

Happy Hours with the Ticinese

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HAPPY HOURS WITH THE TICINESE.

One of the problems which the Swiss Colony in this country has to face is that it is getting older. Fewer young people can settle here, and with every year the average age of the Swiss in Great Britain becomes considerably higher. When I attend one of the many meetings, lectures or social gatherings in the Colony I am usually struck by the alarming fact that the few young people present are mostly temporary residents, and only few parents have their sons and daughters with them.

There is one exception to this. The Unione Ticinese have managed not only to bring the second but even the third generation into their Society, an achievement which deserves great admiration. This is very noticeable at their well-known Sunday afternoon Tea Dances which they hold every few months at the Dorchester Hotel. On 3rd February my husband and I were the Society's guests and we again spent a very happy afternoon and evening with them.

There were over 400 people by the time the dance was well under way. The grandmothers were enjoying themselves as much as the children. The hard-working President, Mr. P. De Maria, welcomed Monsieur and Madame Lepori of the Swiss Legation and Mr. and Mrs. W. Meier of the Swiss Mercantile Society. Madame Lepori looked particularly charming in a beautiful Ticinese costume from the Mendrisiotto. After the President, Dr. Lepori spoke in Italian, giving the Minister's greetings and thanks for what the Unione Ticinese were doing for the Colony, and with moving words he paid homage to the beloved Ticino. The cabaret followed. After a tenor solo, the Sussex Champion Dancers gave a demonstration of exhibition ballroom dancing. The Corale of the Unione Ticinese, as has become a custom, then sang a number of Ticinese folksongs, the tunes we all like so much. The stormy applause showed how much the audience appreciated their singing. Mr. De Maria, who is not only President of the Society but also Conductor of the choir, is to be congratulated on producing new songs again and again. This must be quite a job, first to find them, then to get the music from Switzerland and finally to train the choir. His wife and young daughter were also singing, and his two sons assisted him in looking after the guests. Another family which has quite a tradition in the Unione Ticinese is that of Mr. C. Berti. He is a former President of the Society

and as Chairman of the Entertainment Committee was responsible for the arrangements of the Tea Dance. One of his sons was busy with the tickets at the door, the other was again successful as M.C. He is also a member of the Corale. Mrs. Berti is the Chairman of the Sezione Femminile of the U.T., and as such she does a great deal of work for the Society as well as the Colony. There are other such "dynasties" in the annals of the Unione Ticinese. One of my neighbours was Mr. Eusebio, son of the former Owner of Diviani's Restaurant in the City, that many of us remember. His wife is the daughter of a great personality well-known in the Colony, Mrs. Lunghi-Rezzonico, who died a few years ago, and I have no doubt that the Eusebios will take their own three pretty daughters along too, as soon as they are old enough. Thanks go to these and many other Ticinese families who generation after generation devote their spare time and hard work to the development of their Society and with it for the benefit of the Colony. We Swiss from other parts of the country feel happy in their midst. My husband and I are looking forward to when we can take our own children to such a pleasant afternoon where there is no lack of youth and where the friendly, natural atmosphere makes everyone feel carefree and happy. Few are lucky enough to win bottles of gin and whiskey or attractive spot prizes, but all enjoy themselves. We thank the U.T. for a happy afternoon and evening and say sincerely "Vivano i Ticinesi! Viva l'Unione Ticinese di Londra!"

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