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SWISS MERCANTILE SOCIETY

Annual Luncheon and Tea Dance

on

SATURDAY, JUNE 7th, 1952

at

THE DORCHESTER HOTEL, PARK LANE, W.I.

In the Chair: W. MEIER, President

There are many, almost too many, functions of one kind or another, held in the Swiss Colony during the Year, and it is a puzzle to me, that most of them are fairly well attended, considering that we are continuously told, that times are bad and money scarce.

A few of the social festivals are held with great pomp and circumstance, and a red coated toastmaster announces the various celebrities both English and Swiss, who adorn the top table; a bevy of smartly dressed Ladies adding special lustre to the occasion.

There are, however, some functions which are run on less pretentious lines, where perhaps a more homely atmosphere prevails.

Among these, I would classify the Annual Luncheon and Tea Dance of the Swiss Mercantile Society, which was held at the Dorchester Hotel, Park Lane, W.I. on Saturday June 7th, 1952.

The Social gatherings of this Society have always been known for their friendliness and for the warm spirit of congeniality prevailing principally due to the fact, that a fair number of old members make it their duty to attend, to show their attachment to a Society which has, one can safely say, rendered conspicuous services not only to the Colony, but also to our country.

Can one wish for anything better, than to be in the company of old friends, enjoy a good luncheon (and very excellent it was) and have a glass or two of delicious Swiss wine, which warms the cockles of your heart and sets the tongue wagging?

Amongst the 120 members and guests, I am glad to say there were also a good number of the youngsters of the Colony present, which made the gathering all the more pleasant, it was indeed a most successful blending.

Towards the end of the Luncheon, the President, Mr. W. Meier, proposed the toast to H. M. The Queen and to Switzerland, and later on extended, on behalf of the Committee a hearty welcome to the Swiss Minister and Madame H. de Torrenté, thanking the Minister for the continued interest he is taking in the work of the Society and the College. He also greeted the Minister's collaborators, Dr. E. Bernath, 1st Counsellor of Legation, Dr. E. Bircher, Secretary of Legation, who were accompanied by their Ladies. Mr.

Meier also voiced his pleasure at seeing present as guests: Mr. W. H. Gamper, one of the Trustees of the Society, and Mrs. Gamper, Mr. A. Stauffer and Mrs. Stauffer, Editor of the 'Swiss Observer', an Honorary Member and former President of the Swiss Mercantile Society, Father A. Lanfranchi and Pastor H. Spoerri of the 'Schweizerkiche', (Pastor and Madame C. Reverdin, Pastor von Fischer and Mr. Kubler were unavoidably prevented from attending). He mentioned, that he was glad also to welcome Mr. P. De Maria, President of the Unione Ticinese and Mrs. de Maria, Mr. A. Gandon, President of the Secours Mutuels and Mrs Gandon.

The President continued by saying: "I see the company includes such staunch and loyal friends as Mr. Louis Chapuis, who joined the Society in 1898 and Mr. H. Pfirter, also a member for over fifty years."

He thanked also those members, who he said "have no particular distinction, but who attend our Monthly Meetings regularly", his colleagues of the Council and the different committees, singling out Mr. L. W. Krucker, Chairman of the House Committee and Mr. W. Burren, Chairman of the Education Committee, and the office staff.

Mr. Meier reported, that the College is full to capacity and that our young compatriots had been ably guided by the Principal, Mr. C. Slade, who was present with Mrs. Slade. He shortly referred to the recent visit of National Councillor, Schmid-Ruedin and Mrs. Schmid-Ruedin, and in conclusion paid a tribute to the Ladies present.

When the applause, which greeted the President's address had subsided, Mr. W. Krucker presented Mrs. W. Meier, on behalf of the members with a beautiful bouquet of flower. Madame de Torrenté received a bouquet during the reception.

The Toast to "The Swiss Mercantile Society" was given by the Swiss Minister, Monsieur Henry de Torrenté, who received a hearty ovation on rising from his seat. He said:

"It is always a particular pleasure for my wife and myself to attend any of the manifestations of the Swiss Mercantile Society. To me, the great value of your organization, lies in the fact that one of your aims is the training of young people. For many years now, the diplomas which your schools give to success-

ful candidates have been a Hall mark in the world of commerce.

Whenever I have visited the school at Fitzroy Square, I have been impressed with that atmosphere of serious study and that obvious determination amongst your pupils to do the job they have come to England for: to learn the English language, to become acquainted with English business methods and to get a grasp of the English way. Your excellent staff not only respond to the good will of the pupils, they go out of their way to help in any and every respect. What better proof of this fact could you have, than the ever increasing number of applications which reach your secretariat. I am therefore not exaggerating when I say that the whole Swiss Colony is proud, not only of what you achieve, but also of the way in which you have attained those high results.

You follow the best tradition of our home-land and perpetuate an attitude to life, which helped our people in the past to overcome the handicaps with which nature has endowed our land. Determination and application to the work on hand have enabled us to hold our own. Those virtues will help us to maintain the respect which the world will always grant to those who are known for their integrity, their thoroughness and their willingness to render honest work.

There is one other point where your devotion to your school can give important help. Most of you left home more than 20 years ago. You went abroad at a time when the world was comparatively free, when any-one willing to do an honest day's work could find a job. To-day it is much harder to squeeze through the growing fences which separate each country from its

neighbour. It is more difficult to emigrate and find a job, and even, if once settled abroad, it is more difficult to return in your old age and spend the proceeds of your mite amongst the friends and mountains of your youth.

And yet, greater difficulties are not the only cause why wanderlust declines. I fear, there is to-day less of the adventurous spirit, less daring, less courage amongst our youth, less willingness to rough it. Full employment and high wages at home and that two-edged blessing of the pension fund are apt to weaken the spirit which once was willing to grasp the future with both hands.

Here is a point where all of us must help and see to it that our youth does not become "security-minded". If you, the members of the Swiss Mercantile Society, can assist and fortify that spirit of adventure and of enterprise—which led our forbearers from the Pact of 1291 the daring conception of the Confederation of to-day—you will render a service to the future of our land, which will not be forgotten."

The Minister's speech was loudly cheered. Mr A. Stauffer, on behalf of the guests, thanked the President for having had the pleasure of attending this most enjoyable gathering.

Dancing then started to the music of an excellent dance band, interrupted only by an interval for tea.

At 6 o'clock Auld Lang Syne was sung, with the President and Mrs. Meier, in the "circle", and this happy gathering came to a close.

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