

# News from the colony

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# NEWS FROM THE COLONY

## HANS EGLI RETIRES

Readers of the "Swiss Observer" have been made aware of the recent transfer of the presidency of the London Group of the Nouvelle Société Helvétique from Dr. H. W. Egli to Mrs. Mariann Meier. This move is now followed by the official retirement of the former President from the position held with distinction for many years as Correspondent of the "Neue Zürcher Zeitung", one of the foremost European newspapers.

It appears to us fitting, at this juncture, that tribute should be paid to the man who, for so long, has served the Swiss Colony and his employers with unfaltering zeal and devotion. To many of us old NSH hands, the name of Hans Egli is intimately identified with this fine old cultural Society whose destinies, from the troubled post-war years to 1956, and again from 1962, he has guided with skill and in his own inimitable manner. Only those who have undertaken similar work can fully appreciate the painstaking endeavour and unflinching good humour called for from those shouldering this type of community work. Hans Egli has not only performed valiantly himself, but he has been known to infuse his enthusiasm into a number of collaborators who, over a number of years, assisted him in the management of the NSH.

It would be grossly remiss not to mention the contribution Dr. Egli has made to the life and future of the Swiss Colony by his campaign from the early 'fifties for the co-ordination and mobilisation of the forces propagating the establishment of a Swiss Centre and Forum of Switzerland. Odds against such an achievement seemed exceedingly high, disappointments and even hopelessness followed, only to be overcome by the unceasing work and devotion of a comparatively small number of persistent campaigners such as Hans Egli.

He had always been active in the Swiss community, was, and still is, a member of many societies. He was one of the founders of the Anglo-Swiss Society, and it was he who, with the late Raoul de Cintra and the late Walter Meier brought the Presidents' Assembly into being, the co-ordinating body which today is the Federation of Swiss Societies in the U.K.

Dr. Egli came to the United Kingdom in 1919 as a student of the London School of Economics (a famous scholastic establishment then untroubled by student agitation). After obtaining his doctorate in jurisprudence at Zurich University and a short spell as *Bezirksgerichts-Schreiber*, he returned to London in 1924 where he acted as correspondent of various Swiss News-

papers, such as "Bund", "National-Zeitung", "Agence Télégraphique", "Neue Zürcher Zeitung", until the outbreak of the war. At one time he was also Editor of the "Swiss Observer". In 1939 he assumed the highly responsible and onerous job of Chief Correspondent of the "Neue Zürcher Zeitung". Many were the well-documented and fearless articles emanating from his pen, to the deep satisfaction of his Editor and the anger and annoyance of certain "brown" powers. Since the 'fifties his burden has been shared by two colleagues thus enabling Hans Egli to concentrate upon economic and financial matters for which training has so admirably fitted him.

Now this young man of seventy, happily married to a lady of great gifts, proposes to take things easy! Destiny has granted him good health and the gifts of non-emotionalism. *Stadt-Zürcher* he may be, but more in tradition of the highly cultivated and serene figures of the "Zürcher Novellen". His mind is open to anything that is beautiful in literature and music. May he enjoy these precious gifts of leisurely contemplation for many years to come!

(WR)

## A New President for the Nouvelle Société Helvétique London Group

The London Group of the Nouvelle Société Helvétique, the first off-shoot abroad of this patriotic organisation in Switzerland, does not like to change its President too frequently for the good reason that its self-chosen task of providing monthly lectures, discussions and film-shows of specific Swiss interest for its members and the Colony at large requires continuing personal contacts in Switzerland and here with potential lecturers and with organisations in a position to help in this task. Thus the recently announced change at the helm of the N.S.H. was quite an event worthy of some more extensive notice.

The out-going President, Dr. H. W. Egli, has twice held the position for eight or nine years starting in 1947. His first successor in the fifties, Mr. Willy Renz, was happy to find another successor of great promise after a few years in the person of Mr. M. Homberger, whose presidency, however, was cut short by his early return to Switzerland for reasons of health. As there was no other suitable candidate willing to shoulder the task, Dr. Egli resumed it once more "ad interim" pending the emergence of a younger president in the making.

This eventuality has taken longer to materialise than expected, but the present solution has been worth waiting

for. Having been relieved at her insistent wish of the editorship of the "Swiss Observer" in August last, which she held with so much devotion and distinction for eight years, Mrs. Mariann Meier consented to taking on the presidency of the N.S.H. at the repeated request of Dr. Egli and fellow-members of the society's Council to which she herself had belonged for many years as one of its most active and imaginative members. The rare combination of her intellectual powers with a vigorous personality and a great sense of devotion to the home-land and our own community offer the best guarantees for a most successful span of development of the N.S.H. and its work under her presidency.

Although Mrs. Mariann Meier needs no introduction to our readers this may be a suitable opportunity to remind ourselves of her extraordinarily rich and varied life and work—most of it in our midst. The daughter of the old Liestal family Gysin, Mariann was born in the first days of the First World War, 1914, to the sound of the guns at Mühlhausen. She was educated at the Mädchen-Gymnasium in Basle and Moravian Finishing School near Neuchâtel and spent several years learning languages in England, Italy and the University of Basle. But her education for the practical tasks of life was not neglected either, for which she attended the Domestic Science College in Basle, nor that of the finer arts and of sports. She studied piano and singing with Walter Sterk and his private choir, which training enabled her these last few years to participate with distinction in various musical events in London and elsewhere.

At a banquet of the City Swiss Club in London in 1932, Mariann Gysin met Walter Meier whom she married three years later, fully sharing his interests in the Colony as well as in his work with a well-known merchant-firm of the City. While raising a family of four in an exemplary fashion, Mrs. Walter Meier found time to take an active part in the life of a variety of Swiss societies and the Colony at large mainly in company with her husband who was President of the Swiss Mercantile Society for eleven years, which she joined in 1944. At the end of the war they joined the Nouvelle Société Helvétique, which soon after was happy to elect her to the Council. Both were also members of the Schweizerbund and as founder members, of the Anglo-Swiss Society. No less important was the time and effort Mrs. Meier devoted from the war-years onward to the work of the Swiss Benevolent Society, the Swiss Hostel for Girls, the Welfare Office for Swiss Girls in Great Britain, which she presided from 1958 to 1962, the