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UNIONE TICINESE — THE DANSANT.

On Saturday, 15th May, 1949, the Swiss Minister, Monsieur Henry de Torrenté, and Madame de Torrenté, accompanied by Madame de Riedmatten, were guests of honour of the "Unione Ticinese" at a Thé Dansant held at the Dorchester Hotel, Park Lane.

A most colourful scene met my eyes as I entered the ballroom — a ballroom gaily bedecked with flags and flowers, where saucy "Swiss Misses" in very pretty Ticinese costumes, complete with "zoccoli," flitted to and fro amongst a crowd of over 500. The atmosphere was so carefree and jolly that I felt as though I had been transported from this island of austerity, right into the heart of "Il mio bel Ticino" — though not all those present had forgotten the rationing problems, for at an adjoining table I espied a very thrifty lady who had brought along her own little jar of sugar!

Mr. Harry Vardon's excellent Band enticed everyone on to the dance floor — and here I must pay a special tribute to the gentlemen, who suffered the heat of the day with true courage and gallantry, mopped their brows, then with renewed vigour, joined the merry throng and danced again and again.

After a most welcome and delicious tea, the popular President, Mr. Carlo Berti, addressed a few words. He said that it was always a pleasure to greet members of the Unione Ticinese and their friends, but this day more so than ever, for he had also the honour of greeting the Swiss Minister and Madame de Torrenté for the first time in their midst. They had been most anxious to welcome him and were happy indeed that he and Madame de Torrenté had been able to be present. The Ticinese were proud of their homeland, and would always give their support in every way, for their heart was truly in the right place.

Monsieur de Torrenté delighted everyone by making his reply in excellent Italian, when he thanked the President for his very kind words to himself and his wife. He said that he had travelled in many countries and met many other Ticinese, but never in any other place had he met any so united as in Great Britain, and he was most proud of the honour given to him in being asked to be present on this occasion. He recalled many happy days spent in Canton Ticino during his Military Service, and well knew and understood the sincerity of its people. He ended his short address with a rousing "Viva la Svizzera, e Viva nostro Cantone Ticino."

The Cabaret followed and began with a charming dance by three very sweet little girls in pink, pupils of Madame Verishka's School of Ballet, and accompanied by Miss Betty Bray at the piano. This was followed by two solos, "Musical Moments" and "Irish Jig."

Signor Luigi Bruni then entertained us with his accordion — incidentally, he is also the accordionist in the "Corale Unione Ticinese."

The more advanced pupils of Madame Verishka rendered an extract from Chopin's "Les Sylphides," and the six young ladies looked very pretty indeed in their long white ballet frocks.

Next on the programme was to have been Robert King and Leslie James in "Harmony and Syncopation," but unfortunately Mr. Leslie James was indisposed. Mr. King, however, sang two delightful songs, the first a Ballad from the days of our Grandparents,

which he followed up with a Negro Spiritual, "The Gospel Train." Miss Betty Bray played the piano accompaniment.

Again Madame Verishka's pupils entertained us with a further variety of dances, including a solo from the "Swan Lake," "A Russian Dance," "Flashing Butterflies" and others, ending their repertoire with a "Gallop." The costumes worn throughout were indeed delightful and most decorative. I would make a criticism, however, which in my opinion is that the cabaret was perhaps just a little too long, not entirely in keeping with the true spirit of the occasion, and somewhat too ambitious.

The "Corale Unione Ticinese," conducted by Mr. P. De Maria, as usual well and truly "stole the show" with their lively singing, and those of us who remembered the words, could not resist joining in — including a burst of song from Monsieur de Torrenté, who seemed to be enjoying it all immensely.

At the conclusion of the Cabaret, dancing was resumed, during the course of which several lucky people won spot prizes. Later in the evening a raffle was drawn for some very handsome prizes, including a wrist watch, bottles of Whisky, Gin and Marsala, etc. One very fortunate lady held two winning tickets!

"God Save the King" was played just after 10 o'clock, thus bringing to a close a most enjoyable and successful day, but I shall be looking forward with anticipation to "the next time"

A telegram from National-Councillor Pini, reading as follows:—

"Carlo Berti Presidente Unione Ticinese

Dorchester Hotel London.

Sono con voi colla nostalgia dei ricordi di una settimana d'incanto omaggi al ministro di Svizzera e gratitudine a voi emigranti Ticinesi che avete fatto grande e caro il nome del vostro paese in terra inglese.

Aleardo Pini."

was unfortunately received too late to be read out in time.

I.B.



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