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SWISS MERCANTILE SOCIETY

Annual Dinner and Dance

on

SATURDAY, JANUARY 30th 1960

at

THE DORCHESTER HOTEL, PARK LANE, W.I.

In the Chair: O. GROB, President

Some fifteen months ago — on 13th September 1958 to be exact — The Swiss Mercantile Society, a section of the "Schweiz. Kaufmännischer Verein", had reached the venerable age of seventy. This being a milestone in the history of this very active Society, it was duly celebrated; amongst the many guests present on that memorable day was a large delegation from the mother Society in Switzerland, headed by the General Secretary.

On that occasion, a respectable number of members of the London section were presented with the "Golden Pin" of the "Schweiz. Kaufmännischer Verein", for forty or more years of membership, whilst a large number received the "Silver Pin", or what is called the "Veteranen Abzeichen", for twenty-five years or more membership.

The writer, who on this memorable day was "decorated" with the "Golden Pin", thought it would be an appropriate moment to wear this much coveted distinction at the Annual Dinner and Dance, which took place at the Dorchester Hotel, Park Lane, W.I., on Saturday, 30th January. So, in his full glory, he sat at the top table amongst a number of distinguished guests.

Coming back to the Society's seventieth birthday, such anniversaries are by no means an everyday occurrence; in fact, so far only about five Societies in the Swiss Colony have survived seventy years, namely, the "Société de Secours Mutuels" (257 years, having been founded in 1703), the Swiss Club Manchester (110 years, founded in 1850), the City Swiss Club, London (104 years, founded in 1856), Unione Ticinese, London (86 years, founded in 1874), and the "Schweizerbund" (Swiss Club) London (81 years, founded in 1879),

Although not coming under the heading of Societies, it might be recorded that the "Eglise Suisse" was founded in 1762, and the "Fonds de Secours" (Swiss Benevolent Society) in 1870.

In everyday life, seventy years is, however, quite a respectable age, an age when one is looking forward to taking things "a little easier". The Swiss Mercantile Society has now exceeded the three-score-years-and-ten stage by nearly two years, but I am glad to say shows not the slightest sign of old age, or wear and tear, and certainly is not taking things any easier; on the contrary, the Society is still very much alive, which was evident at its last month's celebration.

The party started with a reception by the Swiss Ambassador, Dr. A. Daeniker, and Mr. O. Grob, President, and Mrs. Grob, during which the President's wife was presented with a lovely bouquet. Having been duly "fortified" by cocktails in great variety, the company adjourned to the "Orchid Room", which was decorated with flowers and the Swiss and British emblems. After Grace had been said by the Rev. C. Reverdin, an excellent dinner was served consisting of "Le Consommé de Volaille en Tasse, Les Pailettes Dorées, Le Délice de Sole Cardinal, l'Entrecôte Sauté Marchand de Vin, La Bouquetière de Légumes, Les Pommes Nouvelles au Beurre, Le Vacherin aux Framboises, Le Rocher de Glace Vanille, Les Petits Fours, and Le Café."

Shortly before café was served the President, Mr. O. Grob, proposed the customary *Toasts* to H.M. the Queen and Switzerland.

The first speech of the evening was entrusted, as it should be, to the President, who on rising received a cordial ovation. He extended a hearty welcome to H.E. the Swiss Ambassador, Monsieur A. Daeniker, Honorary President of the Swiss Mercantile Society, regretting the absence of Madame Daeniker, who is at present in Switzerland.

"It is many years" he said "since the S.M.S. had the honour of welcoming at its annual dinner the chief citizen of the Borough of St. Pancras, whose hospitality the Society and the College have enjoyed for a period of more than thirty-three years; I am therefore especially pleased to welcome His Worship the Mayor of St. Pancras and his gracious lady." The speaker further greeted Alderman George Hathway and his daughter, Dr. René Faessler, Commercial Counsellor at the Swiss Embassy, and Madame Faessler, Consul E. Ribi and Madame Ribi, Mr. C. W. Wescott, Vice-President of "The Times" Football Club, and Mrs. Westcott, Pasteur C. Reverdin and Madame Reverdin, Herr Pfarrer P. Wipf and Frau Wipf, and the Rev. Father Joseph Scherrer.

Mr. Grob said: "As the Rev. Reverdin and his wife are shortly leaving London, may I take this opportunity to express to them — on behalf of the members — our appreciation and grateful thanks for all the good work they have rendered over the last twelve years in the Swiss Colony."

The President continued by saying: "It goes without saying that we are very happy indeed to have with us our much beloved Honorary Member, and

former President, Mr. A. Stauffer, editor of the 'Swiss Observer', accompanied by Mrs. Stauffer." He regretted the absence of Mr. Wiesendanger, Chairman of the Assembly of Presidents of the Swiss Societies in Great Britain, and Mrs. Wiesendanger, owing to Mr. Wiesendanger's absence abroad, Mr. Grob also welcomed Mr. L. W. Krucker, Honorary Member and Trustee, and Mr. C. Voegeli, Honorary Member and Trustee, Mr. W. Burren, Secretary and Honorary Member, Mr. W. Meier, Honorary Member and former President, and their ladies, Mrs. Nina Pfaendler, and Mr. C. Slade, Principal of the College, and Mrs. Slade. Turning to Mr. Slade the speaker said, "I wish to thank you, and all other members of the teaching staff, for the hard work you have put in to make our College the success it is to-day."

Mr. Grob then gave a few particulars about the College, saying that during 1959, 446 students attended the day school, and 893 the evening classes, representing increases of 32 and 43 respectively over the previous year. Out of the 446 day school students, 273 sat for the Diploma examination, and 241, or 89 per cent, received the College Diploma.

"We received" Mr. Grob continued, "a subsidy of Sw. Frs. 51,555.— producing £4,239 from the "Bundesamt für Industrie, Gewerbe und Arbeit" Berne, which amount almost made good the deficit in the College accounts for 1958 amounting to £4,307.

The President referred to the presentation of an oil painting to "The Times" football club in appreciation of the hospitality given to the Swiss Mercantile Society's football club for the last twenty-three years. He also expressed thanks to the Trustees, the members of the Council and of the various committees, singling out the two Vice-Presidents, Mr. A. Jaccard, chairman of the Education Committee, and Mr. R. Chappuis, chairman of the House Committee, for the loyal support which they had given him during the past year. Mr. Grob mentioned the passing away, after sixty years of membership, of Mr. Louis Chappuis, saying that his memory will long live in the history of the Society.

In conclusion the President paid a warm tribute to the ladies, saying, "I always think no gathering of friends is complete without the ladies". He asked the members of the Society to join him in drinking the Toast, "The Guests and the Ladies", coupled with the names of H.E. the Swiss Ambassador, and H.W. the Mayor of St. Pancras, Harold P. Bastie, J.P.

The address of the President was loudly cheered. Mr. R. Chappuis, who throughout the evening very efficiently acted as toast-master, then announced that the Swiss Ambassador wished to address the company.

The Ambassador — who was loudly cheered on rising — thanked the President for having given him once again an opportunity of attending the Annual Dinner and Dance of the Society, recalling the fact that on his arrival in 1955, to take up his diplomatic appointment, his first official function in the Colony was to be the guest of the Swiss Mercantile Society at their annual celebration.

Monsieur Daeniker, referring to last year's "Swiss Fortnight", said it was a tremendous success, and a shining example of Anglo-Swiss co-ordination, and a proof that the Swiss enjoy a good reputation in this country, and "especially in the Borough of St. Pancras." The Ambassador paid a

high tribute to the College and its remarkable achievement in instilling a thorough knowledge of the English language into generations of young Swiss who came to this country. Only in recent years, he said, were the people at home made aware of the serious drawbacks resulting from an insufficient knowledge of the English language among the Swiss population in comparison with other Western nations. Monsieur Daeniker mentioned that he had had a telling experience of this when, six years ago, he went to Korea with a team of Swiss officers to work there in close collaboration with the teams of other nations.

Sincere applause greeted the Ambassador's address.

The task of replying on behalf of the guests was entrusted to H.W. the Mayor of St. Pancras, Harold P. Bastie, J.P., who thanked the company for the invitation accorded to him. He recalled pleasant holidays spent on the borders of Lac Léman, watching the arrival and departure of the boats on the lake. He remarked that when he received the invitation of the S.M.S. he first assumed that this had something to do with "shipping", being himself a boating man. The Mayor said that he was much interested to hear of the activities of the Society, wishing it much success in its work. In conclusion he thanked the company — on behalf of the guests and the ladies — for their hospitality.

The last speaker was Mr. A. Jaccard, chairman of the Education Department, who thanked Mr. Grob and Mrs. Grob for the very efficient way they were conducting this enjoyable evening.

Mr. Krucker as usual presented a beautiful evening bag to the lady who had the winning number, which had been drawn by the Ambassador.

The official part of the evening thus came to a close, and after a short interval dancing began with an enticing Viennese waltz played by an excellent dance band.

Shortly before midnight the band played "Auld Lang Syne", a circle was formed, and the President and his charming lady were ushered into the middle of it, and were accorded three cheers. This was followed by the rendering of "God Save the Queen", and this year's Dinner and Dance came to a finish. It was a most successful evening, which will leave behind plenty of pleasant memories.

ST.

Kettner's Restaurant has no music and is not luxurious . . . but the Food and Wine are superb.

