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Welcome of the
SWISS MINISTER
 and
Madame THURNHEER

at the

**DORCHESTER HOTEL, PARK LANE,
 LONDON, W.,**

on **SATURDAY, MARCH 2nd, 1940.**



The memory of the farewell party to Monsieur and Madame Paravicini at the Monico is still very vivid, and we can yet feel the heartache which this parting caused us; the emotion with which we took leave of them on that memorable night will remain with us all our many a day.

On Saturday last, we witnessed another wave of emotion sweep over more than 900 members of the Swiss Colony.

This time it was not to say farewell, but to welcome the new Swiss Minister and Madame Thurnheer.

The party was conspicuous by the absence of any ceremony; it was in the real sense of the word a family party. One could have wished, that more seating accommodation had been available, or that some members of the gathering would have shown less tenacity in sticking to their seats and had given the "other fellow" a chance. I understand, however, that the organising committee had reckoned with a much smaller attendance, I will therefore not stretch this point to any extent, and I feel sure, that the many who tried to balance their cup of tea in one hand and a plate of cakes in the other will have forgotten this inconvenience by now.

Such a large attendance does credit to the Colony, and it must have been pleasing to both the Minister and Madame Thurnheer to see that their arrival in this great metropolis has given such genuine pleasure and that they were received, figuratively speaking, "with open arms."

The Swiss Colony, is, as the Chairman rightly said, first and foremost benevolent, and I even take the risk of being accused of blowing the Colony's "own trumpet," if I declare that the Swiss Colony in Great Britain is one of the most generous ones of all the colonies abroad.

We are at times critical, and even unruly, but we are and have always been faithful to our beloved country, and loyal to its representative.

This loyalty, which has never wavered, through good and bad times, has always been reciprocated in

the same generous manner, and I feel sure that therein lies the secret of the happy relationship which in the past has existed between the Colony and the Legation.

Monsieur Thurnheer has taken up his post in a difficult time, heavy are the clouds which hover over a war-torn world, misery and distress are rampant, and with a sad heart we look into the future.

We are fully aware of his tremendous task, and of his great responsibilities, and we pledge ourselves not to add to his burden in making heavy demands on his time for social functions, etc.

He has at his side, as his immediate collaborators at the Legation, and the Special Division, men of experience and capabilities, who are greatly esteemed in the Colony; to these we give the same hearty support and extend the same loyalty.

Monsieur Thurnheer and his collaborators are a link in the Swiss "Magenot Line," we are the soldiers; shoulder to shoulder, we stand together, and man the line, faithful to our age-long tradition, and as the Chairman said in his address "when we are needed, call us, and we will answer to a man, — present."

Madame Thurnheer has a no less onerous task, although in a different sphere. She has already given us proof that she is eager to collaborate with us in caring for our compatriots, many of whom, through no fault of their own, are in dire distress; by doing so she has captured our hearts, and we pray that God's blessing will rest on her work.

We all hope that in not too distant a time, the bells will herald in peace, and that we shall all be able to help to rebuild a better and happier world; in the final issue, it is the ploughshare that remains after the sword has been broken; but until this time comes we must remain at our post ever watchful.

And now let me return to the function. M. Louis Chapuis, who acted as Chairman, addressed the gathering as follows:—

It is our centuries' old custom that whenever and wherever Swiss are gathered, they must have speeches and sing national songs. To-day we shall

not depart from that old tradition and, indeed, our voices shall ring to their utmost in personal and patriotic tribute to the occasion.

I know that every one of you is eager and impatient to hear our distinguished guest of honour, but I beg of you to bear with me for a few moments.

On behalf of the organising committee, I heartily thank you all for your wonderful response to our invitation to meet and enthusiastically greet our new Minister, Monsieur Walter Thurnheer and Madame Thurnheer, who, by her grace and charming simplicity, has already conquered our hearts.

Monsieur le Ministre,

In the name of the Swiss Colony in Great Britain, I have the great honour to extend to you and to Madame Thurnheer a warm and hearty welcome among us.

We might have wished that this welcome could have taken the form of a banquet with the usual pomp and circumstance, where we could have toasted you with glasses filled with wine instead of cups full of tea. Yet our pleasure at meeting you could not have been greater, or our greetings and our sentiments more sincere.

This is the family party of the Swiss Colony, of which you are now the head, and it was your wish to have the opportunity of meeting your compatriots in this simple manner. I know that the very simplicity of this gathering must bring a closer contact between you and the members of your new family than could possibly have been achieved by a dozen of more formal occasions.

You will find that the Swiss Colony is well organised in every sphere of its activities.

First and foremost: Benevolence! Of this, Monsieur le Ministre, you are already aware since your first contact here was with the Swiss Benevolent Society. Furthermore, Madame Thurnheer has already given a proof of her kindly interest in visiting the Home for the Aged Swiss, which she has graciously taken under her personal patronage. Benevolence plays a part in nearly all our Swiss functions and I am sure that you, Monsieur le Ministre and Madame Thurnheer, are happy to know that even to-day we are all helping to bring relief to those of our compatriots who are in distressed circumstances.

Then we have our two Churches, or rather, two places of worship united in one Swiss Church. You will also discover that we have over a score of Swiss Societies and Institutions embracing every social and cultural interest.

The Members of these component parts of our Colony all hope that at some time or other you will honour them by your presence at their meetings. In every one you will find a truly Swiss atmosphere and a profound attachment to our native land, coupled with a sincere love for this hospitable country and for its people, whose aims and ideals live in our hearts and in our souls.

Monsieur le Ministre,

The Federal Council have entrusted you with a great and difficult mission at a time when Europe is in turmoil, when the horrors of war are threatening the peaceful freedom of all the small nations.

We admire your courage in accepting in these times the great responsibility of coming to the Court

of St. James to uphold the national and vital interests of our beloved Motherland.

You are now our Standard Bearer, and around you we shall rally. We pledge ourselves to support you in your great task; we pledge our loyalty and our devotion to Switzerland, and should the time come when we are needed, call us and with one voice we will answer: "Present!"

We wish you good luck and pray that Providence will grant you the strength and the health which you will need to fulfil your difficult mission.

May the years that you and Madame Thurnheer will spend in our midst be among the happiest of your life.

Long applause greeted the Chairman on resuming his seat.

The toastmaster then announced that the Swiss Minister wished to reply to the Chairman. Amidst almost tumultuous applause the Minister arose and said:

The Swiss Societies in London were kind enough to organize this Reception so that we all should have an opportunity of getting acquainted. My Wife and I looked forward with great pleasure to this day. To the Committee who took charge of the organization, to the ladies who presented my wife with such beautiful flowers and to the Chairman who welcomed us with such hearty words, I wish to express in the name of us both our sincere thanks.

What struck me most in the speech of M. Chappuis was the spirit of loyalty to Switzerland and its representative. I can assure you that I, on my part, reciprocate these sentiments towards the Colony. The fact that the Swiss Benevolent Society is profiting by these pleasant hours we are spending together is looked upon by me as a good omen for the future. Swiss people will always

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stand together helping each other when they are in difficulties.

When you came together last time at the Monico, it was to say good-bye to my friend and predecessor, Monsieur and Madame Paravicini. With your permission I would like to suggest that we send them a wire of greetings across the Channel.

I have come to this important post in very earnest times. The British Empire and France, Switzerland's neighbour to the West, are at war with Germany, our neighbour to the North and East. Along the border of France and Germany there are two parallel chains of tremendous fortifications: the Maginot Line and the Siegfried Line. They both end to the South, right on our borders. They even stretch out their arms to the left and right along our frontiers. It is therefore evident that Switzerland, in spite of its size, has become from a political and military point of view considerably more important.

Under these circumstances and in an age where international confidence is getting rare, it is good to know that Switzerland's neutrality is absolutely trustworthy. We have proved it, neutrality is part of our tradition, since centuries it has been our policy to remain neutral and we have kept our neutrality in many difficult moments of our history to the benefit of everybody. But this does not mean that we would allow anybody to violate it, we would immediately resist any aggression to our utmost.

That is why at the beginning of this war Switzerland quickly put its whole army on the borders. Ever since every fifth male Swiss is under arms. We spend daily three to four million Swiss francs for our defences. Besides, in view of the difficult times, our Government and Parliament have long before the war taken farsighted economic and military preparatory measures which meant an additional expense of several hundred millions.

We are spending this hard earned money without grudge. Our soldiers faithfully stand guarding the borders. On our farms, in the factories, in the offices, men and women carry on with strongly reduced staffs and labour without complaining. Everyone is doing gladly his duty with determination and a cheerful heart knowing that they are thereby guarding the freedom of every single Swiss, our families, our institutions, the freedom of our beloved country, Switzerland.

The address of the Minister, which was at times interrupted by hearty applause, earned him a tremendous ovation.

Before this happy gathering came to an end, the Minister and Madame Thurnheer shook hands with a great number of those who were present, and if all the good and sincere wishes they received are fulfilled the Minister's "séjour" amongst us will be a happy one.

ST.

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LETTER BOX.

M. F. — Pleased to hear that you like extracts from the English press. We have purposely not reproduced the article from the "Evening Standard" (21.2.40) as apart from a few inaccuracies such as "our army horses hauling 16inch guns" it contains nothing new to Swiss readers. The article has since appeared in several provincial papers but with a more engaging portrait of General Guisan; his counterfeit in the "Evening Standard" leisurely drawing out the last juice of a "Stumpe" certainly suggests that the photographer forgot to tell him to look pleasant.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS.

Wednesday, March 13th, at 7.30 p.m. — Swiss Mercantile Society — Monthly Meeting, at 34-35, Fitzroy Square, W.1.

NOUVELLE SOCIÉTÉ HELVÉTIQUE: *Rectification*:

Friday, March 15th, 1940 — Monthly Meeting — at the "Foyer Suisse," 12, Bedford Way, W.C.1. Supper at 6.30 sharp, to be followed at 7.30 by a causerie by Henry C. Balser, Esq., on "Things in General."

Divine Services.

Dimanche 10 mars 1940: à l'Eglise Suisse, 79, Endell Street, W.C.2.

11h. Culte M. M. Pradervand.

11h. Ecole du dimanche.

6h. Culte en allemand au Foyer Suisse.

Mardi 12 mars, à 2h.30, Réunion de couture au Foyer Suisse, 15, Bedford Way, Russell Square, W.C.1.

Pour tout ce qui concerne le ministère pastoral, prière de s'adresser à Monsieur le pasteur Marcel Pradervand, 65, Mount View Road, N.4. (Téléphone Mountview 5003). Heure de réception à l'église le mercredi de 11-12h.30.

Sonntag, den 10. März 1940: in der Schweizerkirche, 9, Gresham Street, E.C.2.

11 Uhr. Gottesdienst.

6 Uhr. Gottesdienst im Foyer Suisse, 15 Bedford Way, W.C.1.

Für Amtshandlungen u. alle Anfragen wende man sich an Pfr. Stutz, 23, Womersley Road, N.8. (MOU. 4649).

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