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SWISS MALE CHOIR. (“ Gemütlicher Abend. ”)

Banquets, Balls and Dances have for the time being almost come to an end in the social life of the Colony, but this means in no way a respite for the Editor as the more entertaining functions are followed by numerous Annual General Meetings of the various Societies at which he is expected to attend.

Looking back at some of them I must confess that — with few exceptions — these gave little reason for rejoicing, as the respective keepers of the purse with a tedious regularity reported deficits, some small and some large, which invariably were explained by loss of membership, increasing costs of entertainments, propaganda etc.

Whilst this state of affairs should have caused anxiety, nobody seemed to be unduly worried, and it looks to me as if many of the Societies treat deficits as a matter of course, nobody ever suggesting they “ get out of business ”.

The “ Gemütlicher Abend ” or “ Genial Evening ” of the Swiss Male Choir which took place on Friday, March 8th, at Bush House, Aldwich, therefore came as a welcome diversion, acting as a stimulant in more ways than one.

The Society, which has given us so much pleasure over many years, also has its worries. In fact some time ago they seriously discussed whether they could carry on, owing to loss of membership which is not counterbalanced by new influx. Fortunately they decided to carry on in spite of handicaps, and thus the Colony will have the pleasure of hearing them sing in the future.

The evening at Bush House proved that there is still plenty of life in them, and that unavoidable reverses have not sapped their will to survive.

We all are acquainted with the saying “ Wo man singt da lass dich ruhig nieder, böse Menschen singen keine Lieder ” (Where people sing you may dwell without fear, there is no wickedness where songs you hear), and so it was; the nightingales of the Colony are a jolly crowd of people keen on being happy and making other people happy too; in these endeavours they succeeded admirably.

The attendance this year was smaller than on previous occasions, but this did not act as a damper. The cocktail party which preceded dinner soon brought the right “ Stimmung ”, which a very good dinner

provided by our old friend Albert Widmer still further enhanced.

Whilst some Swiss Societies on their festive occasions engage a toast-master in full regalia, the Swiss Male Choir entrusted the task to one of its members, and Mr. E. Luterbacher once again took on the job of making things “ hum ”; he did it just as well as a “ professional ” and, no doubt, cheaper!

With a remarkable persistence he asked the President, Mr. F. G. Sommer, during dinner to “ take wine ” with “ all sorts of people ”, thus putting a heavy strain on his drinking capacity, but I am glad to report that he stood up remarkably well to the ordeal and both he and the wine steward seemed to enjoy it.

The usual toasts were given by the President, the first to H.M. the Queen with the singing “ God save the Queen ”, followed by the toast “ La Suisse ”; for the latter toast the Swiss National Anthem was replaced by the rendering of “ Qu'elle vive. ! ”

The announcement of the President that no speeches would be made was greeted with applause; he simply welcomed with a few words the company, especially the ladies, the passive members, and the official guests who were Mr. A. Stauffer, Editor of the “ Swiss Observer ” and Mrs. Stauffer, and Mr. A. Gandon, leader of the Swiss Accordion Group, and Mrs. Gandon. Mr. Ch. Mayr, equally brief, thanked the choir and the President for their invitation, and Mr. L. Jobin expressed on behalf of the members their appreciation to the President for his exemplary and efficient leadership.

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The choir then sang "La Youtsé" by J. Bovet, and Fehrmann's "Mein Herz ist fröhlich", under the capable direction of its conductor Mr. E. P. Dick. Both songs were well rendered and much enjoyed.

Master Gandon, the young son of our old friend A. Gandon, gave some yodel solos, accompanied by "Dad". He has a sweet voice and fine delivery, and I am sure he will become in time one of the champion yodellers of the Colony.

Whilst the singers gathered new strength for further performances, Mr. E. Luterbacher continued with unabated vigour to invite all and sundry to empty their glasses for all sorts of excuses. This encouraged the choir to sing at once "Le Flot et le vent" by J. Bovet, and one could almost imagine them "floating", and to strike a more sentimental note, they continued by singing "Des Jäger's Abschied".

The choir has amongst its members a very clever comedian in the person of Mr. Anguish who recited a dialogue "Sam, Sam pick up your rifle", but Sam would not hear of it until the Duke of Wellington asked him to do so. Whilst Sam dropped his rifle, the performer dropped a line or two, but these were gallantly picked up by his charming wife, who acted as a prompter, and everybody was happy and heartily applauded the artist.

The musical part of the evening concluded with two more songs from the choir by Bovet, which proved that they have lost none of their former efficiency.

Meanwhile the Accordion players went into action, inviting the couples on to the dance floor, and

the many waltzes and "Laendler" were greatly enjoyed. It was good to see that many of the older members took part in the dancing thus showing that they can still successfully compete with the youngsters.

Shortly before midnight this enjoyable evening, where so much good comradeship was prevalent, came to its close, and everyone left Bush House with the feeling of having had "a jolly good time."

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