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CITY SWISS CLUB

96th Annual Banquet and Ball

at the
DORCHESTER HOTEL, PARK LANE, LONDON, W.1
on
FRIDAY, 17th NOVEMBER 1961

In the Chair:

Mr. Th. von SPEYR, PRESIDENT

Rapidly, the Banquets of the City Swiss Club are approaching the century mark; had it not been that during the two World Wars these banquets were dispensed with, last month's annual festival would have been the 105th of its kind.

The City Swiss Club, in spite of its venerable age, shows few signs of wear and tear; steadily and unobtrusively it carries on its work. As hitherto, it has lost none of its glamour. Primarily a social Club, one of its endeavours is, and has been, to foster close relations between our home country and our British friends. Important personalities in all walks of life have over the years been bidden to be its guests either at banquets or at the monthly reunions. Prominent politicians, soldiers, writers and scions of industry and commerce have on these occasions paid homage to our country for its humanitarian endeavours, stressing the necessity of having an island of tranquility and peace in the middle of Europe.

* * *

As usual the evening started with a reception by His Excellency the Swiss Ambassador, in the capacity of Honorary President, accompanied by Madame Daeniker, and Mr. Th. von Speyr, President, and Madame von Speyr.

During cocktails, which were served in one of the reception rooms of the Dorchester Hotel, one had the opportunity of admiring the smart *toilettes* of the ladies, and shaking hands with old friends, whom one meets, unfortunately, far too rarely nowadays. Amongst them, one noticed some of the former Presidents of the Club, namely Messrs. A. Rueff, Ch. L. Chapuis, L. Jobin, H. Knoll and X. Speckert. The octogenarians of the Club were represented by Mr. Carlo Chapuis, accompanied by his charming wife — the date of the banquet happily coincided with their 44th wedding anniversary, and many were the good wishes showered upon them.

The lively chatter of the company was interrupted when the red-coated toast-master announced "Dinner will be served." The orchestra played a lively tune whilst members and guests filed into the lovely ballroom to take their places at their respective tables. These tables were adorned with heavy silver candle-sticks, bearing lighted red candles, and the top table was decorated with red and white flowers, presenting a picture of great splendour.

When everyone had found his or her allotted place, the official guests, headed by the Swiss Ambassador and Madame Daeniker, made their entry, amidst much hand-

clapping. The toast-master then announced that the Rev. J. Scherrer would say Grace, after which the company sat down to a sumptuous and excellent dinner, prepared under the supervision of the famous head-chef of the Dorchester Hotel, Mr. E. Käufeler, a compatriot of ours.

Whilst *café* was served, the Toast to "Sa Majesté la Reine" and "La Suisse" were proposed by the President, Mr. von Speyr, the company being upstanding whilst the respective National Anthems were played by the orchestra. (It was noticed that instead of rendering the former Swiss National Anthem, "Rufst Du mein Vaterland", which in the past had shared the tune with the British National Anthem, the new Anthem, "Trittst im Morgenrot daher", which is to be given a trial for three years, was played.) Then everyone settled down to listen to the remaining Toasts, the first of which was "Nos Invités", given by the President. He said that it was with deep regret that he was compelled to commence his address on a sad note, announcing the recent passing away of Mr. de Cintra, a former President and Honorary Vice-President of the Club, and asking the assembly to rise for a brief moment to honour his memory.

Continuing he said:

Your Excellency, My Lord, Ladies and Gentlemen, I am happy to welcome you tonight to our Annual Banquet and Ball, and it is my great privilege and pleasure to introduce to you our distinguished guests.

We are delighted to have with us tonight His Excellency, the Swiss Ambassador, with Madame Daeniker, to add charm to our evening. The heads of our Colony are certainly very well known to most of you and I should like to say how deeply we appreciate their constant interest in the affairs of our Colony, and their concern for the welfare of all the Swiss resident in Great Britain. We can count ourselves very fortunate that our Colony is headed by Monsieur and Madame Daeniker, and, although we may not approve of all the measures taken by our Government in Berne, in this instance we have every reason to be grateful for their choice.

We especially welcome tonight Lord and Lady Nathan; Lord Nathan is certainly no stranger to the City Swiss Club, and indeed is such a well-known public figure that I hesitate even to mention his many fields of activity. Suffice it to say that he was an M.P. for many years and Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for War and Vice-President of the Army Council, 1945-6; Minister of Civil Aviation, 1946-48. He was created a Baron in 1940. Most

of our members will recall with pleasure the very witty talk he gave us some time ago on the House of Lords. I am only sorry that tonight Lord Nathan forgot to wear his coronet and robe for they would certainly have added splendour to the evening and have given great pleasure to the Ladies. Lady Nathan's activities are as widespread as those of her husband. May I just mention, in passing, that she is an Alderman of the L.C.C. and has been a member of that body for some 30 years and was its Chairman from 1947-1948. Lady Nathan was the first woman member of the Metropolitan Water Board and is the President of Women's Farm and Garden Association. These are only a few of the many public posts she has held.

I should also like to thank most warmly Professor Finch and Mrs. Finch for having honoured us with their presence tonight. As most of you know, Professor Finch is the President of the Alpine Club, which has a long and very distinguished history. Professor Finch is a great sportsman and apart from works written on scientific subjects, he has written many articles for the Alpine journal and I would also remind you that the famous book "The Making of a Mountaineer" emanates from Professor Finch.

Mr. Richards, President of the Association of British Members of the Swiss Alpine Club, and Mrs. Richards, are also no strangers to us and I am delighted to have the honour of welcoming them here tonight. I feel sure that they hardly need any further introduction from me.

I am also very happy that we have amongst us tonight the Representatives of the Swiss Churches in London, Reverend and Mrs. Wipf, Reverend and Mrs. Nicole, as well as Rev. Father Scherrer. The devotion with which they care for their flock is something which we all admire and no mean task in what must be the biggest parish in Europe.

We had hoped to be honoured by the visit of Sir Clifford Norton and Lady Norton, but unfortunately, owing to unexpected circumstances, they have been prevented from being amongst us.

I need hardly say that the pleasure of this evening would be completely lost were it not for the many charming ladies who have graced us with their presence. They give not only grace and beauty to our evening but also their attire adds a sparkle of glamour to our ball which should be more than sufficient consolation to their hardworking husbands who have had to foot the bill. I assure you it was worth every penny.

Finally, I should like to mention that, as is now the well established custom, we shall in the course of the evening make a collection in favour of the Swiss Benevolent Society, but I would request our guests to abstain from contributing as this collection is meant for members only, and a contribution by our guests would only be a cause of embarrassment to us.

May I ask the members of the Club to be upstanding and to drink to the health of our honoured guests.

When the applause acknowledging the President's address had subsided, the Swiss Ambassador rose to give the "Réponse".

He said:

Mr. Chairman, my Lord, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I wish to thank you very cordially for having so kindly asked my wife and me to your Banquet and for having addressed us with such kind words of welcome. Nevertheless, I should not be surprised if some feelings of frustration existed in your ranks about an Honorary President

who is so seldom seen at your parties. Well, last year it would hardly have been possible for us to be present, as we were on our tour through Africa. Perhaps we spent the very evening of your Ball somewhere out in the bush or in the savannah in the company of elephants, water bucks, rhinoceroses, crocodiles or hippopotamuses; I must confess that we did not feel any the worse for it.

I am glad to read in your annual report that the Club is flourishing and that you have had quite a considerable influx of new members, equal to almost 10 per cent of the number of active members. It is gratifying for us all that the younger generation should be so well represented, and that those under 45, in particular, should have felt the need to make closer contact with each other. This promises well for the future; the apprehension which is so generally felt in our colonies abroad because of the lack of interest of their youth is at least not shared by your committee.

In another Club, the Swiss Rifle Association, we have had to contend with the opposite difficulty: a special cup has recently been offered which can be won only by members above the critical age of 45, in order to prevent the Club's trophies from being invariably taken home by young members.

You have no such trophies to distribute in your Club, but the more energy and time each individual member will devote to the Club's activities, the more the Club will benefit and the more he will profit from it himself.

It is the first time that you, Mr. President, preside over this annual function. This is a fitting occasion to congratulate you and express our heartfelt wish for a successful term of office. At the same time I should like to express my appreciation to your predecessor who, with the support of his charming wife, has done so much to keep the Club life in movement, to make it attractive to young and old, to increase the number of meetings whose success was assured by the gracious presence of the gentler half of the colony and thereby to secure the Club's future.

The City Swiss Club has an important tradition to uphold as an outpost of Switzerland in this great and hospitable nation. It is our mission to be a bridge or an active ferment, in order to maintain and enliven the relations between our two countries. I have just read a stimulating lecture by Professor Straumann, the Rector of the University of Zurich and founder-President of the Anglo-Swiss Society at home, whom time and again we have had the pleasure of welcoming here in London.

He shows how varied have been the contacts between our two peoples in the course of history. For Switzerland has not always been the playground of Europe as it is today, when an ever increasing stream of visitors is almost exclusively interested in our landscapes, comfortable lodgings, good food and travelling facilities.

Following the Reformation in both countries these contacts were all based on learning. A great number of scholars and students, many of them refugees from religious persecution, came from England and Scotland to discuss problems of theology and church politics, and a remarkable number of letters were exchanged on such subjects at that time between England and our Protestant towns. They translated each other's works, to a greater extent than Pro Helvetia or the British Council could do with public funds, but nowhere is it mentioned that the English visitors noticed the beauty of our landscapes. When in Geneva or Zurich, they had no eyes for the lovely lakes or the majestic mountain views.

Later, mutual interests were centred on science and literature. This did not preclude trenchant critical remarks about each other. Thomas Moore was deeply impressed by the behaviour of Swiss mercenaries and found them hideous, savage and fierce, and one of his contemporaries wrote: "law, logic and the Switzers may be hired to fight for anybody". Francis Bacon, noting the diversity of religion and cantons amongst the Switzers thought that utility, not respect, was the common bond amongst them. On the other hand, I should refer to a gentleman from Berne, Beat de Muralt, who as a forerunner of Voltaire was instrumental in starting those Anglophile trends on the Continent which have changed the literary scene so much. From long experience he found that the English way of life could only be expressed in paradoxes. He noted "a natural inclination towards indolence and at the same time an amazing energy in his English friends; not unlike their admirable dogs, they were silent, headstrong, lazy, unfit for fatigue, in no way quarrelsome but eager in fight, insensible of blows and incapable of parting". He praised "the beauty of English women and their quality as housewives", and deplored "the fact that most English men preferred wine and gaming to women, in which they were to be blamed, because the women were so much better than the wine". But de Muralt is the first writer on the Continent to refer to the name and genius of Shakespeare. In spite of the difficulties of the language, the classical works of English literature were eagerly studied in Switzerland and the first translations of Shakespeare and Milton's "Paradise Lost" were published in Zurich towards the middle of the 18th century.

There followed the Romantics who had an eye for the beauty of Swiss landscapes. They did not care for our urban civilization, confining themselves to singing the glory of the Alps. Now that the mountain world had at last been discovered and observed, it was not long before British pioneers showed us that this magnificent realm was accessible and found ways and means to conquer it.

Later on, the industrial revolution of last century, the growth of the world-wide British Empire and the final completion of the federal state in Switzerland contributed to give both sides a more balanced view of each other and renewed their interest in each other's political and economic problems.

Thus, our Professor concludes, in each period the observer sought in his contacts with the other country a confirmation of his own plans, attitudes, wishes and interests, rather than the objective qualities and characteristics of the other country. No doubt, in spite of the difference between our systems of government, there is a deep affinity of thought between both peoples, a common pragmatic view on nature and the appetites of men and on the art of government, which aims at avoiding extremes and fostering the spirit of compromise. Switzerland has always been eager to receive the benefit of English culture, but has also been able, on her side, to provide sparks of inspiration for English thinking.

No Swiss authors have ever had such a wide influence on the English-speaking world as those who have penetrated the mystery of the mind of man. May I mention Jung in our time, 200 years before him Hans Kaspar Lavater with his studies of physiognomy and, again 200 years earlier, one Ludwig Lavater who, with his book "Ghosts and Spirits Walking by Night", is said to have inspired Shakespeare's Hamlet.

Our classical writers are still mostly unknown, but curiously enough two books written in a spirit of mild Protestant teaching have had a very wide circulation: "The Swiss Family Robinson" and Spyri's "Heidi".

May I conclude by congratulating the City Swiss Club on being the centre for the promotion of patriotism and Swiss cultural life in this country, by offering praise for a mission so well accomplished and by expressing the wish that your Club may always flourish for the greater benefit of Anglo-Swiss friendship.

Long applause was given to the Ambassador's excellent address.

To the Right Honourable the Lord Nathan, P.C., T.D., F.B.A., was given the task of replying for the guests. In his humorous address he referred to the long and happy connection with the City Swiss Club, wishing it prosperity and long life. The noble Lord's words were much appreciated.

Thus, the official part of the evening came to its conclusion, and dancing to Arthur Salisbury's orchestra started after a short interval. It was a pleasure to notice that apart from the younger generation, greatly in evidence, quite a number of the "not so young" took to the floor with remarkable energy and endurance.

Shortly before 2 a.m. this enjoyable evening came to its close, an evening full of gaiety and geniality, which left behind many pleasant memories.

A. STAUFFER,
Press Reporter, City Swiss Club.

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