

# City Swiss Club

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**H. KNOLL.**  
President, City Swiss Club.

## CITY SWISS CLUB

### *92nd Annual Banquet and Ball*

at the  
DORCHESTER HOTEL, PARK LANE, LONDON, W.1  
on  
FRIDAY, 15th NOVEMBER, 1957

*In the Chair:*

THE SWISS AMBASSADOR MONSIEUR ARMIN DAENIKER

On 15th November the City Swiss Club held its 92nd Annual Banquet and Ball at the Dorchester Hotel, Park Lane, W.1.

The previous year the Club celebrated, with much pomp and ceremony, its Centenary — one of those events which are of rare occurrence in the Swiss Colony of Great Britain.

The difference between the number of banquets held and the age of the Club is explained by the fact that during each world war, and immediately after, no banquets took place.

A City Swiss Club annual festival is always looked forward to with great eagerness, not only by the members and friends of the Club, but also by all the invited guests. The Society has always had the reputation of being an efficient and generous host, and this year's function, heralding in the second century, has proved once more that this long-standing tradition is being maintained.

One had there an opportunity of seeing many friendly faces, perhaps not encountered for many months, and to cement old friendships with a hearty handshake, which not even a "freezing Martini" could cool down.

Cocktails being mentioned, I take this opportunity of thanking all those who were so kind as to offer me "a loving cup"; had I accepted them all, I should have had to be "either carried in or out".

As on former occasions, there was a great array of ladies and beautiful dresses in all the colours of the rainbow, which must have made even a confirmed bachelor's heart beat quicker.

I intended to reserve a special paragraph in this report for the ladies, but some time ago a friend of mine called me over the coals for always calling them "beautiful" and "lovely", saying that some of them look quite plain to him. I explained that when I call them beautiful I do not always mean a pretty face; there are various types of beauty. A pretty face is not always beautiful — a plain woman if she is interesting to talk with is to me beautiful in a different sense. Then again a "plain-face" can have beautiful eyes, or a beautiful smile, or she can have a finely shaped ankle, etc. I truly believe there is not one woman who has not something beautiful about her — "God bless them all!".

The two rooms in which the reception was held became very crowded. In one corner one could hear the eloquent French being spoken, whilst in another a group of our brethren from the Ticino conversed in their melodious language. "Schwyzerdütsch" could be heard everywhere. It reminded me almost of a small assembly of the United Nations.

Then suddenly the red-coated Toast-master announced that dinner was about to be served, and the company wended its way to the lovely banqueting hall, which was richly decorated with flowers. The menu-programme provided a striking table decoration.

One missed this time the usual and spectacular entry of the official guests. Whilst everybody was waiting to accord them a hearty reception, scanning the entrance eagerly, it was realised that they had already taken their seats at the top table. Several of the lady guests deposited in front of their table the lovely bouquets which had been previously presented to them on behalf of the members of the Club.

Behind the Fauteuil Présidentiel were displayed two large banners, one Swiss and the other the Union Jack. Years ago the banner of the City Swiss Club — presented by the ladies — used to occupy a prominent position; alas! it has since died of old age making an unceremonious exit.

Before the company sat down to an excellent dinner, produced by the head chef of the Dorchester Hotel, Mr. E. Kaeufeler, a compatriot of ours, Grace was said by the Rev. A. Lanfranchi.

Although perhaps not in the best of taste, it is nevertheless true to say that one of the more important factors of a dinner is the food, and I have no hesitation in declaring that this part of the programme was as successful as the other. Choice vintage wines were served, amongst them such well-known brands coming from the slopes of our country as Dôle de Sion, Fendants, Johannisberg, Dezaley and Neuchâtel.

The "Tafelmusik" during the dinner was provided by Les Brown and his orchestra, which has now for many years played at the banquets of the Club.

Towards the end of the dinner the Toast-master claimed silence for the customary Toasts.

The Swiss Ambassador, in the capacity of Honorary President of the Club, proposed the Toasts to H.M. the Queen and to "La Suisse".

Then came the time for the speeches. The first was to "Nos Invités", given by the President of the City Swiss Club, Mr. Hermann Knoll, making his *début* as President. On rising from his seat he was accorded a sympathetic reception.

The President referred briefly to the Centenary Celebration of last year. He paid a sincere and touching tribute to his predecessor, the late Charles Gysin, by saying, "He was a man of outstanding ability, great personal charm and integrity; he was held in high esteem by everyone in the Colony, and the invaluable services he rendered to our Club will always be remembered".

Mr. Knoll continued by saying: "To-night I have the pleasant task of introducing and welcoming our guests. For more than a century our Club has enjoyed the hospitality and friendship of a great people, and it is, therefore, quite natural that we should invite some of the citizens whom we know to be as fond of our little Switzerland as we are of their great country.

"If we have fewer English guests than on previous occasions, it is due to the fact that for reasons beyond their control Lord and Lady Sempill, Sir Patrick and Lady Scrivener, and Sir Raymond and Lady Needham had to cancel their acceptance at the last minute, and we much regret their absence."

The President then extended a warm welcome to Sir John and Lady Hunt. He said the leader of the

successful British expedition to Mount Everest had also a distinguished military career to his credit, and had proved himself a successful author.

"To-night, however," he continued, "whilst acknowledging the public services Sir John has rendered, we have to thank him for a personal service he has rendered to our Club. You may remember how, some months ago, Sir John rescued a party of climbers who got into serious difficulties in the Alps; amongst them was a Swiss who happens to be a prominent member of our Colony and Club, and it is thanks to Sir John's gallant efforts that that Swiss is with us tonight. I take this opportunity of expressing our gratitude to him for saving the life of one of our family.

"It is in yet another capacity that Sir John is with us this evening. He is President of the Alpine Club, which only recently celebrated its Centenary, and we can think of no one more fitted to preside over the Club during this important year in its history. Please convey, Sir John, our most cordial congratulations to the Alpine Club, and our best wishes for its continued success."

Next, Mr. Knoll greeted Sir Arnold Lunn, saying, "Sir Arnold is a man who, I think I can safely say, knows more about our country than the average Swiss. In the skiing world his name is legion. He is the founder of the Alpine Ski Club and other mountaineering clubs."



THE SWISS AMBASSADOR AND MADAME DAENIKER, MR. H. KNOLL, PRESIDENT OF THE CITY SWISS CLUB, AND MRS. KNOLL RECEIVING THE GUESTS.



**SIR JOHN HUNT, PRESIDENT OF THE ALPINE CLUB. AND LADY HUNT — AIR CHIEF MARSHAL THE RIGHT HON. SIR RALPH COCHRANE AND LADY COCHRANE.**

In introducing Air Chief Marshal the Rt. Hon. Sir Ralph Cochrane and Lady Cochrane, the speaker said that they were for the first time guests of the Club. "I am happy", he said, "to welcome the President of the Ski Club of Great Britain, a Club with whom we take pleasure in maintaining a close relationship. Perhaps Sir Ralph is better known to us for the valuable services he has rendered to aviation. Beginning his career in the Royal Navy at an early age, he transferred to the Royal Air Force a few years later, where he was soon awarded the Air Force Cross, and in this service he held many important posts abroad. He was aide-de-camp to the late King George VI, and subsequently to H.M. the Queen. He retired from the Air Ministry a few years ago and is now directing his efforts to the nuclear energy projects."

The President said of Sir Frank Nixon, whom he welcomed, that he has held important posts in the realm of Finance, both at home and abroad. "From 1926 to 1944," he said, "Sir Frank was Controller-General of that most useful Government organisation, the Export Credits Guarantee Department, when my Bank had the pleasure of working with him in close co-operation. Incidentally, Sir Frank is the holder of many British and Foreign decorations, and if it were not for the fact that we Swiss are too democratic to

indulge in such luxuries, I feel sure that Sir Frank would also have merited such a distinction from our Government."

Mr. Knoll mentioned that the Associated Members of the Swiss Alpine Club were represented by their President, Mr. Connor, who was accompanied by Mrs. Connor, to both of whom he extended a hearty welcome.

The President continued his address by saying, "May I now be permitted to express our sincere gratitude to our Ambassador and Honorary President, Monsieur Armin Daeniker, and his most gracious lady, for honouring us with their presence to-night. Their continued support and keen interest in our activities are highly appreciated. I am delighted to greet also Monsieur de Tribolet, First Counsellor, and Madame de Tribolet, and welcome all the numerous other members of our Embassy and their ladies who are with us tonight."

In conclusion the President extended a hearty welcome to the following: Mr. A. Stauffer, Editor of the "Swiss Observer", Press Reporter and Honorary Member of the Club, and Mrs. Stauffer; Mr. A. Gandon, President of the Assembly of Presidents of Swiss Societies in Great Britain, and Mrs. Gandon;



and to the representatives of the clergy, Rev. A. Lanfranchi, Pasteur C. Reverdin (accompanied by Madame Reverdin), Pastor H. Spoerri (accompanied by Mrs. Spoerri); and the ladies, saying, "I extend a most cordal welcome to the ladies. What would this evening be without their charming presence? It is the ladies who give the all-important colour and life to such an occasion, and I am, therefore, very happy indeed to see them in such large numbers."

The President's speech was very much applauded, and his Toast to the guests, coupled with the name of Sir John Hunt, was enthusiastically honoured.

The Toast-master then announced that H.E. the Swiss Ambassador would address the company. Monsieur Daeniker, on rising from his seat received a hearty ovation; he said:

"Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen,

"I am glad you asked me to take the Chair at this Banquet, for it gives me the opportunity to speak to you. First, I want to thank you for your kind words of welcome, and second, to say what a great pleasure it is for my wife and myself to spend an evening with our friends from the 'City Swiss Club' and their many prominent English guests.

"Inevitably, my thoughts return to the Centenary Dinner of a year ago and the late President, M. Charles Gysin. His demise was an irreparable loss to the Club, the Swiss Church and to the whole of our colony. His many talents, his devotion and sense of duty gave him an undisputed authority. We met often to talk about the affairs of the Club and I admired the tremendous trouble he took to give a new impetus to the club life and to maintain its high traditions. The colony grieves also that another compatriot, who had the honour to preside over his Club's centenary celebration, M. Gustav Senn of the Swiss Club Manchester, was suddenly taken from us. Both names will be engraved in the annals of the colony and their merits and patriotic example will not be forgotten.

"To you, Mr. President, who take over now when the Club is on the threshold of a new century, I wish good luck in your future functions.

"Last year we celebrated the Centenary of this Club; this year, we are happy to extend our best wishes to another Club which has attained the venerable age of one hundred years and is in some way closely related to our country; I mean the Alpine Club. I'm sure there could not be a more appropriate forum than this, to express to you Sir John Hunt hearty congratulations on behalf of the Swiss colony in Great Britain, our authorities at home and the whole Swiss nation. At the same time I wish to thank you for the great sympathies which you personally have always shown for our country and the active and friendly support which your Club has given to Swiss alpine circles.

"No other organisation has done so much to spread the reputation of our country and to focus the attention of people from all nations on our mountain ranges. The founding of the Alpine Club falls in that glorious period of the golden age of mountaineering when, one after the other, the virgin peaks of the Alps were conquered. The majority of first ascents were

made by British amateurs with their Swiss guides. Only eight years after the Club was founded, the Matterhorn, this highest goal of mountaineering ambitions, had been conquered.

"Sir Arnold Lunn, whose presence at this Banquet I also welcome with particular pleasure, has lately written an account of this last century of mountaineering; his work is a centenary tribute to the Alpine Club from the Swiss Foundation for Alpine Research. Nothing did strike me more, when reading his book, than the almost strange mysticism which inspired those early pioneers. In the words of Mr. Leo Amery, another great alpinist, whom many of us were privileged to know, 'mountaineering is a form of worship as well as a sport — a communion with the innermost heart of things'. This ethical aspect of mountaineering spread gradually also to our own people and has become a source of inspiration and enthusiasm for generation after generation of young Swiss.

"During many previous centuries, our population had viewed their mountains without great sympathy, or rather with a feeling of dread and horror, as a hostile element. I do not know how our forebears felt when they repeated the words of the Bible: I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills from whence cometh my help. Early romanticism induced the feeling of admiration and love for the beauty of our alpine landscapes. I felt glad that Sir Arnold Lunn vindicated Swiss honour and mentioned men like Father Placidus a Spescha, a monk in Disentis, as having attacked and conquered many peaks long before the formation of any Alpine Club. When, however, in the middle of last century, our English friends arrived in Switzerland and brought with them a prowess and dynamism so far quite unknown in our valleys, it was only right and natural that the local guides wanted to leave to their 'Herren', the 'Engländer', the pride and glory of so many first ascents. The spirit and science which they brought to Swiss alpinism has ever since proved of great benefit to our Nation. Under similar circumstances, the English brought us skiing a generation later; not only did they show us and the world what a paradise our country is in winter, they taught us a new sport which had the greatest influence on the health of our Nation. We all owe thanks for this to Sir Arnold Lunn, who was one of the prime movers in this evolution. — I say this in spite of the rising incidence of broken bones for which he, too, might somehow be responsible.

"I want to emphasize that the contacts between our two Nations were not confined to competitive or co-operative exercises on a common playground. Ever since the time of the Reformation there has been a close intercourse between the centres of Swiss reformation and this country; Zurich became a refuge and high school for many British theologians and Geneva was known in the British Isles as 'the new world market for the exchange of earthly against heavenly goods'. This is not the place to mention the close relations, which have existed ever since, in the fields of literature, philosophy and economics between our two countries. Only last Spring, the Anglo-Swiss Society offered us a brilliant lecture by Prof. Wildi on the impact of Switzerland on British visitors. Early this year I had the pleasure of accompanying our friend,

Sir Frank Nixon, to Zurich and proving to him that the traditions of our ancient guilds are still alive and active. We found not only many affinities but some former contacts between our guilds and the Worshipful Corporations of the City of London.

"Mr. President, I think it is a worthy task for the Embassy as well as for your Club to keep such contacts alive and fruitful and to direct our best efforts towards mutual understanding. Even by a common effort we shall hardly equal the work of the British-Swiss Society in Zurich which arranges monthly and often bi-monthly meetings and lectures by prominent British visitors. I shall be glad, therefore, if in the future I too may continue to count on your support, as well as that of the other Swiss societies and our English friends. Serving the bonds of historic friendship between our two countries is a job we all can do wholeheartedly, with an open mind and without any ulterior motives."

The words of our Ambassador and Honorary President were loudly cheered.

The Response to the Toast of the guests was entrusted to Sir John Hunt. That he is one of the most popular figures in public life to-day could be gathered from the prolonged cheers which he received on rising.

Sir John expressed his, and his wife's, pleasure in having been given an opportunity to attend this year's banquet of the City Swiss Club. He referred to the recent Centenary Celebration of the Alpine Club, which he said came into being as a result of the growing interest taken in the Swiss mountains by the

British pioneer mountaineers, as an outlet from an increasingly drab industrial world.

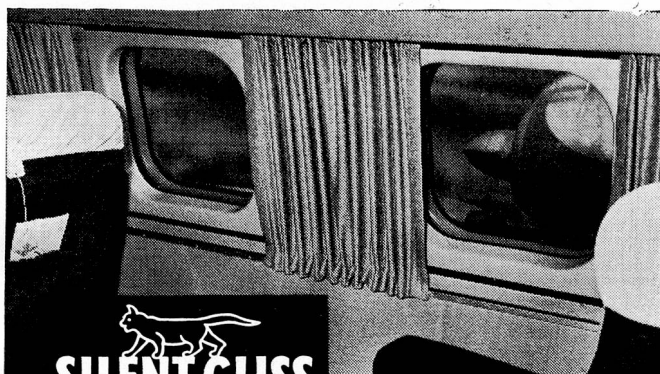
"When we came", he said, "to consider where we should make a pilgrimage to commemorate this event, we decided at once on Grindelwald, where an early ascent of the Wetterhorn by an Englishman is held to mark the beginning of mountaineering sport, and Zermatt, where so many of your highest peaks were first climbed by British and Swiss climbers in partnership."

"Thinking of the countless people growing in numbers through the years, who since those early days have been going to Switzerland — the playground of Europe — one can't help being impressed by the volume of affection in which your country has long been held by us Britishers in all walks of life. Indeed, speaking for mountaineers, what with climbing your mountains in summer, skiing on them in winter, dreaming of the last holiday and planning for the next one, we develop such an obsession that one might doubt whether we find time for any other occupation."

Sir John said that by his speaking of our mountains he may have given the impression that the Swiss people exist in the minds of Britishers only as the incidental owners of those mountains. "I feel sure," he said "all your British guests would like me to assure our hosts here tonight that our sentiments do extend to you also."

The speaker, referring to the meeting of the members of the Alpine Club which took place this summer at Zermatt, said that they will never forget the demonstration of mutual affection and regard

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between the two countries. "I can assure you", he continued, "that our traditional British reserve was visibly blown sky high."

In concluding his address, Sir John said that the feelings of the British people, and people the world over, towards our countrymen were very deep. "In a world which is shrinking economically", he said, "until it must, in the fairly near future, function as a single close-knit economic partnership — or perish — Switzerland has long been a working model of what our world order should become. In this respect you are leading the world. Let us hope the rest of the world will have the vision and the sense to follow your example." (Loud applause.)

When the applause had subsided, word was given to Sir Arnold Lunn, a great friend of our country. He was obviously touched by the spontaneous reception accorded to him by the entire audience.

Dwelling on the close friendship which exists between our two countries, he said that he had visited Switzerland on many occasions — spread over more years than he cared to remember. He had come to know the Swiss very well, and he would not have them different.

Sir Arnold then said, "I am often asked by English people who have never visited Switzerland what I like so much about that country — 'Is it the mountains?'; or perhaps they ask me, 'Is it really as beautiful as we have heard?' and I am puzzled what to answer, for, in the end, magnificent as the mountains are, and beautiful as the country is, if that were all it would not be enough, and I tell these people that they should go and see for themselves — once — and then most likely they too will wish to return; but inwardly I know that is not the whole answer, the mountains and the countryside may be, and are, beautiful, but it is the people of a country who make a country what it is, and I think I voice the feeling of everyone when I say, may Switzerland remain for ever as she is now, a free land where it is possible to live a peaceful and happy life."

Sir Arnold's address, interwoven with a number of witty anecdotes, was very much applauded.

To conclude the official part of the evening, Mr. N. Speckert, Vice-President of the Club, on behalf of the Swiss Benevolent Society, proposed the Toast "La Charité". He made an excellent and sincere appeal to the Swiss members present not to forget their countrymen who — often through no fault of their own — have fallen on evil days. His sympathetic pleading received — as it deserved — a generous response, the sum of £100 being collected.

\* \* \*

After a short interval dancing started. It was a lovely sight to see young and old "titled" and "untitled", whirl round with great exuberance. Tangos, waltzes, fox-trots, Paul Jones, etc., followed each other in quick succession. Even the at one time so popular Lambeth Walk made its appearance again, and many were no longer familiar with the steps, but when it came to the "oy!" and "thumbs up" they were "all there".

Now a word as to "Ball-room" conversation. During more years than I care to remember, I have often wondered what it should be, and I must confess that I am not any the wiser in spite of some experience.

After I had very "intelligently" repeated about four or five times that "it is quite a nice evening", and that "the hall is very pleasant", some saucy young lady said that she thought I had more brain than to talk such "piffle". I made up my mind to talk more intelligently with my next partner, who was a more "mature" lady, asking her whether she had now become a grandmother, but she told me not to be rude. So, thereafter I decided to cease polite ball-room conversation, and the rest of my dancing was executed in grim silence — which got me into more trouble, my partner asking me whether I was tongue-tied!

During an interval from dancing a tombola was held, and Madame Daeniker drew the winning numbers and presented to the lucky recipients very attractive prizes.

Midnight came and passed, and still the dancing was in full swing, but at 2 a.m. the orchestra played "God Save the Queen" followed by "Auld Lang Syne". During the latter the President and his charming wife were ushered into the circle, the entire company singing "For they are jolly good fellows"; and so, once more, a banquet of the City Swiss Club came to its close.

On my journey home I could still hear the happy laughter of the many attractive ladies, and could one ask for a better memory to take away from a gathering, where every activity in the Colony was so well represented?

The committee of the City Swiss Club, who had so efficiently arranged this annual festival in such a masterly way, truly deserve the thanks of all those present.

ST.

## SWISS MERCANTILE SOCIETY

34-35, FITZROY SQUARE, W.1.

# The Annual Dinner and Dance

will take place at

**THE DORCHESTER HOTEL,**

ORCHID ROOM — (Deanery Street Entrance)

**PARK LANE, W.1**

on

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(Until Midnight)

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