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NEWS FROM THE COLONY

SWISS MERCANTILE SOCIETY

Annual Dinner and Dance

The two important social events of the winter season are held a good two months away from each other, one at the end of the year, the other at the close of January. Whilst the City Swiss Club has made it its business to attract as many participants as possible by advertising and announcing special attractions like cabaret and tombola, the Swiss Mercantile Society has kept its annual social function very much within the circle of its members. No advertising, and first come, first served; the limit being the number comfortably seated in the Orchid Suite of the Dorchester in Park Lane. Thus, year in, year out, much the same gathering and much the same spirit: intimate and friendly, one large family with rarely some new faces apart from a few students of the College and possibly a few new members attending for the first time. And then there is the second generation, in a way more "visible" than at the much larger gatherings of the City Swiss Club, and it is a wonderful sight to see various sons and daughters accompanying their elders and gradually introducing young wives and husbands respectively. It gives the whole party an air of continuity, of generations holding hands as it were and auguring well for the future.

And perhaps more than at any other social event in the London Swiss Colony, those who have departed for ever seem to be present in spirit, and the President is supported by a number of his predecessors, men who like him and the members on the various committees and the Council do sterling work in the interest of hundreds of young Swiss who come over to the British metropolis every year in order to improve their English and to learn something about the people of these Islands and their way of life.

Several of the Society's Honorary Members were present at this year's Annual Dinner, Mr. W. Burren and Mr. O. Grob, K.S.G., accompanied by their wives, and Mr. L. W. Krucker who is also a Member of Honour of the Mother Society in Switzerland. The wives of two former Presidents and Honorary Members of the Society were of the party: Mrs. Alfred Stauffer whose late husband was at the helm 1917/18, and Mrs. Mariann Meier who was welcomed as Editor of the "Swiss Observer" and a member in her own right, but who attended in the first place as wife of the late Walter Meier, President of the Society from 1947 to 1958.

Another former President and staunch supporter, Mr. J. J. Boos, K.S.G., sent greetings. A telegram was also read from the Burgunders now in U.S.A., but well remembered from their days in London, when the Vice-Consul was amongst the most regular members of the Society. His successor, too, was present (Mr. Charles Abegglen), and Consul Tosio and his wife, old friends of the Society, were accorded a very affectionate welcome.

There has always been a happy relationship between the Society and the Embassy, and the Guest of Honour, Monsieur Denis Grandjean, *Chargé d'Affaires,* accompanied by Madame Grandjean, and Secretary of Embassy and Madame Richard Gaechter, received a very warm welcome. The First Counsellor replied to the Chairman's Toast to the guests and the ladies by stating his great pleasure at being with the S.M.S. and, as no Swiss Ambassador was in London at the moment, to express thanks and appreciation to the President and his collaborators for all the valuable work done. "We may all be proud of what has been achieved", said Monsieur Grandjean, and this referred to a few details mentioned by the President regarding the activities of the College: Students admitted during 1966 numbered 633 (day-time) and 919 (evening classes), a record for post-war years. 93% of the day students had been successful in the diploma examinations.

Such excellent results could hardly have been achieved without hard work by the Secretariat in charge of Mr. W. Burren, and above all be the teaching staff, fittingly represented by the Principal and Vice-Principal, in company with Mrs. C. Slade and Mrs. E. W. Makin.

It was stated above that the students were also given an opportunity of meeting English families and learning about English institutions, traditions and pastimes. Of these, football has been high on the list, and the College team is busy every winter on various sports grounds, often with notable success. One of the most treasured encounters every year is the match *versus* "The Times" F.C. It was, therefore, a natural thing to ask Mr. Charles Westcott, Vice-President of "The Times" F.C., who, with his wife, is held in great esteem by the members who have the privilege of their friendship, to reply for the guests. He did this with humour and sincerity and referred to the thirty years and more that the bond between the two organisations has lasted. He recalled early matches when three from among those present used to take part in the game, *viz.* Mr. W. Burren as player, Mr. C. Slade in the goal and Mrs. Walter Meier who, with her late husband had kept an eye on the teams' friendly rivalry in rain, fog and (sometimes) sunshine. Mr. Westcott mused that thousands of Swiss students must have been at "The Times" sportsground to watch the English way of indulging in sport. He hoped that inspite of changes at "The Times", the happy relationship would continue.

The President, with Mrs. Jaccard handsomely supporting him by her ever-loyal presence, also welcomed Dr. H. W. Egli, Chairman of the Federation of Swiss Societies in the U.K., and Mrs. Egli, and voiced thanks to him and the committee for toiling ceaselessly on the Colony's behalf in order to realise the "Forum of Switzerland" at the Swiss Centre in Leicester Square.

It has been an established custom that the major Swiss societies in London invite the clergy to their special gatherings, as a token of appreciation of all the difficult and arduous work they do throughout the year. The S.M.S., therefore, once again cordially invited and welcomed *Monsieur le Pasteur et Madame* Nicod, *Herrn und Frau* Pfr. Dietler and the Rev. Father Scherer.

A social event such as an Annual Dinner and Dance consists of four parts, the Reception, the Dinner, the Speeches and the Dancing. Rarely do you find complete unanimity amongst those present as to order of preference,