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STUDENTS' CHRISTMAS DINNER & BALL

At the PRINCE'S GALLERIES, PICCADILLY,

on Friday, December 14th, 1934.

For the last few years the students of the College of the Swiss Mercantile Society Ltd., have celebrated their Xmas dinner and ball at the Prince's Galleries, to which they have most generously invited a large number of guests, such as members of the various committee's of the Swiss Mercantile Society Ltd., teaching and office staff of the College, and representatives of the Swiss press.

An invitation from these quarters is always accepted with great pleasure; as it recalls to me various happy incidents which have occurred during the twenty years in which I have been connected, in one way or another, with the S.M.S.

It was a very happy crowd which gathered at Prince's Galleries last Friday, there was youth in abundance; every year the faces change, but the spirit remains the same. It is the spirit of enterprise, of adventure into the domains of our earthly pilgrimage, which remains and is carried forward from generation to generation in unabated strength. —

The arrangements, as in former years, were entrusted to the energetic, and may I add, ever young, secretary of the College, Mr. J. J. Schneider; who again most efficiently acted as toast master; but somehow or other my friend has become quieter and more sedate. Well do I remember last year's function, when he unmercifully condemned the Chairman "to take wine" with every conceivable person present; untiringly he used his hammer then, and the roar of his powerful voice resounded over the gathering, who with awe and almost terror carried out his commands. Not so this year, not once did he "condemn" the chairman to raise his glass, and the hammer, which he used to swing so lustily was substituted by an empty Ginger Ale bottle. Although his voice has lost none of its lustre, the physical powers have undoubtedly greatly diminished, whether this is the result of the mild criticism which I voiced in these columns after last year's event, or whether he has received a hint from the chairman, that he could not possibly stand the strain any longer, I do not profess to know, but his quietness struck in me a pathetic note.

The dinner, which was very excellent and well served, started about 7.30 p.m., and just over two hundred guests and students sat round the prettily decorated tables.

Shortly before the coffee was served the Chairman, Mr. E. Hardmeier, Chairman of the Education Committee, proposed the toast to H. M. the King, followed by the toast to Switzerland, coupling it with the toast to the guests; he said:

As in previous years, we are gathered here to-night for our annual Xmas Dinner and Ball, to which I have great pleasure in welcoming you and I am certain that you will all enjoy yourselves in this pleasant hall.

So that the speeches may not go on until a late hour, I have requested the Speakers to be brief in their remarks and so have more time for dancing.

I shall try and set the good example, and will now rapidly introduce to you the guests whom you have so kindly invited for to-night.

First of all I wish to welcome our guest of honour, Dr. W. Rüfenacht. Mr. Rüfenacht is a member of our Society and as such, but especially in his official capacity of First Secretary of Legation and Commercial Attaché, he is always ready to help us and give us his valued advice on matters concerning the welfare of the College. For this I wish to tender him my sincerest thanks.

Then we welcome Mr. A. Steinmann, who for nearly two years now has carried the burden of the Presidency of our Society. He is, of course, well aware of all that is going on at the College, and the Education Committee much esteem his valued collaboration at our deliberations.

Then we have the pleasure of having with us Mr. A. C. Stahelin, Vice-Chairman of the Council, a former Chairman of the Education Committee and at one time President of the S.M.S., Mr. G. De Brunner, Trustee, Member of the Council, former President, and founder of the Day School, Mr. J. J. Boos, Member of the Council and Chairman of the House Committee.

These three Gentlemen are Honorary Members of our Society, which means that they have rendered — and are still rendering — great services not only to the Society as such, but

also to the College. They, together with Mr. Steinmann, deserve the hearty thanks of all connected with the College.

Another Member of the House Committee whom we welcome heartily, is Mrs. Lunghi-Rezzonico, who for a great number of years has acted as temporary mother to our numerous young Lady Students, who know best how much they are indebted to Mrs. Lunghi.

Another guest, whom we are glad to have with us, is Mr. H. E. Weaver, our official Examiner, who sets and judges the papers for the Diploma examinations.

Then I wish to extend a hearty welcome to our Principal, Mr. A. Levy, with his able Staff of Lecturers, and our Secretary, M. J. J. Schneider, with his devoted Staff of the Office.

On behalf of the Education Committee and the Society I wish to express to Mr. Levy and Mr. Schneider, and their respective Staffs, our sincerest thanks for all they have done and are still doing in the interests of the College.

The press is represented by Mr. A. Stauffer of the "Swiss Observer." Mr. Stauffer is an Honorary Member and former President of our Society.

Lastly I take the opportunity of introducing to you my Colleagues of the Education Committee, namely, the Vice-Chairman Mr. W. Meier, Mr. H. H. Baumann, Mr. W. Weist and Mr. F. Streit, with whom I have had the pleasure of working in harmony for quite a number of years. It is only fit that I should seize this opportunity for thanking them for their cordial collaboration in the interests of the College.

And now, Ladies and Gentlemen, let us remember the small and far-away Country, which is so dear to us all, and let us drink to the health and future prosperity of our Switzerland!

Both toasts were rendered with musical honours, and Mr. Hardmeier's address was acknowledged with applause.

A few moments after, it was announced that Monsieur Rüfenacht, First Secretary of Legation, would respond to the last mentioned toast. Dr. Rüfenacht, on rising, received a hearty ovation, he addressed the company as follows:

I see printed on the programme before me, that I have the honour to respond to the toast to our beloved country, Switzerland.

It is with great pleasure that I do so, but don't be afraid, no long speech will follow; I am dutifully aware of the Committee's warning that speeches must be cut short, and furthermore, I am not in the habit of making long speeches as I know only too well, from long experience, how painful it is to have to listen to an orator, especially a bad one, who is unable to come to an end.

It is only natural that to-night, although assembled for the sake of pleasure and entertainment, we should turn our minds to our native country, to which most, if not all of you will sooner or later be returning.

Switzerland has felt the world crisis later than most other countries, owing chiefly to the strong position of her economic system and to her powerful reserves. But to-day she is in the midst of very serious trouble, economic and political as well as moral, and she will need all her strength to come through successfully. Only two weeks ago, Federal Councillor Schulthess, who has for over twenty years been the economic leader of our country, spoke very strong words of warning, saying that Switzerland could not remain a happy island of high prices and a high standard of living amongst other nations, but that she must adapt herself to world conditions if she did not wish to risk losing most of her export markets. This adaptation to new and, I am afraid, more modest standards of living will need a great deal of courage and confidence, and it is here that we may well look to England as an example.

Although many of you may only have been over here for a short time, I think that none of you has failed to notice that England, generally speaking, has found her way out of the crisis. I am not saying that she is already out of it, that seems to be impossible for a country which is in so large a measure linked to, and dependant upon, world trade. There are still many black spots in the picture of Great Britain's industrial activities, and I

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