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ANGLO-SWISS SOCIETY.

Dinner in honour of the Swiss Minister and Madame Daeniker.

Some time ago I came across a translation from the Sanskrit which has become one of my favourite quotations:

"Yesterday is but a dream and to-morrow only a vision. But to-day well spent makes of every yesterday a dream of happiness and of every to-morrow a vision of hope."

These words went through my mind more than once during the dinner in honour of Monsieur and Madame Daeniker arranged by the Anglo-Swiss Society of Great Britain on 30th March. Many functions of the Swiss Colony have been held at the Dorchester Hotel, many times well-known personalities have distinguished our gatherings. Mostly the food was excellent and often the atmosphere happy and friendly. Speeches have usually been fairly long and sometimes painfully lengthy. On just an odd occasion an original note was introduced. Very rarely, however, has any social event had all these assets to its credit and nothing to mar the success on its debit side.

Right from the moment the reception began in one of the less frequently used rooms on the lower ground floor of the Dorchester Hotel there was a special tone of exciting anticipation in the air. The guests were received by the Minister and Madame Armin Daeniker and the Dinner Chairman Lord Salter, C.B.E., K.C.B., and Lady Salter. When the company filed upstairs into the Orchid Room a great surprise awaited it. Instead of the usual round tables and often far too heavy top table the nearly 90 participants were seated at one large horseshoe-shaped table. This created a happy feeling of belonging together. The table was adorned not only with lovely flower arrangements of the usual high Dorchester standard, but also with red candles in heavy silver candelabra. In the few feet of free space opposite the Chairman on the inside of the horseshoe the cantonal flags made colourful decoration. Union Jack and Swiss flag were hung side by side at the top end of the hall.

During a very excellent meal Arthur Salisbury and his trio played for our entertainment.

After a most unusual sweet "Soufflé Surprise" the Chairman Lord Salter proposed the loyal toasts and then welcomed the Guests of Honour the new

Swiss Minister and Madame Daeniker. He stressed the Englishmen's indebtedness to Switzerland, above all on account of its great political system which gives each citizen an opportunity to take part in the government of Commune, Canton and Nation.

The toast of the Guests of Honour was proposed by Sir George Warner, K.C.V.O., C.M.G., British Minister in Berne from 1935-1939. He maintained that every Swiss Minister would always be assured of a warm welcome in this country, but that Monsieur and Madame Daeniker would soon create a special place for themselves through their own excellent qualities.

Sir Clifford Norton, K.C.M.G., C.V.O., British Minister in Berne from 1942-1946, recounted his recent call on Monsieur Petitpierre when they made a tour d'horizon just like 10 years ago during his term of office. That continuity, solidity, even stolidity, he said was Switzerland. He wished that the new Minister's stay in Great Britain would be as happy as his had been in Berne.

The next speaker to second the toast was the Bishop of Fulham. In a humorous way he told us how he had flown from Belgium that evening and had arrived in London almost before he had left Brussels owing to that strange phenomenon called G.M.T. He spoke of Switzerland's neutrality and inestimable work of mercy in the Red Cross. He also referred to his work with the English churches in Europe and the help he had always found in Switzerland, where there

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were more English churches than anywhere else in Europe.

The Bishop, incidentally, was the only man present who could in any way rival the festive gowns of the ladies. He was resplendent in his elegant attire of purple cloth and satin, not to speak of his beautiful bejewelled cross and ring.

The Swiss Minister then replied. He said:

May I assure you that my wife and I are overcome by your kind and warm reception. We both feel most grateful and I wish to thank particularly you, Mr. Chairman, and also Sir George Warner and Sir Clifford Norton for the most obliging words of welcome addressed to us. We are greatly honoured by the large attendance to-night of English friends who came to greet us and to show us their lively sympathy for our country. Your kind support is to both of us a great encouragement in the fulfilment of our arduous task and we are conscious that, to reach the same success in our mission as my distinguished predecessors so evidently did, will largely depend on the amount of goodwill and mutual sympathies underlying the relations between our two Nations.

Your kind reception reminds me that some eight years ago I attended a meeting at Zurich when the British-Swiss Society was founded and even then I had the honour to address on behalf of the Federal Government that distinguished assembly under the able Chairmanship of our friend Professor Straumann. We all were guided by the wish to forge a solid platform on which the great interest evidenced in Swiss circles for all emanation of English political and cultural life could be displayed and to open in

a permanent and organised way a channel for the lively mutual intercourse which would strengthen the evergrowing understanding between both peoples in harmony with the spirit of the Anglo-Swiss Treaty of Friendship which reaches this year the venerable age of 100 years.

You know that the Swiss, true to their character, have not the habit to express their feelings in an obtrusive and ostentatious manner. It was therefore a most gratifying experience to witness in 1947 the overwhelming waves of enthusiasm and deep emotion flowing through our country when your present Prime Minister visited some cities of Switzerland; it was a spontaneous and almost explosive manifestation of that bond which we felt in our hearts, a profession of our common ideals of political freedom, human rights and dignity; most of all however we felt urged to express our infinite indebtedness towards the leader of this great Nation who, during the long years of war had borne the brunt in the defence of these ideals. We remember still the great speech which he, then the leader of His Majesty's Opposition, made at Zurich, a speech which laid the foundation for a new European order and gave this Continent a hope for its unification and a better future built on the proper forces which the European countries themselves would bring forward by common effort.

We have now read in Sir Winston Churchill's narrative of the Second World War those historical words, which he put on record in connection with refuting an attack on our neutrality, mentioning Switzerland as the sole international force linking the hideously sundered Nations, "a democratic state, standing for freedom in self-defence among her moun-

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tains, in thought, in spite of different race, largely on our side".

We have read this statement with great relief. True neutrality has so often been decried as sheer opportunism and looked at askance, that we note with satisfaction its revaluation in recent years. The World seems indeed rather gratified that there are still some neutrals left.

On the other side, we follow in Switzerland with passionate attention the transformation of this mighty Empire in a free Commonwealth of Nations. The 20 odd generations of Swiss have in the course of their common destiny experienced many varied forms of political existence that we know that only a pragmatic approach will secure a safe and durable federal structure on such a world-wide scale. So far we consider the Commonwealth as the most successful safeguard for the maintenance of peace, freedom and progress in the world.

After my extensive wanderings in diplomatic missions through the vast Asian Continent where so often I observed the beneficent, civilising and steadying influence of British policy, I feel happy that I have arrived to this great Metropolis. It will henceforth be my privilege as representative of my country to act as an agent for the mutual understanding, an interpreter of tendencies which strive on both sides for further approaches and to facilitate a common accord on matters of vital interest to our countries, very much as your Association has been so instrumental to the same effect.

Given the great attachment and interest taken in each other Nation's life, there is a real treasure of cultural values lying at the bottom of our relations. And there are also topics of an emotional nature which brought us so much nearer. Let me just allude to the happy resonance which recent dynastic events in this country have found in Switzerland. My compatriots care very little for the ostentatious side in public life. They still view an Ambassador with some suspicion and at our official receptions ladies are still conspicuous by their absence; these may be the reasons why the American Government sent us a charming lady as their first Ambassador! The highest function to which a Diplomat accredited in Switzerland will be invited is the triennial federal shooting competition. Yet in spite of such modesty and perhaps in compensation for such deeply rooted democratic habits, our population is easily moved and warmed by the admiration of ceremonial functions at the Royal Court of this country and there was hardly a family in Switzerland who did not eagerly and excitedly follow the Coronation ceremonies of Her Majesty your gracious Queen and her recent voyage through her overseas Dominions.

And last but not least there is the common love for the high alpine regions and the keen interest in alpinism which has, during many generations, united our peoples. The Swiss used in the course of history to look at those heights as places of terror and desolation; but when finally under the influence of romanticism we awakened to the beauties of the Swiss Alps, we were largely guided by the British in opening the ways to those lofty summits and they taught us how to conquer them, one after the other. There are not any more first ascents to be done on the Swiss mountains. But they are there as an eternal challenge to human courage and endurance.

The Minister finished by drinking to the lasting friendship between Great Britain and Switzerland. Great applause followed his excellent oration.

The speeches of welcome were to have been started by Lord Burden, C.B.E., Leader of the Parliamentary Delegation which visited Switzerland recently. Unfortunately he was prevented from attending by illness in the family. He had sent his greetings by telegram.

Professor H. Straumann, Past President of the "Schweizerisch-Britische Gesellschaft" in Zurich, then addressed the company in fluent English. He brought greetings and best wishes from home. The first Swiss diplomatic representative to this country, he said, had only been appointed 300 years ago. Switzerland was still somewhat afraid of diplomats. And there was another thing from the Middle Ages still existing at home, bad road manners! He recalled the foundation of his Society in 1946 and thanked the Legation for their help, as well as Colonel Townsend and Sir Gavin de Beer.

Mr. L. S. Amery, P.C., C.H., Past President of the Alpine Club, stressed his club's fidelity to Switzerland. Most mountaineers after straying in far off lands came back to the beautiful mountains of Switzerland, its excellent guides, good hotels and food. They might *admire* the Himalayas, but they would *love* Switzerland.

The next speaker, General Sir Frederick Pile, Bt., K.C.B., D.S.O., M.C., President of the Ski Club, thanked the Minister for the kind welcome the Swiss



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always gave to the representatives of his club. He regretted the increasing number of skiing accidents and implored the Swiss to train the British to become less dangerous skiers and thus be a better advertisement for Switzerland.

Mr. F. R. Crepin, President of the Association of British Members of the Swiss Alpine Club, recalled the farewell dinner to Sir Lionel Lamb where a rather sad note had prevailed. To-night, he said, there was only pleasure. He knew the Minister and Madame Daeniker had both done much climbing. Here in England there were only a few "Viertausender" and those only measured in feet. But he hoped they might even so be induced to try the British hills.

Then followed Mr. T. D. Richardson, O.B.E., National Skating Association of Great Britain, who said that Switzerland had the best training facilities for skaters. He hoped that the next European Skating Championships would be held there and that Switzerland would become the centre of the Empire and Commonwealth Wintersports Federation.

The Chairman of the Anglo-Swiss Society Lt. Col. H. S. Townend, O.B.E., thanked and congratulated the various speakers on the excellent speeches which had all been within the allotted short time. He hoped that the horseshoe table stood as a symbol of good luck. In that very room in 1948 the Anglo-Swiss Society had been founded, and he thanked Sir Harry Brittain and Sir Gavin de Beer for their continued help. He also mentioned Dr. H. Egli, President of the Nouvelle Société Helvétique and Mr. W. Meier, President of the Swiss Mercantile Society, and thanked Lord Salter for his chairmanship.

Apart from the guests and speakers mentioned earlier and their wives there were several other well-known personalities, Monsieur and Madame Bernath, Dr. Bircher, Monsieur Albertini, Lord and Lady Nathan, Sir Herbert and Lady Cohen and others.

Lord Salter brought the proceedings to an end by expressing pleasure that the occasion had turned out extremely happy both in spirit and execution. He said that what had been spoken was more than courtesy and hoped Madame Daeniker would treasure the bouquet of words and the Minister the laurel crown which had been handed to them that evening.

Thus a happy occasion came to a close. Thanks are due to Lt. Col. Townend for the excellent arrangements and the perfect way they had been carried on. It was indeed a well-spent evening that will make the 30th March, 1955, a happy dream and fill us with a vision of hope for the prosperity of the Anglo-Swiss Society. But above all it stands as a good omen for a happy and successful stay of Monsieur and Madame Daeniker in this our country of adoption.

Mariann.

OUR NEXT ISSUE.

Our next issue will be published on Friday, April 29th, 1955. We take this opportunity of thanking the following subscribers for their kind and helpful donations over and above their subscription: Roland Mathey, M. Weber, Mrs. L. C. West, F. Battilana, A. C. Baume, Mrs. A. Simpson, M. Wiesendanger, G. N. Ross.



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