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C. E. SEINET.
President: City Swiss Club.

CITY SWISS CLUB

86th Annual Banquet and Ball

at the
DORCHESTER HOTEL, PARK LANE, LONDON, W.1
on
FRIDAY, 23rd NOVEMBER, 1951.

In the Chair: THE SWISS MINISTER

Monsieur HENRY DE TORRENTÉ

The 86th Annual Banquet and Ball of the City Swiss Club was held on November, 23rd, at the Dorchester Hotel, Park Lane, W.1; if it would not have been for the two intervening wars, when this annual event was dispensed with, this year's celebration would have been the 95th, the Club having been founded Anno Domini 1856.

Ninety-five years is, comparing it with human life, quite a respectable age, and one might rightly expect, that signs of discrepancy and infirmity would now be perceptible, but nothing of the sort, the Society seems to be blessed with exuberant health and real *joie de vivre*.

Over three hundred members and their friends gathered in the Foyer to be received by the Swiss Minister, Honorary President of the Club, and Madame de Torrenté, and Mr. and Mrs. C. E. Seinet, President of the City Swiss Club.

Great animation and an almost infernal heat was noticeable in this pleasant anti-room, and I greatly envied the Ladies — who looked as charming as ever — for their *décolleté* which must not only be very comfortable but was also good "to look at".

Nevertheless in spite of the heat and the noise one had an opportunity to greet many acquaintances, perhaps not encountered for several months, and give a hearty handshake to one's old friends, which not even a freezing "Martini" could cool down. Talking of cocktails, I wish to thank all those who were so kind as to offer me a stimulant, had I accepted them all, I should have had to be either "carried in or out".

The reception being over, the red coated Toastmaster announced that dinner was about to be served. When the company had filed into the richly decorated ballroom, the Swiss Minister and Madame de Torrenté, the President and Madame Seinet made their entry amidst great applause. Both Madame de Torrenté and Madame Seinet carried beautiful bouquets of flowers, which had been previously presented to them.

After grace was said by Pastor H. Blum, the company sat down to a really excellent dinner, which did full honour to the renowned *cuisine* of the Dorchester Hotel.

The musical programme during the dinner was executed very finely by Les Brown and his orchestra.

Towards the end of this epicurean feast, the Swiss Minister first proposed the toast to "The King" immediately followed by the one to "La Suisse" whilst the respective National Anthems were played.

Then came the moment for the speeches, which I am glad to say were "short and sweet"; many of the older members, will, no doubt, remember, that in years gone by the speech-making used to take up the best part of the evening by reviewing the political and economic position, with wearisome statistics.

Thank goodness this tradition has, like many others, disappeared much to the delight of the Ladies who used not to care a tinkers cuss for the export and import figures.

The first speaker of the evening was Mr. C. E. Seinet, the President, who extended a hearty welcome to the Minister and Madame de Torrenté, and thanked our Honorary President for the great interest he is taking in the activities of the Club. He also greeted very warmly the following guests, who were seated at the top table: Lord and Lady Brabazon of Tara, Sir Malcolm Trustram Eve, K.C., and Lady Eve, President of the Ski Club of Great Britain, the Rt. Hon. Mr. L. S. Amery, Colonel and Mrs. E. R. Culverwell, President elect of the British Members of the Swiss Alpine Club, Dr. and Mrs. V. Umbricht, Commercial Attaché at the Swiss Legation, Colonel and Mrs. Rieser, Military Attaché, Dr. and Mrs. P. Clottu, Social Counsellor, Dr. and Miss Lindt, Press Counsellor of the Swiss Legation, Mr. and Mrs. A. Stauffer, Editor of the "Swiss Observer," Pastor H. Blum and Father A. Laufranchi. (Pasteur and Mme C. Reverdin were unavoidably prevented from attending.)

The President also expressed his pleasure at seeing amongst the brilliant gathering the following members of the Legation, accompanied by their Ladies; Messieurs E. M. Bircher, G. Lepori, S. Marcuard and R. J. Keller.

The list of guests was this year somewhat reduced by mutual agreement; representatives of sister Societies were not anymore invited as guests as this

practice has often meant a heavy financial burden to smaller Societies, but I am glad to say, that quite a number of Presidents attended as "paying guests".

Mr. C. E. Seinet concluded his address by paying a special compliment to the many Ladies present and by expressing the wish, that the long standing and close friendship between Great Britain and our beloved country may last for ever.

The applause, which greeted the words of our President, had hardly died down, when it was announced that the Swiss Minister, Monsieur Henry de Torrenté would reply. On rising from his seat, our popular Minister received a great ovation. He said: "Mr. President, My Lord, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Your Chairman has placed me in a very awkward position. I am addressing you at his behest and yet know quite well that many of you will say: "Why does he have to make a speech?"

I was puzzled myself on what to speak to-night, until I saw two recent articles in the "Swiss Observer".

In one article, a man tries to persuade the Ladies to use all their influence over their menfolk in order to be taken to the Ball to-night.

In the other article, a woman protests at being left out from the Farewell Dinner to our friend Anton Bon and claims her right to be present at such functions.

What else is this than the problem of the age-old battle between woman and the "weaker sex". Man-kind has different attitudes to this problem.

The ancients stated the case. Aesop relates how Jupiter told the billy-goats, who complained about nanny-goats having beards: "Leave them their vain-glory — as long as they are not your equals in energy and enterprise, leave them the joy to appropriate for themselves the insignia of your just attributes".

This attitude prevailed right up to Molière who said: "Votre sexe n'est là que pour la dépendance, Du côté de la barbe est la toute puissance". A some-

what different attitude becomes apparent in Talleyrand's famous answer. When he was reproached that he paid too much attention to the ladies, he replied: "Mais les femmes, c'est la politique".

It was not until the twentieth century and the modern world that we find such statements as "Beaucoup de maris ne connaissent pas leur femme et c'est très dommage; beaucoup de femmes ne connaissent pas leur mari et cela n'est pas dommage".

But other factors, too, enter into the battle of the sexes. Here in England and in France we, as a matter of course, give precedence to our ladies, when entering a room, or an assembly, or going through a garden gate. Not so in Switzerland. When I asked a compatriot at home one day: "Why do you always go first?", he was most surprised and in all naïveté replied: "But my wife always tells me "Gang Du vora ga luege" (You go ahead and look)".

Even women's suffrage is only another aspect of the problem. Women have no vote in Switzerland.

I hesitate to admit the existence of barbaric conditions in our beloved country, but I trust to the goodwill and the kind hearts of our English friends, who are present here to-night, and hope they will forbear with us a little longer.

As you all know, we in Switzerland belong to a dwindling group of die-hards. The only other countries in the western hemisphere, who grant no political rights whatsoever to their womenfolk are: Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Transjordan, Lebanon, Saudi-Arabia and Yemen. Perhaps we better leave it to the anthropologists to draw conclusions from this curious fact.

The question of women's suffrage has been ventilated to some considerable extent in Switzerland this summer. The trouble is that not only the men but also the women seem to be divided on this point. In fact, so deep was the division amongst our women, that unkind tongues speak of two kinds of "Suisseuses". The "Stauffacherin" who looked forward and the "Bülacherin" who looked backward. Perhaps the



General View of the Banqueting Hall.

"Bülacherin" is like the Chinese lady who, in obedience to the new republican laws, went for the first time to record her vote. She appeared at the polling station and said: "I want to vote for my husband". She could not read and when it was explained to her that her husband was not a candidate, she simply said: "Then I don't want to vote". Such loyalty and devotion may be charming, but it will not help the problem.

There are, however, other obstacles to the general introduction of votes for women, obstacles which only exist in our country. I do not know how many of you have followed the debates on women's suffrage in our Parliament. The representative of Glarus, for instance, voted against it for the simple reason that the town-square of Glarus was too small. One cannot imagine what would happen if on top of the 7,000

citizens of Glarus also 7,000 citizenesses wanted to squeeze into the square. What are we to do with the Landsgemeinde of Appenzell, where only those can vote who bring their ancient swords and raise them as a token of their majority. What weapon should we give the women of Appenzell?

So far I have followed the advice of Horace: "Ridentum dicere verum quid vetat?" "What is there to prevent laughter from speaking the truth?". For myself, speaking as a private individual, I have no hesitation in declaring, that I see no valid reason whatsoever, why our women should not share with us the burden, the rights and responsibilities of full citizenship. But neither you nor I can solve this delicate question, which is for our people at home, and for them alone to decide.

My time is up, I know you are longing for the end of my speech and the beginning of the dance. I hope, however, that "Marianne" as well as the ladies of our Colony will have drawn some consolation from my words to-night."

This witty allocution of the Minister was loudly cheered.

The task of saying "Thank you" on behalf of the guests was entrusted to the Rt. Hon. Lord Brabazon of Tara, P.C., M.C., who, in a very humorous vein expressed his admiration for our country, its institutions and its people, relating some of his experiences at the famous Cresta Run near St. Moritz, and of mountaineering in the high alps.

This speech, interwoven with witty anecdotes, was greatly enjoyed and loudly cheered.

Finally, Mr. M. R. Roethlisberger, a member of the Committee of the Swiss Benevolent Society, made a touching appeal for our less fortunate compatriots in this country, his sincere words did not fail to get its deserved response, and it was announced that the respectable amount of £116 had been collected.

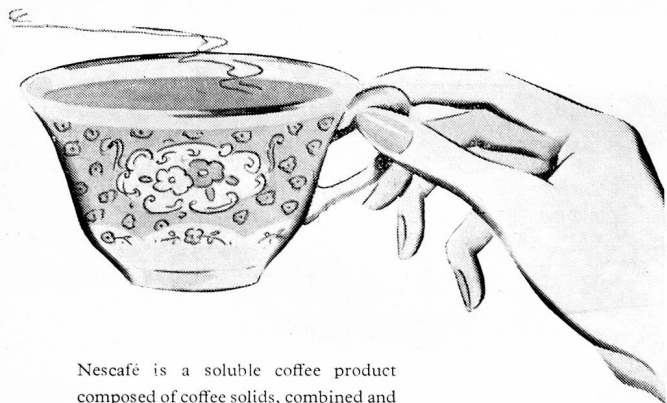
Dancing then started and Les Brown and his orchestra proved to be very efficient and untiring in their endeavours to lure young and old to waltz round in either quick or slow tempo. At 1.30 a.m. the orchestra played "Auld Lang Syne" whilst the President and his charming Lady stood happily smiling and bowing in the circle.

Thus ended another very successful Annual Banquet and Ball of the City Swiss Club, and the Committee of the Club is to be heartily congratulated on a really lovely and enjoyable evening.

ST.

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CITY SWISS CLUB. Xmas Dinner.

The traditional Xmas Dinner of the City Swiss Club took place this year rather earlier than usual, and was held on Tuesday, December 4th, at the Dorchester Hotel.

Following so soon after the Annual Banquet and Ball, fewer members attended this year's feast, but the 60 stalwarts who were there spent a most pleasant evening.

The spirit of goodwill, which is such a feature of this festive season was not missing. What a happy time Xmas is, everyone seems to be imbued with a feeling of kindness!!!

The postman, who for eleven months of the year, puts the letters in the wrong letter box, becomes suddenly most careful not to make a mistake, the dustmen, who usually make a terrible mess in emptying the bins, are sweeping up the potato peelings which they continuously drop all over the place, the station master, at the local station is suddenly most concerned about one's health and even touches his cap which for eleven months seems to have been glued to his head. —

The President, Mr. C. E. Seinet, after the dinner which consisted of fish, turkey, Xmas pudding and mince pies, extended a hearty welcome to the representative of the Swiss Minister, Dr. E. Bernath, Counsellor of Legation, and the members present.

Our old friend, Mr. A. Gandon, on his accordion played many of our homely Swiss melodies which were sung with great fervour. It is a pity that the President and Conductor of the Swiss Male Choir were not present, as they would have been agreeably surprised to see how many members possess powerful and melodious voices, and I am sure they would have been successful in enrolling not a few to become members of their choir.

Mr. Heimerdinger, was the star turn of the evening and his always witty and clever entertainment was delightful to listen to. The Editor of the "Swiss Observer" and "Mariann" were his "target for the night", and caused great hilarity.

The Committee of the Club was congratulated by one member on the efficient way the Banquet had been conducted and Mr. Ronus, the Manager of the Dorchester Hotel received the compliments of all for having studied the material welfare of the members not only at the Banquet but throughout the year.

Mr. Ch. Gysin, the painstaking Hon. Secretary of the Club, in the capacity as President of the Consistoire de l'Eglise Suisse, mentioned the presence of Pastor H. Blum, who is shortly leaving London to take up an appointment in Switzerland, thanking him for the great services he had rendered to the Colony during the last six years of his *séjour* to which the latter replied most touchingly.

A visitor to the Club from Solothurn, gave a clever imitation of an "Alphorn" which nearly brought tears to my table neighbour who is a great mountaineer.

Before closing the meeting, the President wished all the members and their families a Happy Xmas and Prosperous New Year.

ST.

LONDON SWISS PHILATELIC SOCIETY.

The Members of the London Swiss Philatelic Society met on October 26th to inspect part of the collection of Swiss stamps formed by Colonel H. de Watteville, C.B.E. The issue selected for Display was the "Seated Helvetia" of 1862-1882, and he gave a running commentary which not only covered the printing of the stamps, but also explained the reasons for the many variations in shade.

The display was greatly appreciated and a vote of thanks was proposed by Mr. A. S. Newall and seconded by the Vice-President, Mr. W. Burren.



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