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NEWS FROM THE COLONY

Swiss Mercantile Society London

ANNUAL DINNER AND DANCE

It has become an established opinion that the Annual Dinner and Dance of the Swiss Mercantile Society is something special, with a very friendly atmosphere, intimate and gay. This year's function on Saturday, 29th January, at the Orchid Suite of the Dorchester Hotel in London, lived up to this reputation, and if anything, surpassed it. The gathering for cocktails before dinner revealed a good many faithful old friends, active members, sons and daughters of S.M.S. stalwarts, not to mention a number of glamorous grannies who defied age and added to the sparkle of the evening.

The dinner, too, was out of the ordinary run of banqueting fare. The *Crème St. Germain aux Croûtons* was really an excellent green pea soup, the *turbot* was turbot, and the main dish consisted of superbly prepared boiled ham and veal in the Fribourg fashion, accompanied by noodles and "Polish" broccoli. And what a *soufflé*! It melted on touch, and the fruit salad underlined its lemon flavour. Not to forget the delicious Swiss wines which, at least at *my* table, were a *sine qua non*.

The debonair President, Mr. André Jaccard, welcomed the Swiss Ambassador and Madame de Fischer who have, he said, consolidated their position since last year and "have gained not only the esteem, but also the affection of their compatriots". He thanked the Ambassador and his collaborators for the ready assistance and advice always given to the S.M.S. and its College. Unfortunately, Monsieur and Madame Heimo were unable to accept the Society's invitation owing to their departure from London for new fields of activities. On the other hand, Monsieur Gaechter, Secretary of Embassy, was present with his wife, and the President extended a warm welcome to them both, as well as to Mr. and Mrs. H. G. Moxham, distinguished partner in a well-known firm of solicitors, to whom the S.M.S. were indebted for professional help on various occasions.

Next, Mr. Jaccard welcomed the President of the Federation of Swiss Societies in the U.K. and Mrs. H. W. Egli. He needed no introduction, as he was an old and trusted friend of all things Swiss. Appreciation of the immense work done by the spiritual leaders was expressed by Mr. Jaccard to the Rev. Father Scherer, the Rev. M. Dietler (who had said grace prior to the dinner) and The Rev. and Mrs. Nicod. Once again the President was happy to welcome the Vice-President of the "Times" Football Club and Mrs. C. W. Westcott, as well as Vice-Consul Mr. F. Burgunder and his wife. For the latter, too, it was farewell, as they were due to leave this country.

The President expressed pleasure at having one of the Trustees and Honorary Members, Mr. L. W. Krucker, present. Once again, he generously gave a beautiful evening handbag as a raffle prize — won by the daughter of another Honorary Member present, Mr. W. Burren, the hard-working Secretary of the Society.

It was particularly gratifying to have Mr. and Mrs. Carlo Chapuis with us, an Honorary Member since 1918 and member of the Society for 57 years. Two more Members of Honour both former Presidents, present with their ladies, were Mr. Oscar Grob and Mr. Raymond Chappuis.

A letter had been received from another Honorary Member, Mr. J. J. Boos, and telegrams were read from Mr. M. Rothlisberger and Mr. Max Schneider, both in Switzerland, the former temporarily, the latter for good.

The President was also glad to see the widow of the late Honorary Member Mrs. Jack Pfaendler, and he welcomed Mrs. Mariann Meier, the Editor of the "Swiss Observer", member of the Society and wife of the late Honorary Member Mr. Walter Meier. The Principal of the College and Mrs. C. Slade as well as the secretarial staff were bid a warm welcome and Mr. Jaccard then thanked his colleagues on the committees and the Council for their help. He ended by calling on the members to drink to the Guests and the Ladies.

The Swiss Ambassador, Honorary President, proposed the health of the Swiss Mercantile Society and its College. He expressed his appreciation of the valuable work done for Swiss students who were given the opportunity of absorbing as much as possible of the wonderful British heritage as well as receiving excellent tuition.

Monsieur de Fischer then recalled some of the great Swiss personages who became prominent in this country in the past. There was a successful trader Gysin, a humanist and patron of the arts at the beginning of the sixteenth century. He sat for a portrait to Hans Holbein and, like many other Swiss here, devoted his wealth to promoting science, art and education. Next, the Ambassador referred to the many Swiss bankers of great fame who played an important part in the City of London, both before and after the Napoleonic wars. (*See "S.O." 17th December.*)

Monsieur de Fischer then talked about Swiss industrialists, who made a name for themselves in this country.

"First there was Johann Conrad Fischer of Schaffhausen, who, thanks to a series of visits and studies with English steel manufacturers, in 1845 invented the steel casting which was the beginning of his firm's great success. Little by little that firm became internationally known, and today has a number of plants and organisations in Great Britain also.

"Johann Georg Bodmer of Zurich, in his turn, went to Manchester to study textile machines and succeeded in developing, among other achievements in the railway sector, one which represented considerable progress and is today exhibited in the Science Museum in South Kensington.

"Later, Hans Renold of Aarau, started manufacturing highly specialized chains in Manchester. Today, his descendant, Sir Cyril Renold, is one of the biggest industrialists of that speciality in the United Kingdom.

"In 1794 Jakob Schweppe of Geneva, came to England to develop and sell a special table soda-water, manufactured according to the methods of the English chemist Joseph Priestley. His enterprise is today a worldwide corporation and the oldest manufacturer of mineral waters still in active operation.

"Emanuel de Trey of Estavayer, invented the synthetic porcelain tooth and was the founder of what is now the internationally known firm of "Amalgamated Dentistries".

“ But, I think, the most important inventor and industrialist of Swiss origin in Great Britain was Sir John Brunner of Bülach, Canton of Zurich. The grandson of a protestant pastor in that village, he became, after a commercial training in Liverpool, within twenty years the head of a firm manufacturing chemical products in Widnes, near Liverpool. There he made friends with Dr. Alfred Mond and founded with him the famous firm of Brunner, Mond & Co. for the production of alkalis, near Norwich. This firm was later to develop into the gigantic ICI. John Brunner, who was made a baronet, elected a Member of Parliament, and appointed a Privy Councillor, also became an active politician and pacifist. A fine statue erected in the Central Hall of ICI's Winnington Works (in Cheshire) commemorates him.

“ One might find his counterpart in Switzerland in the Scotchman, Charles Brown, a machine constructor endowed with genius, who founded with Mr. Boveri the great firm of Brown, Boveri & Co., familiar today to all engineers.

“ If, to wind up, we now compare all those Swiss captains of industry in Great Britain to those in the United States up to the beginning of our century — the Henry Clay Fricks, the Jacques Hubers, the George Iselins, the Robert Schwarzenbachs and others, we see that our group here has quite a good record.”

The Ambassador ended his survey by saying that the few portraits made it clear how the mixture of British and Swiss qualities and inventiveness could sometimes produce interesting results. This should give us great hopes for the future possibilities of the young students of the S.M.S. College.

It was left to Mr. Moxham to reply for the guests, which he did in an easy and elegant way. He mentioned the long association he and his firm had had with Swiss firms, industrial and professional. One of his partners, Mr. H. Oppenheimer who had opened his firm in 1899, and who had just celebrated his 90th birthday, translated into English the Swiss Civil Code. Mr. Moxham congratulated the Society on its valuable contribution to the noble art of education.

That brought the official part to a close, and it was not long before the President opened the dancing with Madame de Fischer, followed by the Ambassador leading Mrs. Jaccard on to the floor. To the strains of Mr. Salisbury's Dance Orchestra, to tunes ever-green or modern ones already half-withered, young and old enjoyed dancing. The Oxford dictionary defines the word as “ moving with rythmical steps, glides, leaps, revolutions and gestures ”. They were all there, believe you me. And so was enjoyment to the full, until the two National Anthems and Auld lang syne heralded midnight and with it the end of a perfect evening. MM

WIGMORE HALL

Friday, 4th March 1966, 7.30 p.m.

PIANO RECITAL

by

RUTH HUGGENBERG

Works by Beethoven, Schubert, Brahms,
Debussy and Schumann.

UNIONE TICINESE



Mr. V. BERTI
the new President.

The Unione Ticinese's first General Meeting of 1966 was held on Sunday, 6th February, at the Swiss Hostel for Girls in Belsize Grove, Hampstead.

After eleven years of unstinting and fruitful work on behalf of the Italian-speaking Swiss community in this country, Mr. Peter Jacomelli retired from the presidency of the Unione Ticinese in London.

The newly elected Committee is as follows: President: Mr. V. Berti, first Vice-President: Mr. P. Jacomelli second Vice-President: Miss S. Morosi. Hon. Secretary: Mr. F. de Maria, Hon. Assistant Secretary: Mrs. A. Selwyn, Hon. Treasurer: Mr. J. de Maria, Collector: Mr. F. Allegranza. The other committee members are: Messrs. J. Diviani, J. Pedretti, C. Rosselli, Mrs. L. Bruni, Miss G. Panatti, Messrs. E. Knabenhans, R. Gibellini and L. Luisoli.

At the subsequent *Cena Familiare* attended by approximately fifty people, tribute was paid to Mr. Peter Jacomelli for his long and loyal service to the Unione Ticinese. He was also presented with a memento in the form of a silver cigarette box.

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NOUVELLE SOCIETE HELVETIQUE (London Group)

Under “ Forthcoming Events ”, the Annual General Meeting and Dinner of the London Group of the Nouvelle Société Helvétique was announced for 21st April. This date has now been changed in order not to clash with the Swiss Industries Fair — and the Golden Jubilee of the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad, both of which take place around that date in Basle. The N.S.H. will now meet for their A.G.M. and Annual Dinner on Thursday, 14th April.

PERSONAL

Mr. H. Bronnimann of 29 Temple Road, Stowmarket, wishes to inform his many friends that he was discharged from hospital on 1st February and is making good progress at home. It will be some time before he is completely fit, but he has been advised that he will not suffer any permanent injury. He wishes to thank his friends for the enquiries and good wishes he has received which he greatly appreciated.