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THE MAYOR OF ST. PANCRAS AND THE SWISS AMBASSADOR VISIT THE COLLEGE OF THE SWISS MERCANTILE SOCIETY



There was an air of expectancy at the College on the afternoon of Thursday, 12th May. The Swiss flag and the Union Jack were gaily fluttering in a light breeze, hailing the arrival of the Mayor of St. Pancras, accompanied by the Mayoress, and the Swiss Ambassador. The visitors were welcomed by the President of the Swiss Mercantile Society, Mr. O. Grob, and Mrs. Grob.

After the customary introductions, the guests visited some of the classes at work, under the guidance of the Principal, Mr. C. Slade, M.A., and the Vice-Principal, Mr. E. W. Makin, M.A., in order to obtain a better idea of the educational activities carried on at Swiss House.

Following the usual practice on such auspicious occasions, all the senior students and the teaching staff of the College then assembled in the lecture room, which was filled to capacity.

Stating that this was a memorable occasion in the history of the College, the Principal formally introduced and welcomed the distinguished visitors as well as the representatives of the Swiss Mercantile Society and its Education Committee, headed by the Chairman, Mr. A. Jaccard.

The Principal expressed his pleasure at the presence of the Swiss Ambassador, Monsieur A. Daeniker, in his dual rôle as Switzerland's representative at the Court of St. James's and Honorary President of the Swiss Mercantile Society. He stated that the college had always maintained close and harmonious relations with the Swiss Embassy, and that this visit was further evidence of this longstanding association.

His Worship the Mayor of St. Pancras was introduced as the leading citizen of the borough in which the College had been domiciled since 1926. Twice, before the war, a Mayor of St. Pancras had been welcomed at Swiss House, but this was the first visit in the post-war period. Mr. Slade said that happily the Mayor was no stranger to the Society, having been a guest of honour at the annual dinner at the Dorchester Hotel in January. Furthermore, to-day's date had been well chosen, it being the feast day of St. Pancras.

The Swiss Ambassador then addressed the assembly in the following terms:—

“As Honorary President of the Swiss Mercantile Society it is a real pleasure for me to be with you when His Worship the Mayor and the Mayoress of St. Pancras are honouring the College with their visit. No doubt you are aware of the great attention our people pay to education in general, and particularly to school training. Direct democracy as we practise it in Switzerland is largely dependent on a high educational standard. We look on it with pride and think there could be no more noble or rewarding task for our authorities than to develop and expand it. Our universities and our technical and commercial colleges attract every year thousands of students from all parts of the world to pursue their studies in Switzerland.

“It is therefore significant that the Swiss Mercantile Society, the representative organisation of Swiss commercial circles in Great Britain, founded forty years ago their own college, which provides a thorough training in the English language, conversation and correspondence, literature, shorthand and other branches of commercial sciences. Conscious that

a solid preparation in English is the foundation for proficiency and success in their professional career, this school, under the very able guidance of Mr. Slade, has helped a whole generation, more than ten thousand, of young Swiss, to perfect the rudimentary knowledge of the English language which they bring from their schools. Rightly, this college enjoys the official recognition of the federal authorities and receives an annual subsidy. I think this is also a fitting occasion to express on behalf of the Embassy our appreciation and thanks to the Principal, Mr. Slade, and his staff for their untiring and devoted services to the college.

"I am sure that the students know how to appreciate to their full value the advantages which this college provides for them. I hope they are conscious that it is not enough to do their homework, to read a lot or to listen to the radio, but that, to be conversant with a foreign language, one has to practise it all the time, also outside the class rooms.

"Our Swiss community in Great Britain, which has kept up for more than a hundred years the good reputation of our people for efficiency and probity, is in great need of the younger element to fill in the ranks. May I hope that with the proficiency acquired through such excellent school training, more and more of our young compatriots will be willing to consider a prolonged stay in this country. I can assure you of the Embassy's support to that effect and I know that the British authorities are ready to grant the necessary facilities.

"I am most grateful to the Mayor and the Mayoress for showing us, through their presence, the sympathetic interest which they take in this flourishing institution; by asking them to spare some of their precious time to visit this college we wish to express our appreciation of having enjoyed during almost 35 years the hospitality of their Borough."

The Ambassador's address was enthusiastically applauded by all present, and the Mayor of St. Pancras, Mr. Harold P. Bastie, J.P., then rose to respond. He expressed his appreciation of the hospitality accorded to him and the Mayoress, and said they still had happy recollections of the Society's function

which they attended last winter. He confessed to having been unaware of the important work that had been going on in this building within his borough, but that he was now in a position to enlighten his fellow councillors. He said that it was not a common trait of the Englishman to learn foreign languages, but that he did admire the sensible approach to the subject by the students who were devoting so much time and energy to studying English. He hoped that this knowledge, in due course, would prove both useful and enjoyable to them in their business career as well as in their social life. In a humorous aside, he stated that the sole thing he had in common with all present was a Swiss watch on his wrist which, he had to admit, was the only thing in his life that was always right.

He said how interesting he had found the lessons he had attended, and voiced his thanks to the Principal and all the teachers at the College for the time and efforts spent by them in imparting a sound knowledge of the language and an appreciation of this country to the students.

The Mayor received vociferous applause on resuming his seat, and finally Mr. A. Jaccard, Chairman of the Education Committee, expressed thanks to the visitors for having spared the time to come to Swiss House to see the College at work, and to the Principal and his staff for their devotion to duty. This was cordially endorsed by all the students present.

Following the meeting, the teaching staff were introduced to the Mayor and the Ambassador at an informal gathering, and thus came to a close a memorable and enjoyable afternoon. *WB.*

OUR NEXT ISSUE

Our next issue will be published on Friday, 10th June 1960. We take this opportunity of thanking the following subscribers for their kind and helpful donations over and above their subscription: J. J. Huber, J. Steiner, Dr. E. Bernath (Bangkok), A. Blunier, City Swiss Club, Mrs. L. Bristow, E. Rietmann-Adams, A. C. Baume, Miss H. Sidler, Mrs. A. Rossier, C. Conrad, M. E. Hauwyler, E. Ulmann, J. Clement, H. Scheiwiller, John Frei.



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