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NEWS FROM THE COLONY

A WELL DESERVED TRIBUTE

Although it is not customary to publish anything about meetings of the Advisory Council of the "Swiss Observer", the one held just before Christmas deserves to be treated as an exception. Not on account of the Council's deliberations, which were, as usual, confidential, but on account of the little dinner party and ceremony which followed. A little belatedly, it is true, due to various circumstances, the Council had invited the "Swiss Observer's" former Editor, Mrs. Mariann Meier — and for good measure and in a Christmas spirit the present one — to a dinner at the Brown's Hotel. At its conclusion the Council's Chairman, Mr. Robert J. Keller, got up to thank Mrs. Meier in the briefest speech I have yet heard in the Swiss Colony for the great and tireless services she has rendered its official publication. On behalf of all the Council members the Chairman then presented Mrs. Meier with an elegant little silver salver, which had been engraved, as a souvenir and token of gratitude.

After a little while Mrs. Meier, visibly and audibly moved, went round the table to thank each Council member present personally for his contribution to this gift and then proceeded to recount some of her many experiences in the editorial chair. It would be presumptuous on my part to try and recapitulate her ample reminiscences about all the difficulties she has had to overcome to run the paper, about the shortcomings she got on top of masterfully, and the hurdles she jumped over with characteristic drive and energy. She has anyway done this herself in her farewell article and has told her story infinitely better than I could ever hope to re-tell it.

Nevertheless the purpose of this short account is to put on record the whole Advisory Council's gratitude to Mrs. Mariann Meier for faithful services well and truly rendered.

Gottfried Keller

MR. RENAUD THOMAS LEAVES LONDON

A reception at the Royal Garden Hotel, Kensington, attended by a great number of bigwigs from the machine industry, marked the imminent departure of Mr. Renaud Thomas, managing director of British Brown Boveri Ltd.

Mr. Thomas was born in 1924 in Geneva, but spent his teens in Lucerne. He studied at the "Poly" in Zurich and started his career at Brown Boveri, equipped with a diploma in machine engineering. He came to England in 1956 and was a sales engineer at British Brown Boveri before acceding to the top job in 1959. He married Miss Camilla Whittacker in 1960 and has three children.

Mr. and Mrs. Thomas will be well remembered for their devoted contribution to the life of the Colony. After the sudden death of Mr. Alfred Renoud, Mr. Thomas took over the presidency of the Fête Suisse. The fact that he was to be the last president of this institution was certainly not due to any lack of initiative on his part. He also sat on the committee of the Swiss Welfare Office, but when the weight of his professional duties forced him to resign, his wife succeeded him at his post. She is still active as Honourary Treasurer of the Swiss Welfare Office. Mr. Thomas was also a member of the Cercle Genevois, of the Swiss Economic Council, and, last but not least, a member of the Council of the Institute of Swiss Trade Promotion.

He now goes to Baden to fill a newly created post in the very highest spheres of the Brown Boveri universe: he will be one of the three-men directorate of the newly founded "Brown Boveri International" division, whose task will be to direct and animate sales in every country of the world where no Brown Boveri factory exist at present. In this set-up, Mr. Thomas will be in charge of the consortium's business in the whole of the African and Asian continents.

Having lived for 13 years in the mists of London, the Thomas family now goes into exile in the verdant (but how small!) town of Baden.

Mr. Thomas will be succeeded by Mr. George Gyssler, from Basle, who has also received his engineering formation at the "Poly". Mr. Gyssler came to the British Brown Boveri Company in 1967 after having worked for about ten years in the home company at Baden. He is married and has two children.

We wish Mr. Thomas and Mr. Gyssler every success and prosperity in this new phase of their careers.

(PMB)

DEPARTURE FROM LONDON

A loss for the Swiss Colony

At the end of December, Dr. Paul Stauffer left London after four most fruitful years as Cultural Attaché to the Swiss Embassy in London. Dr. Stauffer is a citizen of Suhr (Aargau), but he was born and bred in Basle, and he lived there long enough to acquire not only the distinctive dialect, but also the typical sense of humour of the Basle people. He was educated at the *Realgymnasium* and Basle University where he read modern history, literature and philology. He also studied at the Sorbonne in Paris and finished his studies with a doctorate at the University of Basle. Until the beginning of 1960, Dr. Stauffer taught in Basle, mostly at his former school. He then joined the Federal Political Department of the Confederation. His assignments

included posts in Berlin, Berne and Moscow, before he came to London on 23rd November, 1965. He was put in charge of Cultural Affairs and Educational Matters at the Embassy, replacing Monsieur Jean Revilliod who had been transferred to Indonesia as Swiss Ambassador to that country, Cambodia and Laos.

That is as far as Dr. Stauffer's *curriculum vitae* goes. But it shows nothing of the amount of valuable work he did outside his immediate duties. He was Joint Hon. Secretary of the Anglo-Swiss Society and a member of the Council of the Nouvelle Société Helvétique. And it is the latter organisation which owes perhaps more than any other Swiss society in London to his untiring support in their efforts to keep Swiss cultural matters to the fore. But also as Editor of the "Swiss Observer" I had reason to be grateful to Dr. Stauffer for his willing help at all times. Whenever Swiss artists appeared in London, resident or visiting, Dr. Stauffer gave them active support and practical help. His work has been of special importance for Switzerland in the field of publishing English translations of Swiss works, to mention but the latest effort, "Swiss Men of Letters", an anthology compiled by Alex Natan. In fact Dr. Stauffer's official farewell was combined with a Reception he gave at the Embassy on 16th December, to launch the publication of this important work. In his capacity as Cultural Attaché, he was, of course, the representative of the "Pro Helvetia" Foundation, the body concerned in spreading Swiss culture.

In his quiet and efficient way, he was always available for advice and assistance, although his modesty would not allow him to make much of it. But all who have worked with him, will miss him very much, and more especially those who had the privilege of enjoying his friendship. He is still a bachelor, and his hobby is modern history. He will have ample opportunity of indulging in this in his new post. He is going to Ankara as First Assistant to the Swiss Ambassador. We congratulate him on his promotion and wish him success and happiness in his new sphere of activity. He will no doubt apply his talents and personal characteristics to the best of his ability and with the same devotion which has endeared him to the many friends he leaves behind in London.

(MM)

NOUVELLE SOCIÉTÉ HELVÉTIQUE

This year's Christmas Gathering of the Nouvelle Société Helvétique took place at the Swiss Hostel for Girls on 18th December, when some 40 members and friends got together for drinks and

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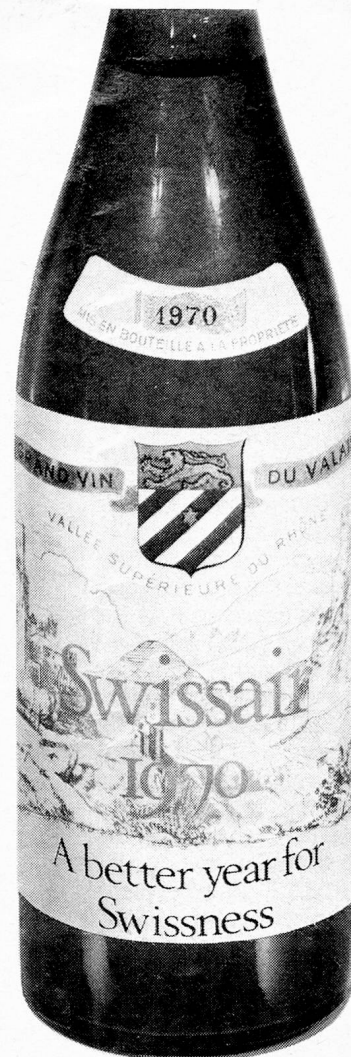
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Dinner. Miss Lili Habegger (soprano) and Mr. Lennart Rabes (piano) were unfortunately prevented from coming, but some recorded Christmas Music was played after dinner when coffee and Swiss Christmas "Guezli" were served in a happy Christmas atmosphere created by the light of candles and the smell of fir, as much as by the friendly chatting of members and visitors.

TS

The next two Open Meetings of the Society will be held on 15th and 29th January. Please see special announcement "DOUBLE BILL".

DOUBLE BILL

Two forthcoming film evenings

The London Group of the Nouvelle Société Helvétique has at the start of recent years shown a special film of events in Switzerland during the previous 12 months. The Secretariat of the Swiss Abroad in Berne have informed the Society that the demand in Swiss communities abroad had been rather disappointing, and that the review film was now no longer compiled. The Council decided to keep to the tradition of showing films at the beginning of a new year, and they have pleasure in announcing two film evenings in January.

On **Thursday, 15th January**, the full-length film based on Gottfried Keller's famous story

"ROMEO UND JULIA AUF DEM DORFE"

will be shown by courtesy of the "Pro Helvetia" Foundation.

On **Thursday, 29th January**, the well-known Swiss mountain guide Mr. Denis Bertholet, Verbier, will show two films on

"SWISS MOUNTAINEERING SCHOOLS"

combined with a talk in English.

Both meetings will be held at 7.45 p.m. at the Swiss Hostel for Girls, 9-11 Belsize Grove, N.W.3, only three minutes away from Belsize Park Underground Station (Northern — Edgware-Line). All Swiss and their friends are welcome.

OUR MANCUNIAN CHRISTMAS

On Saturday, 13th December, the traditional annual Christmas Tree Party, organised by the Swiss Club of Manchester, took place. The main purpose of our party being to give our youngsters, including the tiny tots, a really enjoyable time, and hoping that such an afternoon would provide them with happy, unforgettable memories, which for many of them in later life could prove of great benefit and help outweigh the many worries and disappointments of our restless, exacting and sometimes cold everyday life. Even for those of us who were behind all this with our thoughts, work, and material help, can only benefit from mingling with our younger generation, and which can only be described as healthy, invigorating and extremely rewarding.

Having stated this, let me say that for many of us who had braved the inclement weather with its hazards of fog, snow and rain, it was a great relief to enter the Midland Hotel which once again received us in their customary warm and hospitable way. Well over a hundred people, of which the children formed the majority, assembled in the newly decorated "Rotonda", sat down at delightfully decorated tables and enjoyed the very rich afternoon-tea, which had special emphasis on sweets, multi-coloured jellies, trifles, and other goodies, as befitted the company. A truly youthful, if at times a somewhat noisy crowd, full of life, brimming with expectation and excitement.

Our President, Bernard Simon accompanied by his wife and young family, welcomed us in his typical warm and witty way. He then invited us to furnish ourselves with a chair and move to the nearby small ballroom where a beautifully and brilliantly lighted Christmas Tree greeted us. I felt that this year particularly, the room was well decorated and inviting. Soon the traditional multi-range ring was formed, the children, of course, having the privilege of sitting nearest to the Christmas Tree with its bounty spread around it. I caught the glances of several youngsters who were casting eager looks towards the many small and large parcels neatly arrayed beneath the tree.

Eventually the first strains of "Stille Nacht, Heilige Nacht", played by one of our Lady Members, echoed through the room, and soon everyone joined in this lovely Christmas Carol. Suddenly we were interrupted by a loud bang at the door! Sure enough, it was Father Christmas, with his flowing white beard and dressed in his seasonal red and white attire — perhaps a trifle on the warm side for him. He was heavily laden with what seemed to be an immense and well-filled sack. For many of our youngsters it was the moment of truth, for the believers and even those who may have started to nourish some doubts. The latter may not have been the more happy ones (this could have been the case with the adults, too.) Bravely and with so much goodwill, our children singly or in small groups, stepped forward to entertain our *Sankt Nikolaus* with song, prose and music. A very young chap pleasantly surprised us by flawlessly narrating the story of the Nativity. He was resoundingly applauded by the appreciative audience. There was some instrumental virtuoso and one of our younger members regaled the Saint with a soundless invocation. Nevertheless, everyone received a kind word of encouragement and was rewarded with a parcel filled with sweets and other things. Inevitably the time for our *Sankt Nikolaus's* departure arrived. He left with our deepest regrets, accompanied by our thanks, good wishes, and thunderous applause. Thus, we made sure that

he would return again next year. After *Sankt Nikolaus* had gone, the remaining contents of his sack were distributed to the children who had stayed in the background, echoing the sentiments of the season that at such a time people should be generous, charitable and of good will. We then joined in another popular Christmas Carol after which the President, helped by some of the Ladies of our Committee, distributed the many individual Christmas gifts. There was a gift for everyone, all of which had been carefully chosen and were a great credit to the organisers.

Some of our usual supporters and our Consul could not be with us, having had to attend the Christmas Shoot of The Manchester Rifle Association, of which we form a part. Nevertheless, it was a great pleasure for all of us to greet Madame Born and a few of our other notable ladies. There was also a representation of the Yorkshire Swiss Club, accompanied by one of their veteran members, Mr. Amman of Halifax. All this helped to wards the success of the evening, which alas for many of us was too short. Perhaps, therefore, we may be allowed to express the hope that next year such a party could be slightly prolonged by organising games for our youngsters. Gradually our company disbanded, everyone having had a most enjoyable afternoon. We were all very happy and grateful to our Club for organising such a successful Christmas Party.

E. Berner

THE CITY SWISS CLUB CHRISTMAS DINNER

Eighty of the businessmen of our Colony were present at this year's City Swiss Club Christmas Dinner. Addressing us with a few after-dinner-words, Mr. Alfred Kuhn congratulated the chef who had prepared us such exquisite red cabbages and thanked Mr. Keufeler, of the Dorchester Hotel, for the advantageous conditions he had been offering to the City Swiss Club table-companions. He mentioned the fact that three elderly members of the Colony had entered the Club half-a-century ago and over. They were Mr. Jean Oltramare, who became a member on April 4th 1917, Mr. Silvain Dreyfus, who joined the City Swiss on 3rd December 1918 and Mr. Adrien Rueff, the "late-comer", who entered it on 3rd June 1919. All three are "Swiss Observer" readers and, in passing, we take the opportunity of warmly congratulating them. Mr. Alfred Kuhn said that they had been elected honorary members of the City Swiss Club.

During the address, Father Bossard stole away deftly from the Orchid Suite. We were told not to leave until we had received a surprise, and sure enough, it came when Father Bossard, dressed up as a portly Santa Claus with a big white beard, and accompanied by his acolytes — the Devil and a band of sexless angels — returned to the room.