

Zeitschrift: The Swiss observer : the journal of the Federation of Swiss Societies in the UK
Herausgeber: Federation of Swiss Societies in the United Kingdom
Band: - (1935)
Heft: 697

Rubrik: Swiss Mercantile Society

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ANNUAL BANQUET AND BALL OF THE SWISS MERCANTILE SOCIETY

On Saturday, February 23rd, 1935, at the Trocadero Restaurant, W.I.

When I made some two weeks ago an appeal to the Swiss Colony, through the columns of this paper, to give the Swiss Mercantile Society their whole hearted support for the Annual Banquet and Ball, I had some serious misgivings as to what the result would be.

There are still a good many of our compatriots who think that, owing to the critical times we are passing through, such functions, as the one just held, should be postponed to a more appropriate date; this is, of course, a matter of opinion, and it would lead too far to argue the pros and cons. of this question. In making my appeal, I knew, of course, that I was championing a good cause, but, then so many deserving causes nowadays receive but little or no encouragement.

I am, however, delighted to report, that the members and friends of the Swiss Mercantile Society have nobly answered the call, which proves that the *Swiss Observer* has once more justified its existence. About 180 of our compatriots met at the Trocadero Restaurant to spend a few enjoyable hours in congenial company; amongst them were a number of members who have not been seen at any of the functions for a long time, and their "return to the fold" has been much appreciated by the Society.

My modesty forbids me to account for the increased number of participants, to my efforts alone. The main reason was undoubtedly that the authorities of the Society had decided to break with an age long tradition and to go to a more up-to-date place; and I feel sure that everyone will agree with me that the change was all for the good.

Few amongst the participants had ever made the acquaintance of the beautiful rooms at the Trocadero Restaurant, and it was a pleasant surprise to many of them that the committee of the Society had hit on such comfortable quarters.

I felt like Alice in Wonderland when suddenly the wall disappeared, and the Banqueting Hall appeared in all its glory, in fact I had some serious misgivings as to whether the various cocktails with which the Society regaled their official guests, did not play a trick on me, but I was assured by some of my friends, that I was under no illusion, and that it was "quite alright."

Previous to the dinner a reception was held by Monsieur C. R. Paravicini, the Swiss Minister, who was ably seconded by M. Steinmann, President of the Swiss Mercantile Society. There was however, a snag in this reception, i.e., when I entered the reception room, I was correctly announced by Mr. J. J. Schneider, who efficiently acted as "Announcer," I pulled myself together and summoned a most charming smile to my visage, only to discover that "the authorities" were on strike, and I made my bow to "space." A glance revealed to me that the "authorities" were otherwise engaged somewhere in the vicinity of the bar, for which I do not blame them, but then why hold a reception? Some of my friends who had spent some money on white gloves for the reception were rather disappointed, and argued that they could have spent the amount to a better purpose, also in "the vicinity of the bar."

The dinner started fairly punctually, and lest I should forget, I wish to mention right away, that it was a very fine dinner indeed. The *cuisine* of the Trocadero Restaurant has undoubtedly come up to everybody's expectation, and I speak with some authority, when I say that the fare was one of the best I have ever had at any of the numerous banquets I have to attend. But, that is not to be wondered at, when one realises that our friend and compatriot, M. Delaloye was in charge. —

The loyal toasts to H. M. the King and Switzerland were proposed by the Hon. President of the Society, Monsieur C. R. Paravicini, Swiss Minister, and duly honoured.

During the dessert, M. J. J. Schneider, Secretary of the S. M. S., who acted most efficiently at Toast Master, announced that the President of the Society wishes to address the company.

Amongst loud applause, Mr. Steinmann rose and addressed the gathering as follows:—

Once again as President of the S.M.S. I welcome you all to our Annual Banquet and sincerely hope that you will leave here to-night with memories of another evening well spent and thoroughly enjoyed.

Again I am glad to see so many present, particularly as this is the first time that we as a body have graced this hall, I am sure you will join me readily in giving a special welcome to our esteemed Honorary President, Monsieur le Ministre, who as you know, has consented to act to-night as Chairman, a task, though pleasurable, which he is performing in addition to the great help which he continues to give us as at all times. I am sorry to say that Madame Paravicini is not able to honour us with her presence to-night because she is away at the seaside, recuperating from a recent illness. I am sure you all join with me in wishing her a quick and complete recovery, coupled with the hope that next year our company will be complete.

We are glad to see also that Mr. De Brunner, one of our Trustees is here to join us in our festivities.

With your permission I should like to say a few words regarding the progress of our Society during the time that has intervened between the last Banquet and to-night.

Coming at once to what is probably the most important event in the recent history of the S. M. S., I would inform you that a new lease for the Swiss House covering the next seven years has been successfully negotiated and signed by the Trustees. Successfully in this context means that the Trustees were able to induce the landlords to reduce their original demands very considerably. This matter has entailed a great deal of work and business ability that has been willingly given by Mr. De Brunner in particular, and I am certain that it would have been extremely difficult to find another gentleman to do so well on our behalf.

We were enabled to pursue our labours in this direction as a result of the assistance granted to us by the Federal Authorities in response to the visit made by Mr. Staehelin and myself to Berne and Zurich on your behalf in May of last year. Both, Mr. Staehelin and myself were overwhelmed by the great sympathy and understanding displayed by the Authorities on our approach to them for the additional financial assistance required by the increase in the rental.

At the Annual General Meeting last Wednesday, Messrs. Dr. Boeschstein and Schmid-Ruedin were elected Honorary Members of the Society in recognition of their valuable help.

I would like you to know that the year has shown better results in the Employment Department mainly owing to the continued efforts of that stalwart Mr. Pfendler.

Many of you remember that last year I referred to the economic blizzard then prevalent throughout the world. It is still prevalent in most countries, and unfortunately the number of our day students has continued to fall. It is most gratifying, however, to note that examination successes have increased. The evening classes have shown a slight increase, both in numbers and in attendance and since the signs are that economic and political conditions are improving I think we may confidently anticipate an upward movement in the future progress of the College.

There are so many names that could be mentioned as being responsible for the continued success of the Society and the College that I will mention none, but ask you to join me in thanks and an expression of encouragement to all those to whose lot it falls to conduct the affairs of both these institutions.

Last year I referred to the hopes of better economic conditions in the immediate future. This year I am still convinced that we are on the edge of all-round recovery. Whether I am right or wrong, you will agree with me that facts and faith warrant us in regarding our Society as an institution that continues to be a most faithful and helpful servant in the best interests of the mother-country, Switzerland, that is so dear to all of us.

The applause which the President received on concluding his speech was richly deserved. Another gentle tap with the hammer commanded silence for the Honorary President of the Swiss Mercantile Society, Monsieur C. R. Paravicini. On rising from the *Fauteuil présidentiel*, M. Paravicini received a hearty ovation.

The Swiss Minister then said:

We have just had from your very able President a most interesting and concise survey of the Swiss Mercantile Society's activities in the past year. There are, however, a few black spots in the picture; the crisis which unfortunately does not seem to show, as yet, any signs of abatement in Switzerland, has not spared the College of your Society which has to register, as we heard already, a serious drop in the number of students attending the day courses. On the other hand I am glad to see that there are several signs, if not of prosperity, yet of encouragement."

M. Paravicini then referred to the change which the Society has made for their Annual Banquet from a "Station Hotel" to a smart West-end Restaurant, which was a sure sign that the Society is on the road to prosperity. — He continued:

I am furthermore glad to have an opportunity of congratulating MM. Steinmann and Stähelin on the great success of their mission to Switzerland last year. As M. Steinmann just pointed out, they have secured from the Federal Authorities in Berne a larger subsidy for their College in view of the fact that, owing to the renewal of the lease of Swiss House, at a higher rent, and the expenses are, of course, increasing.

Thanks are also due to the Authorities in Berne for their sympathetic attitude towards the Society and their willingness to help as far as possible which, I am sure, you will doubly appreciate in view of the fact that strict economies have to be made in public as well as in private expenditure in Switzerland. I think that we all are very gratified at your Council's ability to retain, after long and difficult negotiations, the lease of Swiss House for a period of seven years; thus the great inconvenience which a change of address would have meant to everybody concerned is happily avoided.

Allow me to turn now from these domestic matters to the affairs of Switzerland in general. 1934 has certainly been a very eventful year for our country politically as well as economically. In the early months of the year occurred the resignation of M. Musy, our able and resourceful Minister of Finance for nearly twenty years. His resignation was soon followed by the one of M. Häberlin, our trusted Minister of Justice and Police. M. Musy was replaced by Ständerat Etter from Zoug and M. Häberlin's post was filled by Ständerat Baumann from Appenzell, Auser-Rhoden.

Now, news reaches us of the decision of Federal Councillor Schulthess to retire from his office this spring. M. Schulthess, who has been Chief of the Federal Department of Public Economics since 23 years, is with M. Motta, the senior member of the Federal Council. In November last, he made a very important speech at Aarau, dealing with the economic difficulties Switzerland has to face. M. Schulthess told the Swiss people very frankly that Switzerland could not remain an island of high prices and of a too high standard of living, but that she must adjust herself to the conditions prevailing in the world at large. This speech created a great sensation in Switzerland as well as abroad and it has been said, especially in certain foreign papers, that M. Schulthess had admitted the failure of the economic policy which he has supported during the last years. But, far from denoting a change of economic policy, this speech once more clearly showed that M. Schulthess has been and still is convinced that Switzerland must adjust herself carefully to the prevailing economical conditions. In fact, it was due to his personal action that the Swiss Government published, on March 2nd, 1932 already, a message in that very sense.

At this juncture the speaker proposed that a telegram of appreciation should be sent to Federal Councillor Schulthess, voicing the high appreciation for the great services which the departing Magistrate has rendered to his country during the many years in which he held his high office. This proposal was carried with great acclamation.

Monsieur Paravicini then concluded his address in saying:

To-morrow the Swiss people will have to take a most serious decision by voting for the prolongation of the Swiss military service and an increase of military expenditure. We all hope, that despite the tremendous propaganda which has been made in certain quarters against the Government's proposals, the Swiss people will show themselves worthy of their past, and of their country which still remains one of the freest and the most beautiful in the world.

This remarkable speech of the Minister was greatly applauded.

A Swiss Mercantile Banquet without guests is unthinkable, and true to their generous tradi-

tions, the Society invited well over thirty guests to sit down at their table. The toast to the Guests and the Ladies was entrusted into the capable hands of M. A. C. Stähelin, a former President of the S.M.S., who accomplished his task with his usual efficiency. He informed the company that the following gentlemen from the Legation were present:—

Monsieur Ch. de Jenner, accompanied by Madame de Jenner,
Monsieur W. A. de Bourg, accompanied by Madame de Bourg,
Monsieur W. Rüfenacht,
Monsieur P. Hilfiker,

The Swiss Churches were represented by M. R. Hoffmann-de Visme, M. C. Th. Hahn, accompanied by Mme. Hahn and Pater Oliver Maradan of the University of Fribourg.

That the S.M.S. entertains friendly relations with all their sister Societies was proved by the attendance of the representatives of the following Societies:

City Swiss Club (Messrs. H. Senn and G. Marchand),

Fonds de Secours (Mr. Dupraz),
Unione Ticinese (Mr. Demaria),
Nouvelle Société Helvétique (Mr. Suter),
Swiss Orchestral Society (Mr. Dick),
Swiss Choral Society (Mr. Gerber),
Swiss Club Birmingham (Mr. Brun).

Mr. Stähelin also welcomed Mr. G. De Brunner, one of the Trustees of the Society, Mrs. Lunghi-Rezzonico, Dr. Kessler, London correspondent of the "Neue Zürcher Zeitung," Dr. Egli, London correspondent of the "Bund," and Mr. A. Stauffer, accompanied by Mrs. Stauffer, of the "Swiss Observer."

The introduction was accompanied by various witty remarks also addressed to the Ladies, which once more proved that Mr. Stähelin is an after-dinner speaker *par excellence*.

Compliments so lavishly bestowed require, and deserve an acknowledgement, and the task of saying "Thank you very much" was entrusted to Mr. Senn, President of the City Swiss Club, who, by the way, is also an old member of the S.M.S.

In announcing him, my friend Mr. Schneider somehow experienced difficulties in pronouncing the name of the Society which the speaker was representing, which rather surprised me, as I noticed, being in his vicinity, that his beverage consisted of Ginger Ale only. This example of tongue twisting unfortunately affected my friend Mr. Senn too, and he had considerable difficulty in uttering the name of his Society, but as I noticed no "Ginger Ale" in front of him, he might perhaps be excused. That we are suffering still from the "economic blizzard" which the President mentioned in his speech was apparent, as a good many of my fellow guests were on the "Dole" but they seemed to enjoy it.

Mr. Senn said:

I take it as a very high compliment and am flattered that the Committee of the Swiss Mercantile Society should have again asked me, in the capacity of President of the City Swiss Club, to reply to the toast of the Guests and the Ladies.

This is always a very pleasant task and on behalf of the Guests, the Ladies and myself, let me assure you that we very much appreciate your invitation and the opportunity afforded us of spending such a happy and pleasant evening with you.

We thank you for your excellent hospitality and congratulate you on the undoubted success of the gathering. I am confident that I am expressing the true sentiments of your Guests and the Ladies when I offer to Mr. Stähelin, who has proposed the toast with such charm and such exemplary efficiency, our gratitude for his kind words.

The Swiss Mercantile Society is doing work of great importance and is being watched and it's activities encouraged from far and near, and because of the prevailing anxiety in the commercial world and the consequent widespread unemployment is it's efficiency more than ever necessary to-day.

It is only those young people who receive the best preparation for their commercial life and are thus best equipped for the struggle, who will succeed and I would like to wish the Society all possible success to that end.

With so many charming Ladies present and so many young gallants murmuring under their breath "cut the cackle and get on with the Dance" I am sure I shall be called a horrid bore if I take up any more time so I will call upon my fellow Guests and the Ladies to rise and drink to the further prosperity of the Swiss Mercantile Society and to the success of the great work it is carrying on here.

The applause which Mr. Senn received on resuming his seat was a hearty one.

That the members of the S.M.S. do not forget their unfortunate brethren, who are in straitened circumstances was proved by an appeal made for Charity by Mr. Boos, who spoke straight from the

heart, and that it went to those quarters was proved by the splendid result, as over £41 were collected which constituted a record of which the Society can be proud.

This appeal concluded the speech-making and the Hall was made ready for the dancing. I need hardly say that the second part of the programme was equally successful, a welcome item was the various turns supplied by the Trocadero Cabaret by the courtesy of Mr. Delaloye.

It was altogether a most enjoyable evening, which will leave pleasant memories behind to all those who attended this function.

ST.

CITY SWISS CLUB.

Messieurs les membres sont avisés que

L'ASSEMBLEE MENSUELLE

aura lieu le 5 mars au Restaurant PAGANI, 42, Great Portland Street, W.1. et sera précédée d'un souper à 7 h. 15 précises (prix 5/-).

ORDRE DU JOUR:

Procès-verbal. Admissions. Démissions Divers.

Pour faciliter les arrangements, les participants sont priés de bien vouloir s'inscrire au plus tôt auprès de Monsieur P. F. Boehringer, 23, Leonard Street, E.C.2. (Téléphone: Clerkenwell 9595) Le Comité.

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FORTHCOMING EVENTS.

Tuesday, March 5th — City Swiss Club — Monthly Meeting — preceded by dinner (7.15 sharp) at Pagani's Restaurant, Great Portland Street, W. (see advert.).

Tuesday, March 5th, from 8 p.m. to midnight — Swiss Mercantile Society Ltd. — Dance at the Royal Hotel — Woburn Place, Russell Square, W.C.1.

Wednesday, March 6th, at 7.30 p.m. — Société de Secours Mutuels — Monthly Meeting, at 74, Charlotte Street, W.1.

Wednesday, March 13th, at 8 o'clock — Swiss Mercantile Society Ltd. — Monthly Meeting — followed by a lecture "Flying around the Ancient World," by O. E. Simmonds, Esq., M.A., F.R.A.C.S., M.I.A.C.E., M.P.

Saturday, March 16th, 7 o'clock sharp — City Swiss Club — Dinner and Dance at the May Fair Hotel, Berkeley Square, W.1.

Saturday, March 16th — Ice Hockey Match, (Swiss National Team v Wembley Canadians) at Wembley.

Monday, March 18th — Ice Hockey Match, (Swiss National Team v England) at Queen's Road Rink, Bayswater.

Wednesday, March 20th — Ice Hockey Match, (Swiss National Team v Streatham) at Streatham Ice Rink.

Wednesday, March 20th — at 7.45 p.m. — Nouvelle Société Helvétique — Monthly Meeting, to be followed by a causerie by the Rev. Hoffmann-de Visme on: Naples et les Suisses," at the "Swiss House," 34/35, Fitzroy Square, W.1.

Saturday, March 23rd — Swiss Club Birmingham — Annual Dinner and Ball — at the Midland Hotel, Birmingham. (Reception 6h30, Dinner 7 o'clock.

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6h.30 — Prédication, M. R. Hoffmann-de Visme.

N.B.—Les cultes de Ste Cène ont été reportés au 10 Mars.

SERVICE FUNEBRE.

Au Crématoire de Norwood, Emile Albert César Matthey, La Brévine (Neuchâtel) né le 9 Juillet 1875, décédé le 24 Février 1935, dans sa 60e année.

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Sonntag, den 3 März 1935.

11 Uhr morgens, Gottesdienst und Sonntagsschule.

7 Uhr abends, Gottesdienst. Predigt: Seemannsmissionar Schwedes.

Dienstag, den 5. März 1935.

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Printed for the Proprietors, by THE FREDERICK PRINTING CO., LTD., at 23, Leonard Street, London, E.C.2.