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SWISS MERCANTILE SOCIETY LTD. (Annual General Meeting.)

On February 20th last the Swiss Mercantile Society Ltd. held its Annual General Meeting at 'Swiss House', Fitzroy Square, W.1, and, as usual on these occasions, attracted a very good attendance, no less than 42 members and guests being present. Mr. W. Meier, in the Chair, promptly opened the proceedings at 7.15 p.m. by extending a warm welcome to everyone, in particular to our honoured guests, Dr. R. Faessler, Commercial Counsellor, and Monsieur P. Thevenaz, Secretary, of the Swiss Legation, also to Mr. Robert P. Huxley, F.C.A., the Society's Auditor for many years.

The President next announced that the Secretary of the Society had recently passed with success the examinations of Company Secretary, and can now boast of the letters F.C.C.S. after his name, and he called on Mr. J. Hauser to read out the Notice convening the Meeting and the Business to be transacted.

The first item was to receive and adopt the Accounts, bearing the Auditor's Report. These had been circulated to all the members 3 weeks previously, in accordance with the requirements of the Companies Act. The President, therefore, assumed that every member had given the figures due attention meanwhile. All the same, he ran briefly through each item, furnishing comments and explanations where required and proving that he was indeed familiar with every detail. The accounts of the London Section, the Income and Expenses account and the Balance Sheet were thus dealt with and all were accepted and passed without discussion. The Company's Auditor, Mr. Robert P. Huxley, F.C.A., was warmly thanked and re-elected unanimously for the year 1957. Mr. Huxley replied, in a few well chosen words, thanking the Council, the Company's Secretary and the Office Staff for their great assistance in his task and he congratulated Mr. Hauser on the excellent way in which the books were being kept.

Mr. Meier then presented his Presidential Report, which was followed by those of Mr. W. Burren, for the Education Committee, and Mr. O. Grob, for the House Committee. To shorten the proceedings, statistical details from these various Reports were omitted, as they will duly appear in print, when the Society's Annual Report is published. All these reports were received with rapt attention and acclamation by the members.

When the President welcomed our guests in his opening speech, he also expressed his pleasure at seeing several Past Presidents and other old stalwarts present and he singled out, in particular, Mr. A. Stauffer, Editor of "The Swiss Observer", himself a Past President and an Honorary Member of the London Section. It was stated that Mr. Stauffer assumed the Chair of the Society exactly 40 years ago, in recognition of which he was elected with acclamation Chairman pro tem, during the elections which followed. Mr. Stauffer, in acknowledging this compliment, delivered a modest speech, full of humorous sallies, in which he drew a parallel between the times of 1917 and to-day, pointing out how things had changed almost beyond recognition. He

continued, saying that he understood all the present holders of Office were prepared to carry on in their respective capacities for another year. This greatly facilitated his task and he, therefore, proposed that the Meeting should re-elect straight away Mr. W. Meier as President, so that he (Mr. Stauffer) could hand over the burden of the Chair to its rightful owner, whilst returning to his seat amongst the 'have beans'.

Mr. Meier was re-elected accordingly, amidst great applause, and Mr. Stauffer, on vacating the Chair, thanked him on behalf of the Society for his selfless and outstanding services to the cause of the S.M.S. over so many years.

Mr. Meier expressed his sincere appreciation to the Meeting for the continued confidence of the members and said that he was ready and willing to serve as President for another year. He added that he did so the more readily as he was fortunate enough to have so many good friends in the Council and in the Committees, on whose wholehearted co-operation he knew he could at all times rely and to whom he was most grateful.

The President then proceeded with the election of the Council and the various Committees, which did not offer any snags; Mr. J. W. Bonjour and Mr. A. Faes were unanimously elected as additional members to the Council.

Owing to the departure of Mr. E. H. Schlatter (who, the President informed us, had been appointed a Corresponding Member) who returned to Switzerland early this year and whose regular reports on the

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Monthly Meetings in "The Swiss Observer" were so greatly enjoyed by all readers, a new Press Reporter was to be elected; likewise a new Delegate of the Society to the N.S.H. Unfortunately, there was no rush to fill these appointments and the Meeting left it to the President and his Council to find in due time the right persons for these openings.

The Elections having been terminated, Mr. Meier submitted to the members two applications for admission and one resignation, which were unanimously accepted.

The President also said that it was with great regret he had to inform the Meeting of the passing of Mr. J. H. Ungricht, a former President and a Veteran of the Society, at the age of 83. Mr. Ungricht, who had lived in retirement at Worthing for many years, last attended 'Swiss House' when he received the plaque for 50 years' membership of the Society in 1953. The members rose, to pay the departed a last, silent tribute.

Mr. Meier also announced that in future there would be a slight increase in contributions for membership and the A.H.V.

Lastly, the President read out a letter he had received from Madame M. Daeniker, appealing for funds for the French Hospital in London and of which appeal she is a Patron.

This brought the Meeting to a close at about 9 p.m. and Mr. Meier expressed the hope that

members would attend future Monthly Meetings with the same enthusiasm as they had shown on this occasion.
W.D.

SWISS WOMAN CONDUCTOR AT THE FESTIVAL HALL.

On Tuesday, February 19th, Hedy Salquin, who is principally known in Switzerland and in other Continental countries as a pianist — although she has frequently appeared in European countries also as a conductor — made her début at the Festival Hall.

Born in Lucerne, she started studying the piano-forte at the age of 6, and at 11 entered the Geneva Conservatoire, studying under Dinn Lipatti. In 1949 she received her final concert diploma with distinction, and won International prizes at Ostend and Geneva. At the Paris Conservatoire she was the first woman to be admitted to the orchestral conducting class, where in 1952 she won first prize for conducting, and also first prize for piano accompaniment. In 1953 she received the first Coolidge Medal of the Harriet Cohen Foundation in London.

She appeared at the Festival Hall with the Pro Arte Orchestra — which was founded some two years ago and consists of professional players — in a mixed programme which included one symphony — Dvorak's "New World" — and several items for solo artists.

We are pleased to say that the attendance was a very satisfactory one, considering that she, as well as the two soloists — Desmond Bradley, an Australian violinist, and Austin Miskell, the American tenor — were practically unknown to English audiences.

From the various critical notices which appeared in the daily Press, we give the following in abbreviated form:

The Times: "Miss Salquin is evidently a prompt accompanist, with a clean tidy beat. Musically she seemed not entirely sure of her own views, and she imposed too many variations of pace in ritornellos of the concerto."

Daily Telegraph: "Her clear beat and unaffected style drew sympathetic response from the players but too often she showed little feeling for interpretation. This was particularly noticeable when accompanying Desmond Bradley in Brahms' violin concerto."

Daily Mail: "She knows the effects she is after even if they sometimes fail to come off. Her enjoyment, when the orchestra is in 'full cry' is infectious. I would like to see Hedy in command again when she has had a few more years' experience."

The conducting (without score) of Dvorak's Symphony No. 5 in E minor was most impressive, and a befitting conclusion to an enjoyable performance. This young and competent artist will, no doubt, in time make a name for herself, and we hope to see her again conducting one of the bigger orchestras.

Her début in the Metropolis can be considered a success.

After the concert H.E. The Swiss Minister and Madame Daeniker held a reception at the Legation for the artists, which was attended by members of the Government, the Diplomatic Corps and the Press.

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