which includes looking after Swiss inmates of lunatic asylums. There followed smaller items, which in each case must have meant a great deal to the individual: "*Children's Holidays in Switzerland*" which had been arranged in conjunction with the Nouvelle Société Helvétique; "*Grant for Holidays to Needy Swiss in Failing Health*" partly paid for by the Martha Steiner-Staehelin Fund; "*Repatriations*" and, for the first time, "*Welfare Office for Swiss Girls in Great Britain*." The accounts of the *Home for Aged Swiss* were explained by Mr. Zimmermann. They cover the remaining pensioners living at Swiss Home, 31, Conway Street, W.1, and at Libury Hall, the home of the Society of Foreigners in Distress. It is hardly necessary for me to stress that all the costs are still rising. And yet the Society's financial position, in spite of a small deficit for 1951, is sound. This is mainly due to our friends who again liberally subscribed last year. The Society will need their loyal support more than ever in the uncertain times ahead. Several most generous legacies had also been received in the course of the year.

After the accounts and the auditors' report had been accepted all the officers and committees were re-elected. Monsieur Clottu, on behalf of the Minister, thanked the Secretary, Mr. Ritter, the Assistant Secretary, Mr. Ziereisen, and the Committee members for the devoted work they were doing. The Chairman expressed the Society's appreciation of the active interest the Legation were always taking and he went on to convey the members' warm thanks to the "Monday Committee". Mr. D. Bonnet, Miss Olga Muller, Mr. J. Oertli, Mr. M. Rothlisberger and Mr. J. Zimmermann who meet at Swiss Home every Monday evening throughout the year to deal with business on hand. Usually, either Monsieur Clottu or Monsieur Magnin from the Legation attend. Other members come too, mostly somebody from the Unione Ticinese and the pastors of the Swiss Churches.

Every society has several kinds of members. Some just pay their subscription and leave it at that. Others attend meetings when it suits them. There are some who take their membership seriously and attend almost every meeting. What would a President be without these faithful members? As to the committees there are, of course, always a few members who like to "sit on" without doing much work at all. They may or may not attend meetings regularly, and they do or don't take part in the discussions, but they are not usually

available for any hard work. The Presidents (most of whom have to work very hard — I ought to know —) are well-known in the Colony. Other officers occasionally get some of the kudos, too. But there are others, Hon. Treasurers, Hon. Secretaries, Hon. Assistants and ordinary committee members who also give a great deal of their leisure to work hard and faithfully and whose names — like those of the "Monday Committee" of the S.B.S. — are hardly known outside their Society's ranks. So much of the good work, spiritual and physical, which is carried out within the Colony is due to their unselfish and untiring devotion. And it is to them that we owe our thanks. Let us show our gratitude by taking our various memberships more seriously. In the case of the Swiss Benevolent Society we can show our appreciation of the work these loyal members are doing by helping the Society as much as we can. Let us pay our subscriptions promptly. Let us sign a covenant for seven years. It means no special liability to us but the 114 subscriptions now under guarantee brought in £471.7.9 in 1950. Let us go through our wardrobes and chests and send clothes and household goods to the Society for distribution. Let us women join the French- or German-speaking Sewing Circles that meet for tea once a month and take home wool and material to make into garments for the S.B.S. And remember it is not too soon even now to make plans for Christmas when the Society's parcels — filled and made and distributed by voluntary helpers — will bring sunshine and happiness into many homes.

Mariann.



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