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NOUVELLE SOCIÉTÉ HELVÉTIQUE. OPEN MEETING.

The Open Meeting of the Nouvelle Société Helvétique (London Group) took place on Tuesday, 23rd September, at the Swiss Hostel for Girls, 9 Belsize Grove, N.W.3, and was well attended.

The President, Mr. W. Renz, in opening the meeting extended a cordial welcome to the members present, and especially to the Swiss Ambassador and Madame Daeniker, as well as to the speaker of the evening, Sir Seymour Howard, Bt., Lord Mayor of London in 1954/55.

He then gave an extensive account of the Journée des Suisses à l'Etranger, which took place at Baden and Zurich on 30th and 31st August, particulars of which were published in the last two issues of the "Swiss Observer".

Mr. Renz referred in particular to the "Fonds de Solidarité des Suisses à l'Etranger", a scheme which will in the near future come before the Federal Chambers. (Details of this undertaking were published in the "Swiss Observer", 12th September, 1958.) He then introduced to the company Sir Seymour, who, he said, had kindly consented to give a *causerie* on "Reflections on Switzerland".

The President expressed his pleasure at having in our midst such a distinguished personality, and such a staunch friend of our country.

Sir Seymour, who received a warm reception, said that he was not going to dwell on the history of Switzerland, with which his listeners were, no doubt, better acquainted than he was. He treated his subject purely from the angle of a frequent visitor. He said that early in life he felt the urge to visit foreign countries with the object of getting acquainted with their institutions and mode of life. "Amongst the many countries which I have visited over a number of years", he said, "I have gone back, time after time, to Switzerland."

The speaker said that our country, although small as to territory, was great in many other ways; having kept out of any political entanglements she has rendered nevertheless many conspicuous services to mankind. He confessed that he was most impressed by the way the country was governed, and by its constitution. "Your country", he said, "is the most democratic country in the world in as much as the final decision of any laws remains with the people; class distinction is almost non-existent."

Sir Seymour then referred to many of the religious, social and historic festivals which take place annually all over Switzerland. He paid a great tribute to the town of Zurich, which he termed "one of the most beautiful towns on the Continent, especially where town planning is concerned." He also passed in review many of the cultural achievements of Switzerland.

The speaker's praise of our country was almost embarrassing — he did not even feel shocked that Swiss women were not accorded the vote as yet!

Whilst it is, of course, gratifying to be eulogised so warmly and sincerely, we modestly confess that many things in our country are not as they should be, and that, in common with other nations, there is plenty of room for improvement.

Sir Seymour, on resuming his seat, received much applause, and was warmly thanked by the President for his sympathetic address.

A short discussion then ensued, and before closing the meeting Dr. H. W. Egli gave further details with regard to the "Fonds de Solidarité".

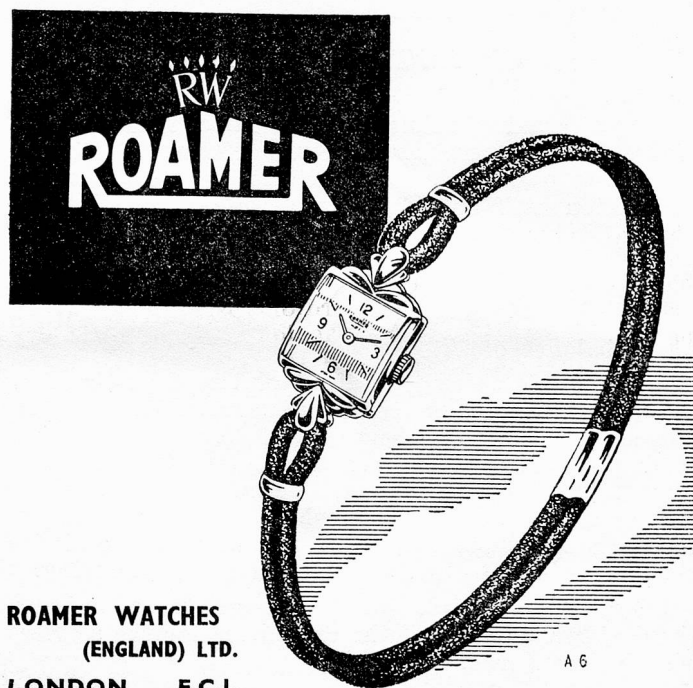
The Meeting closed at 9.30 p.m.

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