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CITY SWISS CLUB LUNCHEON.

Held on Saturday, October 4th, 1941, at the
Dorchester Hotel, Park Lane, W.

In the Chair:

M. Louis Chapuis, President.

Encouraged by the great success with which the last June meeting at the Dorchester Hotel met, arrangements were made by the Committee of the City Swiss Club to again ask the Ladies to participate at our monthly re-union.

The Luncheon held on Saturday, October 4th, was once more an undeniable success, mainly due to the presence of the "Angels," as the President called the Ladies in his introductory address, in fact they brought to us that celestial peace which apparently the world at present cannot give us. —

As on former occasions the members and guests, numbering close on two hundred, assembled previous to the Luncheon in one of the charming reception rooms which was turned into a cocktail bar.

It is now about five months since the clothes rationing scheme came into operation, and it is gratifying to notice that the Ladies looked as smart as ever, which is a splendid testimony to their resourcefulness, and I am glad to say that, judging from appearances the Gentlemen did not seem to have suffered in that respect either, but, of course, I have not seen their ration books.

Having been able to enjoy a larger amount of beauty sleep of late, the Ladies, some of whom appeared in smart uniforms, looked like a bevy of flowers, which made the absence of real flowers at the tables less noticeable.

The Luncheon started shortly before 2 o'clock and the *Menu* was excellent both in quality and quantity, it included such Swiss delicacies as "Gschneztlets à la Zürcher Art," "Knöpfli" and "Epinards à l'Emmenthal," etc., etc., and the Management of the Dorchester Hotel is to be congratulated on their endeavours to please even the most exacting *gourmet*, it was a meal not only fit for Kings but also for simple republicans. —

Towards the end of the Luncheon the President proposed the loyal Toasts to H.M. the King and to Switzerland which were received with acclamation. Soon afterwards, M. L. Chapuis, who occupied the Chair addressed the gathering by expressing his pleasure at seeing such a large number of members and guests present. He mentioned, that as they were at the moment enjoying a well deserved holiday, "somewhere in England" the Swiss Minister and Madame Thurnheer were unfortunately unable to give us the pleasure of their company.

He extended, however, a hearty welcome to the Minister's representative, Monsieur Charles de Jenner, Counsellor of Legation, whom he rightly termed as an old and trusted friend of the Club. He also informed the company, that a large number of distinguished guests had accepted the invitation of the Committee, but owing to their own wish and desire he would abstain from mentioning names, and following his example they shall also remain unnamed here, with the exception of the principal guest of honour, Mr. Lawrence Howard, a man wellknown both in the Film Industry and in Literary circles.

"Mr. Lawrence Howard," M. Chapuis said, "will presently give you an address on our celebrated coun-

tryman Henri Dunant, and I shall leave it to you to judge whether the choice of your Committee to address you on this subject has been justified."

Finally the President paid a touching tribute to that wonderful woman who toils for us, who stands in food queues, and who prepares dainty meals for us from next to nothing, that splendid woman — but who does not mind seeing us in rags as long as she can use our coupons, — namely the *Housewife*.

This eulogy, so well merited nearly brought tears to the eyes of all the Gentlemen present, and to show their gratitude they decided forthwith to burst into song by intoning "For she is a jolly good fellow."

Why they should be called "fellows" is a mystery to me, and upsets all my notions about sex, there seems to be something wrong somewhere, but as it appears to be a time honoured custom in this country to call them thus, I will abstain from going further into the matter, but it seems to me queer, very queer.

There was even an attempt made by my colleague, the Honorary Treasurer, to honour them by a "Ban de cœur." For those who do not know what this means I may explain, that on counting and reaching the number three, all the Gentlemen give a gentle tap to the quarter where the heart is supposed to be located, thus testifying that the person so honoured is ever nearest to our hearts. I am sorry to relate that it did not "come off," principally due to the fact that a good many people did not seem to have the slightest idea where this most important organ of the human body functions, considering that some tapped the wrong side, whilst others even clapped, which also goes to prove that some serious dislocations must have taken place.

On resuming his seat, long and sincere applause greeted the words of the President.

M. Chapuis then called upon Mr. Lawrence Howard to address the company, on rising the latter received hearty applause. For just over an hour Mr. Howard gave us a vivid picture of the life and work of, as he termed it, "the greatest man that has ever lived since the birth of Christ."

The speaker related that Henri Dunant was born in Geneva, the son of a banker established in that City. He received his education in Geneva, and later on entered the banking establishment of his father, where after some years he became an active partner.

Apart from his occupation as a banker, Henri Dunant, had one big hobby, taking a keen interest in the abolition of slavery; on this subject he read all available literature, and in time became an authority on a problem which, in those days, occupied the minds of the intellectuals in the four quarters of the Globe.

With intense interest, he also read about the work rendered during the Crimean war by that Angel of Mercy, Florence Nightingale whose heroic deeds filled him with admiration, and inspired in him also the desire to give his services to all humanitarian efforts to better the conditions of suffering mankind.

About this time, he was commissioned by his co-partners to write a *brochure* on a hydro-electric plant to be erected somewhere in North Africa, and in furtherance of this scheme he left for Paris in order to induce Napoleon the third to write an introduction to his booklet.

On arriving in the French capital he was informed by Marshall Mc. Mahon that "there was a war on," and that the Emperor had left for Solferino; without

any delay Henri Dunant packed his bag, and in short stages arrived at Solferino, bent on his mission to get Napoleon to write the introduction to his pamphlet.

He arrived just at the time when the battle was raging at its fiercest, and was thus an eye witness of the horrors and miseries a battle-field presents.

The utter desolation and sufferings which defied all human conception made a deep impression on Henri Dunant, forgotten was his business mission and without any delay he hurried to the nearest village and began to organise there and then a rescue party consisting of some English and American tourists aided by the priest, a number of peasants and even school-children, altogether about thirty people. Beds and blankets were fetched from houses in the neighbourhood, water was carried along to quench the thirst of the wounded and dying. He induced a priest of a church situated in the battle-field zone to open the church to receive the wounded and mutilated soldiers, thus imitating the work of Florence Nightingale, who had so inspired the young Dunant in the past.

After the battle was over, he returned to his native city without having accomplished the purpose of his journey, much to the disgust of his business associates.

Whilst the horrors of warfare were still fresh in his memory, he wrote another brochure, this time not about business matters, but about the alleviation of sufferings in warfare, in which he coined that prophetic phrase "A wounded soldier is a neutral and not an enemy."

This booklet became over-night the best seller in Europe, and some single copies were even sent to the United States of America.

From this moment Henri Dunant lost all interest in banking, with great zeal and energy he began to propagate his ideas which he laid down in his booklet. He formed a Council in Geneva to which he expounded his ideas. General Dufour, amongst others became one of his most ardent collaborators, by him he was induced to go on missions abroad.

The first journey which he undertook for propaganda purposes was to Berlin, there he met Kaiser Wilhelm I and his Chancellor Count Bismarck, to them he explained his scheme of the Foundation of a Red Cross Society.

Henri Dunant met at first with little success in the German capital. Bismarck was almost hostile to the idea, and only when, during one of the Court functions, — at which Henri Dunant appeared in simple civilian dress, the only one so attired, — he mentioned to the Iron Chancellor in the presence of the Kaiser, that he was at a loss to understand the opposition to his idea of a Red Cross Institution considering that such a body would take the trouble to look after the sick and wounded away from the military authorities, thus allowing them to direct all their attention to military objects, did he at last gain a hearing. This clever piece of strategy went home, and he was assured of their collaboration.

His second journey took him to Paris, where he was lionised, the doors of every *Salon* were open to him, and the French Emperor called him his friend, support was promised and actually forthcoming.

Within three years, this simple banker became the most talked of man in Europe; he was then at the pinnacle of his fame.

A meeting conveyed in Geneva brought representatives of 16 Nations to Switzerland, and a year later

26 countries were represented again at Geneva, and to-day there is not one country which does not belong to the Red Cross.

Then disaster overtook Henri Dunant, having neglected his business, he was declared a bankrupt. There was no place anymore for him in a town, where a strict conservative *régime* was in power.

Penniless and often in want of food he left his native city and arrived in Paris; but the news of his ill fortune had already forestalled him, and everywhere he went he found closed doors, the man who only two years ago called him "mon cher ami" had no time to see him.

In the meantime the Franco-Prussian war broke out, and once again Henri Dunant began to get busy, through a stroke of good luck he met an American woman, a Miss Clara Burton, who introduced him to the Baroness Bertha von Suttner, who enjoyed great popularity as the author of her book "Die Waffen nieder," he also became acquainted with the Swedish millionaire and philanthropist Nobel. With their help and their enthusiastic collaboration, he again feverishly worked for his idea of the foundation of a Red Cross Convention.

As a compliment to the country which gave birth to the Founder of the Red Cross the Swiss Flag reversed became the emblem and symbol of this institution.

America, which in the meantime became an adherent to the Red Cross proposed to incorporate aid not only for wounded and sick soldiers, but help for all those who suffered from other disasters, such as earthquakes, inundations, etc., etc., this was accepted and became a further charter of the Red Cross.

In 1901, the Nobel Peace prize was awarded to Henri Dunant, the major part of this money award, was paid by him to the descendants of those people who had suffered through the failure of his banking ventures.

Once again the name of Henri Dunant became the household word, honour upon honour was showered upon him, all of which he refused, saying "I have already been overpaid by millions of people who have benefitted by the fact that I have lived." His work was done, he could leave his inheritance to younger and no less enthusiastic people, he retired to Heiden where he died at a ripe old age, venerated and loved by millions.

To-day the Red Cross is firmly established throughout the world, in the United States alone the membership exceeds 15 million active members. The membership throughout the four continents exceeds by far the membership of any single established religion.

Mr. Lawrence Howard in concluding said that Henri Dunant was undoubtedly the greatest Swiss that has ever lived if not the greatest man since the birth of Christ, and every Swiss should be proud that this man was a compatriot of theirs.

"If this man," he said, "would have been born in any other country, thousands of people would flock to his birthplace to pay tribute to the man and his work, his dwelling place would have become a National shrine."

Mr. Howard also added, that Switzerland undoubtedly owed her security in the last war and also in this one from attack to Henri Dunant, as his ideas had made her the centre of all International organisa-

tions dealing with the care of humanity essential during a war.

The speaker, on resuming his seat received a long and sincere ovation. His excellent *exposé* rendered without reverting to one single note was listened to with the greatest attention, he was in fact one of the best lecturers who have ever addressed the members of the City Swiss Club.

Monsieur de Jenner, Counsellor of Legation, thanked the lecturer on behalf of the company for the brilliant way in which he accomplished his task.

The President concurred with the last speakers allusions and he too thanked Mr. Lawrence Howard for his most enjoyable address.

And so ended the second Luncheon Party of the City Swiss Club held this year at the Dorchester, which will leave behind nothing but pleasant memories.

ST.

FROM OUR LETTER-BOX.

Our last issue (September 26th) was a "best seller." We have received many expressions of opinion. One correspondent says that we have rightly lifted the veil from the state of affairs imposed on our country and stimulated by the necessity of keeping the wolf from the door; unfortunately we cannot gratify his wish of substantiating some of the statements brought forward in the article entitled the "Beleaguered Country." The opening lines misrepresenting such established data as to size and population of our country seem to cast justified suspicion on the veracity of the whole article. Another reader states that it is high time that we should realise the exorbitant premium extracted from Switzerland to insure our neutrality. A third one strongly objects that we should reprint such an "instructive survey" containing an accumulation of inaccurate statements. We hold no brief for the author and we should certainly love to refute some of his offensive assertions if reliable information were at our disposal. It has always been the policy of the S.O. to reprint outstanding articles from our English contemporaries and so enlighten our readers "how others see us." We have never adopted the tactics of the ostrich of burying our head in the sands when an attack is launched.

* * *

With many thanks we acknowledge contributions from the following: J. R. Oderbolz, O. Worth, J. Stettler, W. Schedler, J. Zimmermann, H. Schenkel, E. P. Dick, C. J. Bernheim, L. Guggenheim, F. Wechsler, W. Flory, A. Meschini, Ch. Chapuis, E. Widmer, P. W. Tröxler, F. Beyli.

* * *

"The Swiss Observer,"

23, Leonard Street, London, E.C.2.

9th October, 1941.

Dear Mr. Böhringer,

Referring to the reprint from the "Sphere" of September 6th in the "Swiss Observer" of September 26th of the article headed "The Beleaguered Country," I have pleasure in sending you herewith copy of a letter I am addressing to-day to the Editor of the "Sphere." I would be glad if you could find space for same in the columns of your valued "Observer."

Yours sincerely,

G. Wüthrich.

Dear Sir,

We read the article in the issue of the "Sphere" of September 6th: "The Beleaguered Country," with very great interest. The writer of same has collected a lot of information about Switzerland and its position since the outbreak of the war, particularly since the collapse of France, but many of the facts and figures have been mis-stated or wrongly interpreted. An endeavour to correct it in every particular would lead too far, and we propose therefore to deal exclusively with what directly interests us as the representatives of a Swiss Electrical Engineering and Contracting concern.

Besides other things, the article states:

"... and the Oerlikon Corporation in Zurich are going full steam, but they are working exclusively for Germany. . . . the Oerlikon make arms, above all anti-tank and anti-aircraft guns — defensive weapons whose quality is said to be unsurpassed anywhere."

We are here only concerned with the "Oerlikon Corporation," in other words the "Maschinenfabrik Oerlikon" registered also as "Ateliers de Construction Oerlikon."

Oerlikon is a village — now a suburb of the City of Zurich — from which the Oerlikon Company derives the name. The Company was founded in 1876 and in the early years largely manufactured Machine Tools, promptly followed by Electrical Machinery and Apparatus, quickly however giving the electrical lines more attention than that of manufacturing Machine Tools, so much so that the latter section separated from the Electrical Department.

Competition, particularly German competition, in the manufacture and selling of Machine Tools, induced our principals, the Ateliers de Construction Oerlikon, in 1905/6 to dispense with this section to a new concern the "Schweizerische Werkzeugmaschinenfabrik Oerlikon," nowadays also known as the "S. A. de Machine Outils Oerlikon."

The fact that both concerns are situated in Oerlikon occasionally leads to confusion between the two:

- 1) We affirm most categorically that the companies have absolutely nothing in common.
- 2) The statement that the Oerlikon Company are working exclusively for Germany is quite incorrect. Never during its long history has the Oerlikon Company been able to export any of its products, namely: Electrical Machinery and Apparatus worth mentioning to Germany. The powerful Tariff and the State sheltered German Electrical industry saw to this, and all your readers, in the least acquainted with international trading conditions, will readily appreciate this.
- 3) The Ateliers de Construction Oerlikon does not make anti-tank and anti-aircraft guns as mentioned in your article.

May we ask you to be good enough to publish these disclaimers in your valued columns.

Thanking you in anticipation.

We are, dear Sir,

Yours faithfully,

OERLIKON LTD.,

General Manager and Chief Engineer,

G. Wüthrich.