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Major Paul de Vallière's Lecture

CONWAY HALL — MAY 5th, 1938.

"Comment la Suisse est née - Premières luttes - Le Secret de sa Vitalité."

The "New Helvetic Society's" untiring effort to bring the Swiss Colony in London into closer contact with the homeland has again met with success. Mr. A. F. Suter, the Society's devoted president, addressed the large audience saying how fortunate we were in being favoured with a lecture by Major Paul de Vallière, a distinguished soldier, because all his life he has been interested in the Swiss Army and has made a special study of it. Major de Vallière has lectured to various learned societies and it was mainly through the generous initiative of Mr. E. Wepf, a member of the Society, and who heard the speaker in Brussels, that this invitation was extended to the Swiss Colony in London.

Opening his lecture with a well-timed reference to Austria, Major de Vallière gave direct emphasis to the undisputed rôle of our army. To know Switzerland, one must look back upon a history of conquests resounding with the woe and the glory of countless battlefields. Surrounded by powerful enemies, religious troubles and political disputes, the history of Switzerland is one perpetual struggle. With ceaseless wars and revolutions, the Map of Europe was ever changing, but Switzerland has weathered the storm. Powerful Austria, the first adversary of Switzerland, was a mighty opponent, yet she was beaten — to-day she is no more.

The art of war was imposed upon the Swiss by the necessities of the struggle for existence. The protection of her independence rests with her soldiers. The army was, and still is, an impelling force vital to the life of the country.

Service for the defence of the land and the safety of its liberty is the Swiss strongest and noblest call to duty. For high courage, for endurance, for tenacity, for fidelity to the cause he was serving, the Swiss warrior had few equals and no superiors, his reputation was known all over Europe.

At the early time of their struggle for independence, the Forest Cantons — Uri, Schwyz and Unterwalden — had only twenty thousand inhabitants against Austria's fifteen millions. During the two hundred years that followed, they were constantly at war with neighbouring and turbulent states. Having successfully rid themselves of the German Emperor, the three confederates were joined by the inhabitants of the mighty towns of Lucerne, Zurich and Berne, all animated by the same desire for autonomy.

Our eloquent lecturer melted into a clear and consistent narrative the aim which inspired the famous pact of 1291, and the series of wars in which the Swiss extended their sway over German and French territories.

The want of an access to the sea took them at one time far into present day Italy. This period marks the apogee of their power, and the days when they were the arbitrators of European politics.

The Swiss, who in the middle ages were the most feared warriors on the Continent, formed regular contingents in many of the armies of Europe, especially France and Italy. These soldiers, erroneously called mercenaries, were actually auxiliaries lent by their respective cantons and under whose jurisdiction they remained. They usually served only on condition of being commanded by their own officers. They carried their own colours, the white cross on a red field with the motto "Honour and Fidelity," spoke and sang their rude dialect and rustic war songs. The famous de Meuron and de Watteville Regiments fought in India, Ceylon, Canada, and Malta. Scores of generals, thousands of officers and over two millions of these men have served in foreign lands.

The lecturer described the evolution from the feudal system to the rule on democratic principles. Throughout those years, liberty and equality have been the common goal of Swiss unity. The struggle of the classes which manifested the revolutionary upheaval of other lands, was, in Switzerland, a movement of liberty based on the collaboration of all classes. The pact of 1291, which constituted the germ of the present confederation, is a fraternal union of all classes.

The founders of Switzerland, wise and prudent traders, soon realised that the prosperity of the country depended on its industrial development, on the improvement of technical capacities and resources and on man's growing mastery over nature — the Gothard road was made and Swiss freedom stood on a firmer basis.

Though Europe's oldest republic, Swiss democracy was only born in 1848, the year of European revolutions and of boundless hopes among the enthusiasts for the future of mankind.

The Swiss, the first to introduce conscription in Europe, have always felt a need to be strong. The soldiers were exceptionally well trained which accounts for the great victory of Morgarten, where 1,400 foot soldiers completely routed 15,000 of Austria's best mounted troops.

Tournaments, a favourite sport among the nobility of Europe, spread to Switzerland. At first the exclusive sport of a privileged few, Swiss tournaments were open to men of unspotted character in all classes of the army and became very popular. It not only stimulated military prowess but mainly helped to establish a better understanding between officers and men. Chivalry included everything relating to martial accomplishments, developing sentiments and manners which had a powerful and salutary effect on society and domestic life.

The great monasteries of Einsiedeln, Dissentis, St. Gall and Pfäfers, were centres of progress and learning. Major de Vallière gave us interesting facts concerning the intellectual life of the castle and its influence upon the people. There was advice and protection within its walls, public meetings were held, orations delivered, and general patriotism found vent in various displays and manifestations of sportsmanship predisposing to the principles of democracy. Switzerland owes much to those Swiss who moulded the character of the nation.

"Men and governments come and go, but the love for one's country remains. Nothing worth while is done without love." With these words, which were received with long and heartfelt applause, Major de Vallière concluded one of the most memorable lectures delivered to the Swiss Colony in London.

M. Charles de Jenner, Counsellor of Legation, thanked Major de Vallière on behalf of the assembly for his very interesting lecture — a lecture that made a strong appeal to the heart and gave great satisfaction to our feelings. The lecturer is the author of the book "Honneur et Fidélité," an important work on Swiss Service in foreign armies, this might well be the subject of another lecture, our most ardent desire, said M. de Jenner, is to hear Major de Vallière again.

Speaking of the Swiss army of to-day, Major de Vallière did much to enable everybody present to feel confident that it will, if called upon to do so, discharge its duties as bravely as its predecessors have done. There is always pleasure in overcoming difficulties by acquired skill and the Swiss Army of to-day, with its mechanised units and most up-to-date weapons, has grown to respectable strength. It is vigorous, enterprising, and greatly daring. The very purpose of a permanent body of troops at the frontier is to discourage the aggressor to take advantage of unpreparedness. As it is, we have the tranquillity of mind that well trained soldiers are there to

meet him — they have no brass bands and no freshly cut flowers!

The writer of this short report, who actually fought with the British Forces at Arras and in the third and terrible battle of Ypres at Passchendaele and who, like most of his countrymen present that evening, served during the Frontier Occupation of 1914, was much impressed by the concentrated vigour and intensity of feeling of Major de Vallière's remarkable lecture.

How is it that the bonds that unite all Swiss are so strong? The answer is to be found in one word — "Freedom." Switzerland has been built up on Freedom. Not the excessive form of liberty which defeats its own object, but that perfect obedience to a perfect law which alone can be called freedom. Nobleness of work and altruism of spirit are the two factors that spur men on to great achievements. It is a happy reflection that the great deeds of the past have been emulated by succeeding generations. The courage, endurance, enterprise, and determination of the men that made Switzerland have been bequeathed to their descendants, the spirit of the Grütli remains and the roll of endeavour shows no diminution.

This is a lesson which should sustain us, especially at a time when our energies are apt to be impaired and our spirits depressed by the chaotic conditions of the world to-day.

P.S.

A LITTLE STORY FOR NAUGHTY CHILDREN.

Once upon a time—well, to be more exact about a century ago—I, too, was in London, I, too, was a British subject, a Londoner by birth, but ... I am afraid, not by choice, because deep in my heart, was a soft note, a sweet melody ... the refrain of which was: "Long live Switzerland, long live Ticino about all" ... And this melody could never be tuned off! May be, it was because in my veins ran, and still runs, true Swiss blood—because my parents were, and still are, true Ticinesi—kept far away from "their" Ticino by "forza di cose e d'eventi," but who could never forget their country, although, to be just, it must be said that they, and I, liked very much England and English people and have been happy also in London ...

I belonged, then, to the younger generation of Ticinesi, spoken about by the now President of the Unione Ticinese, Mr. Eusebio, on the occasion of the 64th Banquet of this club—and it is this younger generation that I, very unkindly, call naughty children! Naughty because they let themselves get too much absorbed by the English life they led, because they become absolutely "Englishified" and keep themselves too much apart from Ticinesi and Ticino. I don't blame them—I quite understand them—but I simply want to ask them, nay, pray them, to try and keep in touch, just a little, with their parents' country; it is all so beautiful, all so wonderful to be a true British subject and to have as well a sweet, loving feeling towards Ticino, this Ticino that deserves all the best thoughts of his children, also of those living far away; this Ticino that is sought by so many foreigners—just now, for Easter, only in Lugano arrived more than 10,000 persons, all eager to admire the beautiful, sunny, Tessin. And lovely, it is really, also when ... it rains!

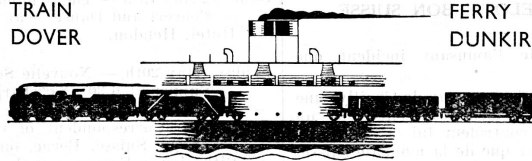
If you, "naughty children," cannot come here for one reason or the other, try then to join the Unione Ticinese, this Club that has been founded may be also by your father, your grandfather, because they simply had to meet other Ticinesi, so not to feel too lonely in a foreign land; and Unione Ticinese helped them to be able to live among

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strangers; helped them to overcome hardship that falls upon an exile; helped them in adversity.

Go to 74, Charlotte Street and watch, and judge for yourselves. See how all sorrows are put aside for a while, see how glad are the Ticinesi to meet each other, to speak "il nostro dialetto", to discuss "affari nostrani" ... to remember "il loro amato Ticino". See if it is not all so touching; nothing could make them forget their home and country, and may be in many an eye you could notice a soft tear at the thought of "the paesello nativo". You will be able, then, to understand what "amor di patria" means—what it can do, and I am sure you will, then, feel that in your veins your blood is running "limpido e fresco come un ruscelletto montano, nostrano; e il cuore batterà più leggero ... e canterà quella dolce melodia che cantava nel mio, così lievemente, come una delicata nenia ticinese. E fate a voi stessi una promessa: vogliamo, dobbiamo essere anche noi ticinesi, anche noi dobbiamo seguire le orme dei nostri maggiori." Be proud to belong to such a country. Be a true British subject, but also a sincere, loving friend of Ticinesi and Unione Ticinese; take an interest in what your forefathers have created. Pulsino le vostre vene d'amor ticinese.

E.G.L.

FOOTBALL.

May 8th, 1938.

INTERNATIONAL MATCH.

Switzerland 0 Belgium 3

Tut, tut, don't say it! After laboriously putting Swiss Football with a capital F back on the map, the Belgians took delight to curb our swelling pride by administering a rude shock to our newly established prestige. To be defeated at home (in Lausanne) by three clear goals is nothing short of a definite "licking." The question is, has the bubble burst, or is it merely a temporary lapse as may occur in the best of regulated families? Rather hard to find the answer. Here are some of the facts; work it out your own way.

Our proud and dour defence stood as against the Czechs at Basel and the Portuguese at Milan, except in goal, where Bizzozzero (Lugano) displaced Huber. This could hardly be said to have been an improvement. After 30 minutes play and one goal down, Stelzer, the left back got hurt and went to outside right for the rest of the game. This meant a reshuffle of the team, Amado going to inside right, Rupp thence to left half and Loertscher to left back. There is no denying that thereby our defence lost a good deal of their happy understanding and the forwards became even more ragged than they had been from the start. The line (Kielholz centre, Walacek and Aebi left wing) seemed to have gone stale, lost the ball nine times out of ten to the quick and alert Belgians and not one of the quintet added to his reputation.

Belgium on the other hand played a nice, fast and clever game; there is no question that they won on their merits. A fine revenge for their defeat at Brussels by 2:1 by our Reds last season.

There is one thing which strikes the observer. This match at Lausanne was exactly the ninth international played since the start of the season last September. On the 21st we have the honour to entertain England at Zurich (let's hope our lads will have recovered their equilibrium by then) and thereafter comes the world championship fixture against Germany at Paris and three more to follow, if we are to win that title. Well, there is no much fear of that, but anyhow, we will have played 11 internationals between September 1937 and June 1938, and that, I humbly submit, is too much of a good thing, in fact it is sheer madness.

M.G.

SPIRITUELLE REPLIQUE D'UN "TRAMELOT," BON SUISSE.

On nous signale l'amusant incident que voici :

L'autre jour, sur le tramway de Chailly, une étrangère offre en paiement au contrôleur un mark allemand. Le contrôleur lui fait observer qu'il ne peut encaisser que de la monnaie suisse. La dame répond alors : " Dans une année, vous serez bien content d'être payé en argent allemand." Le contrôleur continue ses encaissements auprès des autres voyageurs, puis au prochain arrêt de la voiture, ôtant sa casquette, il s'adresse à l'étrangère : " Veuillez descendre, Madame, vous remonterez dans une année."

SOME OF THE FORTHCOMING SWISS EVENTS, 1938.

May 14th-15th.
International Dog Show at Berne.

May 15th,
Singing Festival of Catholic Church Choirs of Switzerland, at Lucerne.

May 16th-September 30th,
Daily Automobile Sightseeing Tours starting from Berne.

May 18th,
Spring Festival de Luxe at Brunnen.

May 20th,
Opening of the Lido at Lucerne.

May 21st,
Football Match, England vs. Switzerland, at Zurich.

May 21 and 22,
Concert in Minster: Haydn's "Creation" at Basle.
Conducted sub-Alpine Botanical Excursion at Brunnen.

May 21st-23rd,
Swiss Artillery Days at Lausanne.

May 21st-29th,
Vaudois Wine Fair at Vevey.
Conference of International Commission for the Study of Gliding; also gliding contests, at Berne.

May 22nd,
Fête of Federation of "Musiques de Campagne" at Chêne-Bougeries, Geneva.

GEORGE FORRER †.

The Swiss Observer deeply regrets to inform their readers of the passing away, on Wednesday last, of Mr. George Forrer, of 14, Mundania Road, S.E.22, the Doyen of the Swiss Colony, at the age of 94.

An obituary notice will appear in the next issue of the Swiss Observer.

A funeral service will be held at the Eglise Suisse, 79, Endell Street, W.C.2, on Monday, May 16th, at 1 o'clock. Cremated at Golders Green at 2 p.m.

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FORTHCOMING EVENTS.

Sunday, May 15th — The Symphonic Social Choir — Concert and Dance — at the Brent Bridge Hotel, Hendon.

Friday, May 20th — Nouvelle Société Helvétique — Supper at 6.30 p.m. sharp, to be followed by a causerie by Gottfried J. Keller, Esq., London Correspondent of the Agence Télégraphique Suisse, Berne, on "The Political Situation in Europe," at the "Foyer Suisse," 15, Upper Bedford Place, W.1.

Monday, May 30th, at 8.30 p.m. to 2 a.m. — The Helvetia Society — Annual Dinner and dance, at 1, Gerrard Place, W.1.

Wednesday, June 1st, at 7.30 p.m. — Société des Secours Mutuels — Monthly Meeting, at 74, Charlotte Street, W.1.

Tuesday, June 28th, at 7.30 p.m. — City Swiss Club — Dinner and Dance, at Brent Bridge Hotel, Hendon. (See advert.).

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Dimanche 15 mai 1938 :

11h. — Culte, Pasteur Renée Dedye de l'Eglise Missionnaire Belge (collecte pour l'Eglise Belge).

11h. — Ecole du dimanche.

7h — Culte, M. Blocher, cand. théol.

8h. — Chœur mixte.

Le Pasteur Emery reçoit le Mercredi de 11 heures à midi 30, à l'église, 79, Endell Street, W.C.2. S'adresser à lui pour tous les actes pastoraux. (téléphone: Museum 3100, domicile: Foyer Suisse, 12, Upper Bedford Place, W.C.1.)

SCHWEIZERKIRCHE

(Deutschsprachige Gemeinde).

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(near General Post Office.)

Sonntag, den 15. Mai 1938.

11 Uhr morgens, Festgottesdienst aus Anlass des 50 jährigen Jubiläums der Gründung des Schweizerischen Vereins Christlicher junger Männer (Swiss Y.M.C.A.). Predigt: Herr Pfarrer D. Witzig aus Aarau.

11 Uhr, Sonntagschule.

7 Uhr abends, Gottesdienst. Pfr. Hahn.

8 Uhr, Chorprobe.

TRAUUNG.

Am 10. Mai wurden getraut: John Bernard Halse von Sidmouth (Devon.) und Lore Derrer von Winterthur.

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