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SWISS MERCANTILE SOCIETY

62nd Annual Dinner and Dance

on

FRIDAY, 6th OCTOBER, 1950

at

THE TROCADERO RESTAURANT, PICCADILLY, W.1

In the Chair : W. MEIER, President.

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 wholehearted support for their Annual Dinner and Dance, I had some serious misgivings as to what the result would be.

From comments made here and there, I gathered, that some considered the date to be too early in the season for this function, whilst others were of the opinion 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.

I am, however, delighted to report, that the members and friends of the S.M.S. had nobly answered the call, which proves that the "Swiss Observer" has once more justified its existence; and nearly 150 of our compatriots met at the Trocadero Restaurant to spend an agreeable evening together.

Modesty forbids me to account for the increased number of participants to my efforts alone, the promise made to cut down the speech-making to an absolute minimum — a promise which, I am glad to say, was rigourously kept — had, without a doubt, acted as an incentive to quite a number of friends to come along.

Previous to the dinner a reception was held by Monsieur F. Rothenbühler, Chargé d'Affaires, who represented the Swiss Minister, who is still in Switzerland, and by the President of the Society, Mr. W. Meier, accompanied by Mrs. Meier.

The dinner started fairly punctually and consisted of "Filets de Sole Jenn Bart, Poularde Perigourdine, Haricots Verts Fines Herbes, Celeri Antonin, Pommes Macaire, Timbale Helvétique, Delices Bernoise, Café."

The loyal toasts to H.M. The King and Switzerland were proposed by the President and duly honoured.

During the Dinner a band played various Swiss melodies; not being of Swiss nationality, they made rather a hash of some of them, the "Bärnermarsch", f.i. which should be played slowly and "wuchtig", went off at 80 miles an hour, still they made up for these excusable lapses, later on when playing dance music.

After the dessert had been served, the President Mr. W. Meier, rose amidst applause, to welcome the company and the official guests; he expressed his, and the Society's appreciation to Dr. F. Rothenbühler, for having consented to be present as representative of the

Swiss Minister and Madame de Torrenté, he greeted the following guests also present: Dr. A. R. Lindt and Dr. E. M. Bircher (Swiss Legation), Mr. W. R. Gamper, Trustee and Mrs. Gamper, Mr. F. G. Sommer, Trustee and Mrs. Sommer, Rev. and Mrs. H. Blum, Colonel and Mrs. Stuart Townend (Anglo-Swiss Society) Mr. R. Dupraz, President City Swiss Club, Dr. H. W. Egli, President, Nouvelle Société Helvétique and Mrs. Egli, Mr. and Mrs. P. De Maria, Unione Ticinese, Mr. and Mrs. W. Schneeberger (Schweizerbund), Mr. and Mrs. A. Stauffer, Editor, Swiss Observer, Mr. and Mrs. Gottfried Keller, President Foreign Press Association, Mr. and Mrs. Th. Haller, Swiss Broadcasting Corporation.

Mr. Meier mentioned, that a number of Guests had been unfortunately unable to accept the invitation; he concluded his short address by thanking his colleagues on the committee for the help and collaboration which they had given him during the last twelve months, and paid a tribute to the Ladies present. (Applause.)

The toast to the Swiss Mercantile Society was entrusted to Monsieur F. Rothenbühler, Chargé d'Affaires, who was warmly greeted on rising, he said: Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my privilege to propose on behalf of the Swiss Minister the toast to the Swiss Mercantile Society. My first duty is to say that I have been authorised by our Minister to give you his greetings and to say how much he regrets that he was unable to attend your function in person. M. de Torrenté has further asked me to express to you, to your Chairman and the members of your Council, his great appreciation of the splendid work your Society does and at the same time offer you his thanks for the help and the support which he and the Legation have unfailingly experienced from your members and officials.

Your Society has a splendid record and can look back on over 60 years of conscientious work.

You take care of many hundreds of students every year and with Swiss thoroughness give them a chance to complete their knowledge of the English language and of English business methods. In addition you make every effort to let our young compatriots have an insight into English life in general, and to this purpose you organise meetings, visits, excursions, and lectures on topical subjects to which

not only the pupils of your Society but also the older members and their friends are welcome.

The thoroughness and soundness of your teaching one somehow expects from a Swiss institution. But I feel that special praise is due to you and your teaching staff and officials for the excellent fare you offer outside the teaching hours. These items in your programme are just as important as grammar or syntax, if your students are to have a real understanding of the English mentality and the English way of life. I can assure you that your work is very much appreciated by our authorities and our people at home. It is a pleasure for me, therefore, to reaffirm to you to-night my and my colleagues willingness to help and assist you in any way we can.

You are fortunate in having at your disposal a building which, although far from perfect, is your Home and the centre of your activities. Swiss House is known to all the Colony, as well as thousands of friends and wellwishers at home and abroad.

For untold years the dream of every Swiss in London has been, to have a centre in this metropolis which could become the focal point of many of the Swiss activities as well as a centre for the social life of our Colony. These grand plans have never yet been realised, largely because the financial means were not available.

Your group is the only one who has so far achieved this aim to have a home, where work and pleasure can go hand in hand and thus build up a bond of fellowship which reaches far beyond the limits of the individual. Our thanks are therefore due not only to the present Chairman and Council and members of Committees, but also to their predecessors. They had the foresight and the devotion, they gave their time and energy and thanks to them the Swiss Mercantile Society and Swiss House have been a living, prosperous entity.

Looking at your past achievements cannot but inspire you and bring new enthusiasm to the job in hand, so that in years to come the younger generations will reap the golden harvest of your work. I ask you all to rise and drink with me to the future of the Swiss Mercantile Society, coupled with the name of its Chairman.

The speech of the Chargé d'Affaires was greatly applauded.

To Colonel Stuart Townend, Director of the Anglo-Swiss Society was entrusted the task of saying "Thank you" on behalf of the guests, he did this in his usual attractive and witty way, which makes listening to him a great pleasure.

Thus the first part of the evening came to a close and dancing started forthwith. I cannot help but mention, that, in my humble opinion, the second part somewhat lacked a certain *entrain*, was it due to the all too frequent lowering of the lights, or the incessant flickering in particularly unflattering colours? I consider this could have been dispensed with. In years gone by the Society introduced an Entertainment Committee, which was in charge of all the social affairs, and did their job well, I think by reverting to this practice functions of the S.M.S. could be made livelier and consequently more attractive.

Never-the-less it was a pleasant gathering, enjoyed by young and old.

ST.

SWISS MERCANTILE SOCIETY.

After the customary summer recess, the Society resumed its regular activities on Wednesday, September 13th, when the Monthly Meeting was held at Swiss House.

The members present were extended a cordial welcome by the President, Mr. W. Meier. Several new members, mostly transferred from Swiss Sections, were admitted and it is gratifying to record that the Society has again a small, though steady influx of young members who are able to take up employment here for a limited period.

After the usual routine matters had been dealt with, the Chairman called on our member, Mr. C. Mayr, Deputy Manager, Swiss Bank Corporation, who addressed the meeting on

"SCANDINAVIAN COUNTRIES REVISITED."

In a most interesting and instructive address, Mr. Mayr gave his impressions of a recent business trip to Sweden, Norway, Finland and Denmark, countries which he had visited several times both before and since the war. His itinerary covered a great deal of territory and the speaker not only gave a vivid account of his travels, but also described in detail the numerous places through which he passed, the customs and idiosyncrasies of the Scandinavian peoples, and last but not least, the varied and often beautiful scenery. Needless to say, the main part of the address was devoted to the economic and financial aspects of the countries visited and the many difficulties with which they have to grapple in the post-war period. With his profound knowledge of Scandinavian affairs, Mr. Mayr was able to give an up-to-date picture of the many trades and industries which form the chief source of livelihood of these countries.

At the conclusion of his address, which all present had followed with keen attention. Mr. Mayr answered a number of questions put to him by the audience. Finally, the Chairman proposed a cordial vote of thanks to the lecturer for having provided a highly interesting evening, which was enthusiastically endorsed by the members present.

W.B.

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