

Farewell dinner to Dr. W. Ruefenacht

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Farewell Dinner to Dr. W. Ruefenacht,

on TUESDAY, JULY 30th, at

Pagani's Restaurant.

Nearly forty members and friends of the Swiss Mercantile Society assembled at Pagani's on Tuesday last, to take leave of Dr. Rüfenacht, 1st Secretary of Legation, who, after a four years stay in London, is returning to the Political Department in Berne.

Owing to the short notice which was given, many members of the Colony, who would undoubtedly have liked to have been present, were unable to attend, but we are glad to say, that the gathering was nevertheless a representative one.

We heartily congratulate the Swiss Mercantile Society on having given the Colony an opportunity to say good-bye to one of our compatriots, who has by his tact and conscientious work endeared himself to all who have come in contact with him.—

Four years is not a very long time, and therefore it is all the more to the credit of Dr. Rüfenacht, that he has been able, in this relatively short span, to make so many friends, who genuinely regret his departure.

To be quite frank the atmosphere at the beginning of the gathering was rather mournful, and reminded me of those awful moments, when the members of that honourable profession of undertakers produce the "corpse;" but I am glad to say that before long things brightened up considerably, due to some excellent and witty speeches, and last but not least, to a fine dinner served by Pagani's.—

It must have been very gratifying not only to Dr. Rüfenacht, but also to the Council of the S.M.S., that our Minister, Monsieur C. R. Paravicini has honoured this gathering by his presence. In addition there were present also two of M. Rüfenacht's collaborators, M. de Bourg, Counsellor of Legation and M. Hilfiker, Vice-Consul and Chancellor.

Towards the end of the dinner, the customary toasts to H. M. the King and to Switzerland were duly proposed by the Minister, and honoured by the company.

It goes without saying, that one, if not the principal factor at a Farewell dinner, are the speeches, these were numerous but all very short and sweet, and it was a pleasure to listen to them.

M. Steinmann, who has for the last two years presided with such skill and efficiency over the Swiss Mercantile Society, opened the oratorical part by saying:

Dr. Rüfenacht,

In the name of the Swiss Mercantile Society it is my great pleasure, first to welcome you most heartily to this little gathering, met together to celebrate in your honour.

We are all conscious of the services that you have given, willingly, freely and without stint, to our Society and I am certain we should endeavour to emulate your example.

To-night our gathering together, in this way is not merely an excuse to eat and drink, but a sincere mark of the esteem in which you are held by all of us, particularly as you, Sir, have given your time to us from a life already fully utilised in serving the Mother Country in a very important capacity.

You are leaving us; creating the vacant chair of a trusted and beloved friend, in order to give still more service to Switzerland in an important post in the Homeland. Some of us — nay, all of us — will envy you in your being back home again.

The second part of my pleasant duty is to wish you all the success you could wish yourself in your new post.

We are not saddened by your removal from among us — we are glad that the opportunity is yours, to move up another rung on the ladder of success.

Fortunately for us we have a certain compensation for which to be thankful. Mr. Rezzonico who takes your place, has given proof already that he is, equally with you, Sir, well-disposed towards our Society.

The fact, that you and your successor, take such voluntary and keen interest in us as a Society, proves that the Swiss Mercantile Society is playing an important and appreciated rôle in the constant work of serving the welfare of our countrymen and upholding the fair name of our country.

Ladies and Gentlemen, will you rise and join me in toasting the health, wealth and success of our Guest of the evening and wishing him "Bon Voyage!"

These few words, which expressed the feelings of the members and guests very accurately, received much applause.

The next speaker was the Swiss Minister, Monsieur C. R. Paravicini, who, accomplished after-dinner speaker as he is, managed to bring a congenial atmosphere into the gathering. "The duties of a Swiss Minister" he said, "are manifold, some are agreeable, some awkward or even hard, whilst others were easy; whatever they are, they have to be performed." The Minister then referred to farewell speeches as coming under the heading of awkward duties to perform, but on this occasion he would greatly deplore it not to perform his duty. "My friend, Dr. Rüfenacht," he continued "is a diplomat who goes from one place to another, and on such occasions there will be farewell speeches and often articles in the papers." The Minister then referred to some recent articles which appeared in the Press about two diplomats of his acquaintance who were described as having reached perfection in their sphere of activity, although the facts were somewhat different, "that is," the speaker said, "how public opinion is worked by publicity." He then said, "Well I think in this instance my friend Mr. Rüfenacht can be absolutely calm and reassured. Whatever I may say about him is entirely in accordance with facts. You know that the saying goes that a man only has real pleasure in listening to what you say about him on two occasions of his life. One, when he is a bridegroom, on the day of his wedding. Everybody says nice things about him. The other is when he is in the hearse to be buried. A real farewell speech is always a eulogy. In the present instance it must absolutely be nice, but in accordance with facts. He is not going to be buried. He is going to rise to new life in a career which he has brilliantly started. I, personally, regret the departure because he is the kind of colleague whom one wishes to work with. He is a comfort to every chief. You know that he is intelligent and helpful, always does what he can for everyone and you know that he works as he ought to work. In my experience with him when I have told him what is to be done about such and such a matter, he goes up silently into his office and he does it as it ought to be done. He does not ask questions, he does it all by himself. I can tell you that when he does not ask me how things are to be done they are done better. Well, my friends, that is the kind of man one wants at the Legation. Now we see him go, we shall have to do without him. All that we can do is to wish him success. We all know that he will live up to the mark. He now goes to that place where the destinies of our country are dealt with, his activity will be a valuable contribution in the working of the destinies of Switzerland. We wish him all the success and we are already convinced that if he goes on as he has gone on so far he will go up the ladder of success, as your President said, and he will eventually occupy a position which was so brilliantly occupied by his late lamented father to the full satisfaction of his country."

This witty tribute which the Minister paid to his departing collaborator was greatly appreciated by the company, which gave vent to their feelings by loud applause.

In order to allow the various speakers "to collect their thoughts," Mr. v. Bergen sang a few songs in his masterful way, accompanied by Mr. Chappuis, and the compliments which the Minister paid to the two artistes were well merited.

The President then announced that the guest of the evening wishes to say a few words; on rising Dr. Rüfenacht received a hearty ovation, he said:

There are, broadly speaking, two kinds or varieties of diplomats, the more sedate ones who, after a certain while settle down quietly in a more or less agreeable post and seldom move or are moved again, and the more restless ones, who go roaming from country to country and from capital to capital. It is not always inclination or personal choice that makes the ones change their post more often than the others, it is mostly fate decreed by the high authorities at home.

As far as I am concerned, I am bound to say that apparently I belong to the second

kind, having been in the last ten years in Washington, Warsaw, Berlin and twice in Berne. Now I go back to our Foreign Office again and who knows for how long?

But although I seem to belong to the roaming type, I had really settled down quite nicely in London and I should have enjoyed a longer stay. Speaking from my own experience, it somehow takes longer to get used to London and its ways than to other cities. On the other hand, once one has found one's way it seems harder to leave again. London somehow grows on you and is very reluctant to let you go. I have indeed been very happy here, and I am sorry to have to leave after four years, first at Queen Anne Street and now at Montagu Place, and I feel particularly sad at the thought that to-night my official leave-taking is beginning already.

The Swiss Mercantile Society in kindly arranging this farewell-dinner, and all of you who are present to-night, do me great honour and I am deeply touched by this sign of esteem. But I do not only wish to thank you for to-night, but also for all the kindness you have shown me since I came to London and which has made my time here such a pleasant one.

I hardly dare thank the Chairman and Monsieur le Ministre for the very kind words they have said about me and to me; I know only too well that I have not merited such laudatory epithets. After all I have only tried to do my duty but I realise to-day how many things could have been done in a better or more efficient way. However, I can honestly say that I have at least learnt quite a lot and in this respect I owe special gratitude to you, Monsieur le Ministre. I am very thankful for the many ways in which you have helped and guided me, and I can only hope that I go back to Berne a better man than when I came here!

At the same time I also wish to thank my colleagues of the Legation for the unfailing kindness and patience they have shown to me. We have had a very happy time and I shall miss them very much.

My duties as Commercial Attaché have naturally brought me into closer contact with the Swiss Mercantile Society than with any other of our Swiss Societies. I have been honoured through being asked to attend the meetings of the Education Committee, and I have been a regular guest at the Student's Banquet and Ball at Christmas which has always been an enjoyable affair. My attendance at the Education Committee Meetings has afforded me. I dare say, a better insight in the affairs of the College and I had an opportunity of seeing at first hand the many difficult problems with which the Swiss Mercantile Society has to deal. If I have been able to be of any help, I am only too glad of it.

It is fortunately yet too early to say good-bye and I will not say good-bye to you anyhow but "au revoir," because I hope that those of you who find their way to Berne will come and see me at the Palais Fédéral to have a little chat, and admire the glorious view of the Alps, provided they are clear!

In the meantime, I just wish to thank all of you once more for the kindness you have shown to me during the last four years and especially to-night.

Mr. De Brunner, one of the Trustees of the Swiss Mercantile Society then addressed the gathering as follows:

As former President under whose régime the College of the Swiss Mercantile Society was founded I am particularly happy to associate myself with the expressions of gratitude so ably expressed by our President, Mr. Steinmann, as well as by Monsieur le Ministre who represents our glorious country through whose help our Swiss Mercantile Society is able to offer our young compatriots a start in life. I for one regret very much that we lose in you, Dr. Rüfenacht, a very, very staunch supporter of the aims that the Swiss Mercantile Society has set itself. I sincerely hope, you will interpret in Berne our desires in foreign lands to show ourselves in such a light that we command esteem from whatever nation we may be attached to for the time being; otherwise England would not take such an interest in whatever we are doing. We have had visits from the Mayor of St. Pancras and the Swiss Mercantile Society's students have been received

by the Mayor of Cambridge. They are demonstrations, that, whatever we do here in London has been of a national character, worthy to be followed. I hope that when you are back in Berne you will be so kind as to mention in the milieu that matters, the objects which we Swiss are pursuing here as real ambassadors of Swiss in foreign lands. We are fortunate, much as we regret your departure, Dr. Rüfenacht, to have as your successor Dr. Rezzonico, who for many years showed himself a staunch supporter of our Society and we know we shall be able to rely on his co-operation. I associate myself with the feelings that have been expressed in wishing you a safe return and best of luck in your future career.

The applause which these words earned had hardly died down, when the President announced that Mr. Levy, the popular Headmaster of the College would say a few words.

Mr. Levy said:

I read some time that some must govern and rule whilst others must submit and obey. My daily duty to a great extent is to govern and rule with the exception that when I am at home I must submit and obey. May I add my humble words of testimony to those of the previous speakers of the good work that Dr. Rüfenacht has done, especially for the College of the Swiss Mercantile Society. From time to time Dr. Rüfenacht came to the College to see at first hand the work we were doing. I may say that whenever visitors come to Swiss House there is no camouflage. The visitor can go into any room he pleases. When Dr. Rüfenacht attended the Committee Meetings on many occasions he was able to see behind the scenes, the work which a casual visitor could not really estimate. I wish to say on behalf of the College that I thank him for all he has done for us and the great help he has given us. Your Excellency referred to Dr. Rüfenacht's work at the Legation. I presume, and I do not wish Your Excellency as a diplomat to commit himself that when Dr. Rüfenacht handed in those reports to you he put at the bottom those two letters, W.R. which really meant "weighty records," records which gave him a great deal of trouble to draw up. They were worthy of your consideration but also I may say that when you, Sir, received those reports you were relieved from the trouble of putting anything to it as at the bottom of the document were already those letters W.R. meaning "wholly reliable." Well, I presume there are others who would like to add a testimony to Dr. Rüfenacht. I personally am extremely sorry to lose him for whenever he came to Swiss House he always had pleasant words which encouraged one and whenever any social function was held Dr. Rüfenacht was there to join in our merriment. On all occasions we could rely on his help and we wish Dr. Rüfenacht God Speed and every success in his new undertaking.

M. de Bourg, Counsellor of Legation, on behalf of his colleagues and the Staff at the Legation, addressed some words of appreciation to Dr. Rüfenacht.

M. A. F. Suter on behalf of the N.S.H. thanked the guest of the evening for the great interest he had always shown in the work and endeavours of his Society.

M. Meier, President of the Education Dept. of the S.M.S. enumerated the services which Dr. Rüfenacht had rendered to his special Dept.

M. Pfändler also expressed his appreciation for the help which he always received from the energetic Commercial Attaché.

Mr. Deutsch took leave from Mr. Rüfenacht on behalf of the members of the City Swiss Club.

Mr. Stauffer, Editor of the Swiss Observer related the help which he received during the last four years from Dr. Rüfenacht.

And last but by no means least, M. Boos, President of the House Committee of the S.M.S. thanked the Ladies and Gentlemen present for having attended this pleasant function, and thus helped to make this gathering not only a successful one but also a most enjoyable one.—

So ended one of the nicest little functions which I had the privilege to attend in the Colony.

It could have been almost compared with a small family gathering, where all the relations turn up to profess their fond attachment to the one who is leaving the family circle.

We hope the Swiss Colony in England will for ever occupy a treasured corner in Dr. Rüfenacht's heart, we shall always remember him, and shall watch with great interest the various stages of his future career, which we trust will attain the same heights as that of his distinguished father, who has served his country with such distinction.

ST.

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FORTHCOMING EVENTS.

Tuesday, August 6th — City Swiss Club — Monthly Meeting — preceded by dinner (7.15 sharp) at Pagani's Restaurant, Great Portland Street, W.

Wednesday, August 7th, at 7.30 p.m. — Société de Secours Mutuels — Monthly Meeting, at 74, Charlotte Street, W.1.

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Sonntag, den 4 August 1935.

11 Uhr morgens, Gottesdienst. Predigt Herr Pfarrer V. Nüesch. Sonntagschule.

Der Abendgottesdienst fällt während der Monate Juli und August aus.

Während der Ferien des Gemeindepfarrers wird dieser durch Herrn Pfarrer Valentin Nüesch von Roggwil bei Langenthal vertreten werden. Alle Anfragen wegen Amtshandlungen sind während dieser Zeit erbeten an Herrn Pfr. Nüesch, "Foyer Suisse," 12, Upper Bedford Place, Russel Square, W.C.1. (Tel. Museum 2982).