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UNIONE TICINESE THE DANSANT

*"The sun was laughing through a golden haze,
And all the city Shone."*

It was the 20th of February, 1949, and the day incomparably fair in its beauty like a rich jewel set against a background of dark velvet. Spring had sent forth her harbinger early, and, though Winter had not departed and cold, bleak days might still be in store, yet was it not a happy augury that the sun should smile on the very day that the Unione Ticinese held one of its increasingly-popular Thé Dansants at the Dorchester? No wonder that hearts were light and gay and all was merry as a marriage bell and, when Harry Vardon and his Band struck up, the luxurious ballroom was quickly filled by a happy, dancing throng. It was a very cosmopolitan crowd, too, for the Swiss here have made many friends and how exhilarating it was to see how quickly and imperceptibly all race-barriers were broken down, leaving goodwill and concord to reign supreme.

I regret to have to record that the Swiss Minister and his wife, Monsieur and Madame de Torrenté, who were to have honoured us with their presence, were unable to attend owing to the illness of their son. We were all very sorry and disappointed and our sympathy goes out to Monsieur and Madame de Torrenté together with the hope that the boy is now well on the road to complete recovery. However, this gave us an opportunity of meeting Monsieur de Graffenried, Chargé d'Affaires at the Swiss Legation and his charming wife, who graciously deputized for them. They were most warmly received and when Monsieur de Graffenried told us in a little speech how happy he was to be with us and how he has always admired the laughter-loving Ticinesi with their infectious gaiety and sparkling good humour, he endeared himself to all.

In his address, Mr. Berti, President of the Men's Section of the Unione Ticinese, said that we were indeed honoured and fortunate to have amongst us such distinguished guests as Monsieur and Madame de Graffenried, Monsieur and Madame W. Meier, of the Swiss Mercantile Society, and Monsieur and Madame Bolla, of the Rütli Club. He also welcomed com-

patriots of ours recently arrived here from Switzerland, assuring them of the friendship and help of the Unione Ticinese at all times.

As always, the cabaret was excellent and we gaped in amazement at the remarkable feats performed by Mr. Barrie Manning on a pair of roller skates. Miss Gina Servini's voice, we discovered, had exceptional range and purity of tone and she was accompanied at the piano by Miss Betty Bray. As soon as Miss Colleen Clifford, the international impressionist, stepped on to the platform, we realized that here was an artiste of unusual qualifications and her versatility and wit caused much merriment and sent us all into paroxysms of mirth.

But the greatest ovation, however, was reserved for the Corale of the Unione Ticinese. With their gay, colourful costumes and their happy, smiling faces, they were indeed symbolic of our dear Cantone and there was many a tear-dimmed eye among the older folk as we listened enraptured to those wonderful songs of old Ticino, so typical of the soul of her people and so full of nostalgia for those away from home. Never before has the Corale sung so well and Mr. P. DeMaria is to be most warmly congratulated on his brilliant achievements since taking over its direction, and we look forward with sanguine and joyful anticipation to what he has in store for us.

There were dances to suit everybody — and everybody danced; there were spot prizes and elimination waltzes and a raffle with the most wonderful gifts for the lucky winners. How we laughed when Mr. Berti won a beautifully embroidered cushion made by his own wife and our amusement turned to cheers when he generously returned it to be re-raffled!

The happy hours sped by on flying feet until the last waltz, and, as we left the flower-bedecked ballroom and looked up at the flag of Switzerland and the Union Jack of Great Britain hanging in close and harmonious proximity, we felt glad that our little Colony in London was so happily and firmly established on such a friendly soil.

Great praise is due to all who helped in organizing the Dance, and who worked so hard and so relentlessly to make the evening the success it undoubtedly was.

N.P.

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