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SWISS MERCANTILE SOCIETY

Annual Dinner and Dance

on

SATURDAY, JANUARY 28th 1961

at

THE DORCHESTER HOTEL, PARK LANE, W.I.

In the Chair: O. GROB, President

The final occasion for me to attend in the official capacity of editor of the "Swiss Observer" was the Annual Dinner and Dance of the Swiss Mercantile Society, which took place at the Dorchester Hotel, Park Lane, W.1, on Saturday, 28th January 1961.

This year's annual reunion awakened many memories of happy times spent amongst my friends of the Swiss Mercantile Society — but, alas, all too many of the one-time collaborators and friends who, during and since the period when I took an active part in the Society, have gone never to return! It is the way of life, that with advancing age there comes the feeling of loneliness; new friendships are no longer easily made, and the circle of old friends becomes smaller and smaller.

The Swiss Mercantile Society has now exceeded the three-score-years-and-ten stage by three years, but I am delighted to say there are no signs of old age visible — the Society is as young as ever.

* * *

Nearly 200 members, guests and friends met at the Dorchester Hotel. The reception was held in one of the ante-rooms by the Swiss Ambassador — in the capacity of Honorary President — accompanied by Madame Daeniker and assisted by the President, Mr. Grob, and Mrs. Grob.

Such an atmosphere of conviviality prevailed during the cocktail dispensation that when it was announced that dinner was served, it was quite a while before the company adjourned to the Orchid Room to await the entry of the Ambassador and the President and their ladies — the ladies carrying lovely bouquets which had been presented to them on behalf of the members of the Society.

The top table presented a colourful picture, with the silver cups, ornamented with silk ribbons in the Swiss national colours, which were won by the football team of the S.M.S. College, and masses of scarlet and white flowers. Behind the *Fauteuil Presidentiel* were displayed the Union Jack and the Swiss Flag.

Previous to the assembly sitting down to an excellent dinner, the Rev. Ph. Nicole said Grace, and towards the end of the repast the President proposed the Toasts to H.M. the Queen and to "La Suisse".

Mr. R. Chappuis, who throughout the evening very ably acted as M.C., then announced that the President wished to propose the Toast "Welcome to the Guests

and the Ladies". Mr. Grob extended a hearty welcome to H.E. the Swiss Ambassador and Madame Daeniker. He voiced sincere regret that National Councillor Philipp Schmid-Ruedin, Central President of the "Schweiz. Kaufmännischen Verein", and his wife, were unable to attend owing to Mr. Schmid-Ruedin's ill health. He greeted Dr. René Faessler, Economic Counsellor of the Swiss Embassy, and Madame Faessler, Consul E. Ribi and Mrs. Ribi, Mr. C. W. Westcott, Vice-President of the "Times" Football Club, and Mrs. Westcott, Rev. Ph. Nicole and Madame Nicole, Rev. J. Scherer, Rev. P. Wipf and Mrs. Wipf, and Mr. A. Stauffer, editor of the "Swiss Observer". (Mrs. Stauffer was prevented through illness from attending, and so was Mr. E. Kuebler, President of the Assembly of Presidents of the Swiss Societies in Great Britain.)

The President further welcomed all the Trustees and Honorary Members present, Mr. J. J. Boos, Mr. H. Knoll, accompanied by Mrs. Knoll, Mr. L. W. Krucker, Mr. F. G. Sommer, accompanied by Mrs. Sommer, Mr. C. Voegeli, accompanied by Mrs. Voegeli, Mr. W. Burren, and Mrs. Burren, Mr. W. Meier and Mrs. Meier, Mr. V. Berti, President of the "Schweizerbund" (Swiss Club), and Mr. P. Jacomelli, President of the Unione Ticinese. Mr. Grob mentioned that the Principal of the College, Mr. C. Slade, was unable to attend owing to illness, but was pleased to welcome the Vice-Principal, Mr. E. E. W. Makin, and Mrs. Makin, and Miss Stöckenius and Miss Peguiron of the office staff.

The Chairman then gave a few details about the College, saying that during 1960, 461 students attended the day school and 968 the evening classes. Out of the 461 day class students, 285 sat for the Diploma Examination, and 263, or 92 per cent, received the Diploma of the College. "We received", he said "a subsidy of 56,110.— francs, producing £4,622, from the 'Bundesamt für Industrie, Gewerbe und Arbeit' in Berne, which amount nearly made good the deficit in our College accounts of £4,712 for the year 1959." Amongst the various activities of the Society the speaker mentioned the official visit of the Mayor of St. Pancras, Mr. Harold P. Bastie, J.P., accompanied by the Mayoress, to the College.

The President then dropped a bombshell by saying he does not find it possible to seek re-election as President of the Society at the next Annual General



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Meeting, owing to doctor's advice. He said he was glad to announce that the Council had decided to propose as his successor Mr. R. Chappuis, Vice-President and Chairman of the House Committee. (Mr. Grob's services will be reviewed in a subsequent issue of the "Swiss Observer".) Mr. Grob concluded his address with a charming tribute to the ladies.

The next speaker was H.E. the Swiss Ambassador, who proposed the Toast, "The Swiss Mercantile Society and its College". The Ambassador received a spontaneous ovation on rising.

Monsieur Daeniker expressed thanks for the hospitality extended to him and Madame Daeniker. He said that it was a fitting occasion for him, as Honorary President, to extend sincere thanks to all who carry the burden of their voluntary offices throughout the year. "Only last year," he said "I visited the College in the company of the Worshipful the Mayor of St. Pancras, and was able to listen to some classes. I was impressed once more by the high standard of the courses and the rich curriculum which is offered to our young compatriots." Referring to subsidies granted by the Confederation, the Ambassador said "There cannot be a more useful and beneficial way to spend the means of the Confederation, than by paying annuities to the Swiss Mercantile Society College".

He expressed his regret on hearing that the President will soon pass his high office into other hands. "On behalf of the Colony", he said, "I would like to thank you for your precious collaboration in the common cause of the Swiss community". Striking a more sombre note, the Ambassador said that the outlook for the young disciples of commerce to-day was less encouraging than in former times. "The manifold opportunities once offered to generations of our compatriots", he said, "are vanishing fast. To-day the nationalization of industries and trade has barred access of foreigners to managerial positions in many countries, and in many more having only recently reached independence, it is a matter of pride to replace the foreigners by their own nationals. Perhaps most of our younger compatriots in banking and commerce hardly feel as yet the pinch because we have such prosperous times at home. I think it is all the more important that our young merchants are offered the opportunity of a solid and thorough training in the English language and in accountancy in order to increase their chances in the race of competition. No institution at home could do better than your College is able to do for them. I trust we shall see our hopes fulfilled that an increasing number of compatriots may make a longer stay or even build a career in this country; it is our common concern to see the ranks of the Colony replenished in a common effort to share our responsibilities and also to keep up or rebuild — wherever it is possible — the size and importance of the Swiss colonies abroad, and to strengthen the common bond of solidarity which links us each to all."

The excellent address of the Ambassador was much applauded. The reply for the Guests was in the hands of Monsieur R. Faessler, Economic Counsellor, who by now is an old and popular friend of the Swiss Mercantile Society, and was, therefore, accorded an especially warm reception. He accomplished his task in a very charming manner, saying that he had grave

doubts whether he had the necessary qualifications which one ought to have in order to claim the right of attending the Annual Dinner of the Swiss Mercantile Society, as he was neither a student nor past student of the S.K.V., and "since languages, accounting and social graces have always been a weak point with me," he said, "I decided very early on not to follow the normal career of a member of the S.M.S., but to study political economy, which is a field with such a variety of views that it is very much easier to hide one's deficiencies — you know, the things no expert accountant could ever accept and pass".

In spite of these handicaps, Monsieur Faessler said that he and his wife have always felt very happy and at home with the Swiss Mercantile Society. Concluding his short address the Counsellor paid a tribute to Mr. Stauffer, saying "It is, of course, not only for his gallant penmanship that we hold him in great esteem, but there are few who have deserved so well of the S.M.S. or the whole of the Swiss Colony in the United Kingdom as he." Monsieur Faessler also paid tribute to Mr. Westcott of the "Times" Football Club. When the applause of the Economic Counsellor's address had subsided, the President, Mr. Grob, made a presentation of a little Battersea Enamel Pill Box, made between 1750 and 1760, on behalf of the Council and the Members of the Swiss Mercantile Society, to Dr. Faessler, who will shortly be leaving London for another post, saying "I feel certain that the loss which the Swiss Colony in Great Britain suffers will be the gain of any Colony to which you and Madame Faessler may go (applause). The President then also presented Madame Faessler with a beautiful sheaf of flowers.

"Last, but by no means least", the President said, "I have another function to perform. As you probably know, our friend Mr. A. Stauffer is relinquishing the post of editor of the 'Swiss Observer' after 32 years of most devoted service. Mr. Stauffer joined our Society as an active member in 1915, was our President in 1918, elected as an Honorary Member of our Society in 1922, and at our 70th Anniversary Dinner, in 1958, was presented with the Golden Veteran Badge for being an active member for more than 40 years."

Mr. Grob, on behalf of the Council and the Members of the Society, thanked Mr. Stauffer for the many services rendered over many years. "Your devotion to duty", he said, "is not only recognised by us in London, but also by our Central Authorities in Switzerland." The President then read out a letter which the Society received from the Head Office in Switzerland, and then said "It is, therefore, my great honour and privilege to present you with this

extremely rare and most coveted 'Golden Ehrenabzeichen des Schweizerischen Kaufmännischen Vereins' with my sincere congratulations." Both Monsieur Faessler and Mr. Stauffer, the latter visibly touched, thanked the President for these marks of appreciation.

The last speaker of the evening was Mr. A. Jaccard, Chairman of the Education Department, who thanked the President 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 ticket number.

The official part of the evening thus came to a close, and after a short interval dancing began; this continued until shortly before midnight, when a really enjoyable and happy evening ended amidst the sounds of Auld Lang Syne — an evening which will always be treasured by

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