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AN ANNUAL MEETING WITH A DIFFERENCE.



F. G. SOMMER
President
Swiss Benevolent Society.

Many are the Annual Meetings that I attend every spring. It is usually as a member of a society and possibly also as a committee member. All these organisations I joined at one time or another by paying an annual subscription which goes towards the running of the society. When the general meeting comes along in the spring it is normally combined with a social gathering or even a festive dinner.

The Annual Meeting of the Swiss Benevolent Society which I attended at Swiss House on 10th March was different. It was purely a business meeting and the people who attended had been elected to the committees for special reasons. Not here the individual who becomes a member by showing his willingness to strengthen an organisation. And yet the Swiss Benevolent Society has more supporters than any other Swiss Society in London. 368 subscribers paid a voluntary donation in 1957, bringing in a total of £1,526. The vast majority of these donors and subscribers never attend a meeting of the Society, and yet year after year they loyally continue to send their gifts in cash and kind to the S.B.S. They will presently receive the annual report and learn that once again their numbers have dropped, as several staunch supporters have died or returned to Switzerland. They will also learn, as we were informed by the Hon. Treasurer, Mr. M. Rothlisberger, at the meeting, that

the total payments for relief have gone up by £305 to £6,233, whilst receipts have fallen. It is not surprising, therefore, that the accounts for 1957 ended with a deficit of £148 compared with £39 the previous year. On the other hand the work done by the Society covered so much ground that it is surely extremely stimulating to our efforts, not only to keep the S.B.S. alive, but to help them increasingly in their endeavours to give relief in cases of need, to the aged and the infirm.

The Swiss Ambassador, Monsieur Armin Daeniker, who attended the meeting, pointed out that he and his collaborators at the Embassy were in an excellent position to judge and appreciate the vast amount of valuable work which the Society had again carried out. He also referred to the harmony in the Colony which had been enhanced by the S.B.S.'s great understanding shown towards the Swiss Hostel for Girls during a difficult initial period. It was most gratifying to see the hostel had proved a safe investment so far, and Monsieur Daeniker thanked the President and his helpers for their very devoted work and unselfish support. The Ambassador, who is Hon. President of the Society, conducted the first part of the elections. Mr. F. G. Sommer, the hardworking President, was re-elected with great appreciation of his services. He resumed the chair, thanking the meeting for again appointing him. He said he enjoyed his duties, which he could carry out efficiently because of the wholehearted and constant assistance from the Executive Committee and the loyal workers on the Monday evening group.

There were two further elections, one of Mr. X. Speckert as a fourth Vice-President, and the other of Mr. W. Meier as a new member in his own right of the General Committee, on which he had represented the Swiss Mercantile Society for eleven years.

After the meeting had appointed a new pensioner, who would bring the present total of the Society's old age pensioners to seventy, the President closed the proceedings, and another memorable Annual General Meeting came to an end.

Mariann.

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