

The gateway to grandeur

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UNIONE TICINESE.
34th ANNUAL CONCERT AND BALL,
Pagani's, W.1. — December 10th, 1936.

The Concert and Ball organized annually by that popular Society, The UNIONE TICINESE, in aid of its sister-society, the "Fonds de Secours," can hardly now be described as a mere function; it is an institution. Year in, year out, as Christendom's greatest festivity approaches, and our thoughts begin to dwell on such delectable subjects as parties and revels, gifts and sweet nothings, the Unione Ticinese is there to bid us remember our less fortunate compatriots; not, however, by any stern rebuke, but by affording us one further opportunity of getting that Yuletide spirit really under the skin.

This year's edition of this ever popular function, the thirty-fourth, I am assured — why should we thus be reminded of the irrevocable passing of time? — attained the high standard set on the previous occasions it has been my good fortune to attend. Indeed it would be no empty compliment to describe the evening as a splendid success.

Naturally restraint at once thoughtful and respectful came spontaneously, evoked by the hour just struck. An hour momentous in the annals of the British People all over the world and, may we fervently hope, but a forerunner of an ever greater, prosperous future for this hospitable Nation.

To the lack of formality as well as to that infectious atmosphere of friendly gaiety we are wont to associate with all the "Ticinese" gatherings much of the success is doubtless due. The reader will pardon me for striking here a sentimental note. Although bound up with the ultra-nationalistic wave at present sweeping over the Continent is the pride of language (it seems to have affected even such a level-headed, modest lot as our own Romantsch compatriots, whom I personally much admire) very little of the melodious Italian idiom, or for that matter of German or French was to be heard, save for sporadic bouts of "el nost dialett."

The audience numbered just over 180 as the programme began with an "ouverture" played by Gregory's Accordeon Band. The preponderance of song items lent the programme a typical "ticinese" touch.

First Miss Marietta Albertoli, in an attractive "ticinese" costume, gave a spirited rendering of the folksong "Era un bel lunedì," which she followed up with the aria "Smiling Through," as soon as the applause allowed her to do so.

This happy start augured well for the programme items to come; our expectations were not disappointed. Miss Albertoli, as you have perhaps guessed, a "Ticinese," was followed by another "Ticinese" who hides his identity under the professional name of Howard De Courcy and who intrigued us with some efficient conjuring. He succeeded in dispelling a conviction your humble reporter had held for some considerable time, that magic had by now exhausted its possibilities before the all-conquering march of scientific research and unlimited publicity. Mr. De Courcy's claim to be unequalled rests on solid foundations. The birdcage trick especially — a square sized cage, complete with still life canary inside it, he balanced in his hands and, lo and behold! for no apparent reason it rose and vanished — stood out as a remarkable trick only a clever craftsman could perform.



Howard de Courcy.

Thereupon Mr. Fred Saunders, bass-baritone, obliged with two English arias, whilst Argo, the clown, who next appeared, had everybody rocking with laughter with his delightful study of noises, from timberyard to the woods, from farmyard to the nursery, not to mention a love idyll in the cats world, all interpreted in a most comic fashion.

Classical singing cannot but allure with an interpreter of Miss Eva Cattaneo's brilliance, as was amply proved by her competent handling of a difficult aria from "La Cavalleria Rusticana."

but it was impossible not to capitulate to the finespun tone in "La Girometta," an Italian folksong.

Unexpected, but none the less welcome, was M. Geser, a tenor and another compatriot.

"Ai-ai-ai" (I cannot vouch here for the accuracy of the spelling) the well-known Spanish tune, as also a lullaby by Schubert, sung in Italian, he dealt with most attractively and received a well-earned applause.

Here Mr. Oscar Gambazzi, the President of the "Unione Ticinese" interposed to thank all those present for their support, the artists for their generous contribution and ended up with a stirring appeal on behalf of the "Fonds de Secours." Mr. Roethlisberger, representing the latter, had a few words of appreciation for the work done by the Unione Ticinese in furthering the action of his Society.

The supper did justice in every respect to the renown of the House of Pagani, and proved of great benefit later on when a ruthless band gave no quarter to itching toes with tunes ranging from the old fashioned waltz to the carioca.

During a break in the dance we listened to Mr. Berni's keen ringing voice, which particularly when it grapples with the nostalgic arias of Southern Italy spurs and quickens the blood, and to Mr. Katz whose expert fiddling was suffused with delicate ardour.

There are times I wish I were a film publicity agent, and this is one of them — superlatives fail me, but I think no better proof could one ask of me of the evening's enjoyableness than the disclosure of the fact that on the following morning I brusquely awoke to the realities of a sterner world on realizing I was washing my teeth with the shaving-cream.

To all "Swiss Observer" readers, the best wishes for a Merry Christmas from
eusj.

L'ESCALADE A LONDRES.

Les quelques trente Genevois réunis en ce 11 décembre, au Restaurant Pagani ont célébré pour la 23ème fois l'Escalade par leur traditionnel banquet.

Après le menu, toujours bien servi l'on passa à la partie officielle.

Monsieur de Cintra qui présidait trouva les mots pour créer de suite l'ambiance typiquement genevoise. Monsieur le Pasteur Hoffmann-de Visme, de l'Eglise Suisse de Londres, donna lecture des noms des héros tombés en cette mémorable nuit de 1602.

La marmite qui ornait la table présidentielle fut brisée en ajoutant le rituel "Ainsi périssent les ennemis de la République," puis un "Cé que l'aino" vibrant fut entonné. Monsieur Haussauer, le toujours spirituel major de table, pria le Doyen Mr. Dufresne de 1863, de décliner son état-civil complet, contume dont chacun s'acquitta par la suite.

Après quelques chansons interprétées délicieusement par le réputé pianiste de la B.B.C. Mr. G. Ferrari, l'entraîn général régnait. Un comité, composé de MM. Bertschli, Oltramare, Meyer, Piaget et Charnaux, fut nommé de l'organisation de la manifestation du 25ème anniversaire de ce banquet. Le dévouement montré par MM. Campart et Charnaux pour la mise sur pied annuellement de cette agape, est à souligner tout spécialement. Au hasard de la plume nous notons MM. les Drs. Bonnard et Ferrière, MM. de Vugnier, Chapuisat, Jacques et Darier. Assez tard l'on se sépara en se donnant rendez-vous à 1937.

Albert H. Babbaz.

THE GATEWAY TO GRANDEUR.

Lucerne is the gateway — to grandeur — in my estimation — and more — the lake and the sky above — azure — and snowy white peaks — as they soar.

A land of romance and of splendour — the Alps and the lake ignore none — so haste you to see this Swiss grandeur — before this our life — is all done.

The Swiss friends — will live in my memory — as they leave the boat-train — with a wave — "kommen sie, kommen sie wieder" — and these flowers of Switzerland save!"

(Miss Mary E. Brandwood).

PERSONAL.

We deeply regret to inform our readers of the recent passing away of Mrs. Mustard, wife of Mr. J. T. Mustard of 9, Makepeace Avenue, Holly Lodge, Highgate.

We tender Mr. Mustard, who has been for nearly 40 years closely associated with the Swiss Colony, our sincere sympathy in his sad loss.

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