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R. PFENNINGER,
President, City Swiss Club.

CITY SWISS CLUB

88th Annual Banquet & Ball

at the
DORCHESTER HOTEL, PARK LANE, LONDON, W.1
on
FRIDAY, 20th NOVEMBER, 1953.

In the Chair: THE SWISS MINISTER, MONSIEUR HENRY DE TORRENTÉ

Slowly, but surely, the City Swiss Club is creeping nearer its Centenary, and in three years time will join two other venerable Swiss Societies, one of which, two days ago, celebrated its 250th Jubilee, namely the "Société de Secours Mutuels", London, and the other one, the Swiss Club Manchester, which three years ago became a centenarian.

Had it not been for the two last wars, when social functions were dispensed with, this year's Banquet of the City Swiss Club, would have been the 97th of its kind.

With unabated "fury" the Swiss Colony in Great Britain is indulging in a flood of festivities, as will be seen from the many reports which appear in this paper.

Within the last five weeks, no less than ten social functions have been held, which goes to prove that the Colony is far from dormant, and judging from the attendance at the respective Banquets, "Gemütliche Abende", Escalade dinner, Xmas dinners, "Grümpelschiessen" dinner, etc., etc., the Colony has the appearance of being not only lively but prosperous.

This is all to the good, but I wonder whether it is not a little bit overdone, considering that the strain on the family Exchequer must be considerable.

However, it is not for me to pass any censure, but being requested to attend most of these festivities, after a full days work, I begin to long for a little respite. At most of the dinners, owing to the approach of the Xmas season, I was "fed" on Turkey, which, I admit is very nice, but one can get too much of a good thing. I shall certainly dispense with this fare for my Christmas Dinner at home, and if any of my kind readers intends to send me this noble bird for the festive season, I would suggest, that he makes it a box of cigars instead.

Having thus unburdened my heart, I will give a description of this 88th Banquet and Ball, at which nearly 300 members and friends attended, and which I am delighted to say, was a great success. Three factors helped to make it so, firstly the speeches were short and witty, secondly an excellent dinner, and thirdly the Ladies in their finery gladdened everybody's heart.

Without wishing to appear snobbish, I can say, that the Banquets of the Club, always have a certain *cachet*, which makes them such an outstanding event in the social sphere of the Colony.

As customary a reception was held previous to the dinner, by the Swiss Minister, and Madame de Torrenté, and the President of the City Swiss Club, and Mrs. Pfenninger, after which cocktails were served in one of the luxurious anti-rooms.

There an animated conversation was held in many languages, you could hear eloquent French being spoken, and the melodious language of our Ticinesi, "Schwyzerdütsch" was also heard, and, of course, English. I am sure there are not many gatherings held in this great Metropolis where so many tongues are spoken. One of the English guests mentioned to me, that it was quite bewildering, and in order to save his face, as he termed it, he tried to explain to me in his best French, why English people seem to be unable to master foreign languages; after his conversation I heartily agreed with him, as I could not understand a word he said, but perhaps it was the fault of the cocktails with which I was so generously treated.

The company then made its way into the richly decorated Banqueting Hall, awaiting upstanding the arrival of the Honorary President, the Swiss Minister, and their President Mr. R. Pfenninger, who were accompanied by their Ladies, carrying the beautiful bouquets of flowers, which had been previously presented to them on behalf of the members of the Club.

The orchestra played a lively tune when these personalities stepped into the Hall, and vociferous handclapping proved how popular the are. I noticed that behind the two Presidents were exhibited the Swiss flag together with the Union Jack; at one time the banner of the City Swiss Club used to occupy a prominent position, but, alas, it fell a victim of the last war, perishing in a fire, together with the library, and all the old records of the Club. The only survivor, I am glad to say, is the librarian, who should now be promoted to a different office.

After Grace was said by Pastor C. Reverdin, the company sat down to enjoy an excellent Menu, prepared by the famous chef of the Dorchester, Mr. E. Käufeler, a compatriot of ours; he has done, what our American friends would call "mighty fine".

The musical programme during the dinner was executed by Les Brown and his orchestra, and added much to the creating of a happy "Stimmung". Previous to coffee being served the customary toasts to H.M. the Queen and "La Suisse" were proposed

by the Honorary President, both toasts were accompanied with the respective National Anthems.

Then came the time for the speeches, which, as mentioned before, were "short and sweet". The first speech of the evening was delivered by Mr. R. Pfenninger, President of the Club, who received an enthusiastic reception.

Mr. Pfenninger extended a sincere welcome to the official guests, who included the following: Sir Lionel Lamb, C.M.G., O.B.E. and Lady Lamb, Ambassador designate to Switzerland, Mr. & Mrs. G. E. Howard, Vice-President of the Association of British Members of the Swiss Alpine Club, Mr. & Mrs. Kenneth Smith, Hon. Secretary of the Ski Club, Mr. & Mrs. F. R. Crepin, Mr. & Mrs. R. Keller of the Swiss Legation, Mr. & Mrs. F. Streit, Chairman of the Swiss Presidents Association, Mr. A. Weitnauer of the Swiss Legation, Mr. & Mrs. A. Stauffer, Editor of the "Swiss Observer", Rev. C. Reverdin, of the Eglise Suisse, Rev. & Mrs. H. Spöerri of the "Schweizerkirche", Father A. Lanfranchi, and the suffragants of the churches, Messrs. F. Kubler and P. Wissler.

The President then thanked the Swiss Minister, Monsieur Henry de Torrenté for the keen interest he always shows in the activities of the Club, paying also a compliment to Madame de Torrenté. He expressed his delight at having at the guest's table Sir Lionel and Lady Lamb wishing them success in their new sphere of activity. He continued by paying a hearty tribute to the team which conquered Mount Everest, saying "no one has fought longer and harder than these valiant men". Amidst applause Mr.

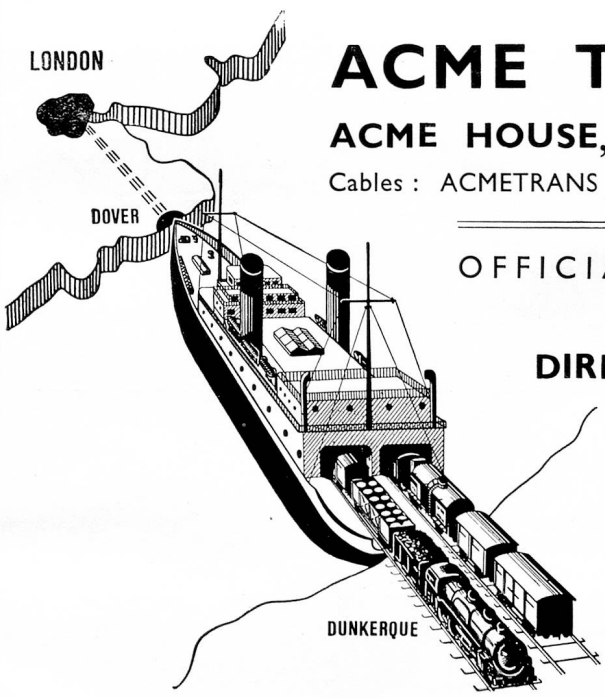
Pfenninger said, he would dispense with giving a *resumé* of the Swiss Economic position, but remarked that same can be viewed with optimism.

The President's words were accorded a hearty reception. The microphone then changed places and this time the toast-master asked for silence to hear the speech of the Minister, who was warmly greeted as he rose from his "Fauteuil présidentiel".

Monsieur de Torrenté said that the natural thing in a Club of business men would be to speak on economic problems, but added "I dare not do so, because the fair sex, although intensely interested in profits, is rarely concerned with how to make them. If on the other hand, I choose a subject which *really* concerns our ladies, say the vote for women, I am sure to cause a sleepless night to many a staunch compatriot."

The Minister said, that the choice of a subject to speak on, was very narrow, as he did not wish even to follow the poet's advice, and reserve to himself the pleasure of saying something useless, because levity and flippancy so often are taboo to the average serious minded Swiss.

"There is", he continued, "perhaps one subject which might possibly interest the "better" — as well as the — shall we call them — "ordinary halves", assembled here tonight. Those amongst you, who read fashion papers, must be aware of a tremendous battle which is raging in the world just now: the battle of the skirt! How many inches from the ground, that is the question? For women realise, of course, the pernicious consequences which some of their decisions might produce. Remember, Ladies, that every inch



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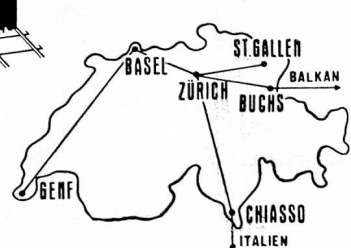
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“ off ” the skirt, means thousands of tons of materials unused. To go without hats or to wear no skirts, equals unemployment on a tremendous scale. Please think what happens to the embroideries and laces of St. Gall or the silk ribbon industry of Basle. As fascinating as it might be, today we simply cannot afford to follow the fashion set by Eve in Paradise.”

“ Clemenceau maintained, that war is too serious a business to be left to the Generals, and I maintain that fashion is too serious a business to be left to the women. So, as often in life, we are therefore once more confronted with a situation which demands a compromise: most of us have *some* idea, *how* difficult it is to compromise with women. It needs all our ingenuity, all our diplomacy, all our tenacity to come to reasonable terms. — Like my friend who wanted to go to Scotland for his holidays, whilst his wife preferred the Riviera. — They compromised — and went to the Riviera.”

“ In this same way ”, the Minister said, “ I feel I must compromise with the ladies over my speech tonight and therefore say to you all: On with the dance — and enjoy yourselves!”

After the conclusion of this short speech we witnessed a repetition of the enthusiasm which had marked the start of his address.

The task to say “ Thank you! ”, on behalf of the guests was entrusted to Mr. G. E. Howard, Vice-President of the Alpine Club, who said that he had first journeyed to Switzerland some fifty-six years ago, when he visited the Bernese Oberland, and from the moment he saw the Eiger, Mönch and Jungfrau, he dedicated himself to mountaineering. “ What has always impressed me most in your country ”, he said, “ is the tolerance with which you solve your problems.”

In conclusion, he paid a tribute to Colonel Hunt, the leader of the Mount Everest expedition, not forgetting the valiant efforts of the Swiss expedition which nearly became first in the field.” (Applause).

Then followed a toast, not mentioned on the programme. Ever since the Banquets have been instituted, the City Swiss Club has always allotted a Toast to “ La Charité ”, followed by a collection in favour of those compatriots of ours who have fallen on evil days. Owing to a recent legacy (which by the way has not yet been handed over) the committee had decided not to make a collection, and thus did away with a tradition which has always been readily and generously supported.

Mr. R. de Cintra, however, was invited to make an Appeal, which I am glad to say brought in an amount of £80, no doubt due to the witty, as well as to the earnest appeal of the speaker, and thus an old tradition of the Club has been restored and I hope will be continued.

For the last two Banquets, as a novelty, a Tombola has been introduced, the proceeds of which, I understand helps to defray the costs of the Banquet. I am not in a position to judge whether this is “ really necessary ”, and therefore will not enlarge on it, but I cannot help mentioning the opinion of two former Presidents of the Club, who said “ that it is cheap, and beneath the dignity of the City Swiss Club.” I will leave it at that.

Thus the official part of the evening was terminated, and the company adjourned to the Foyer, so that the Hall could be made ready for dancing. Soon after 10 o'clock the orchestra started the dance music, and there were few who did resist the temptation to have a jolly good valse, fox-trott, valeta or tango. One or two “ Paul-Jones ” greatly added to the gaiety and mirth which was such a happy feature throughout the whole evening.

At 1.30 a.m. the orchestra struck up “ Auld Lang Syne ”, and so another Banquet and Ball of the City Swiss Club came to its close.

It only remains for me to voice the opinion of all those who were fortunate enough to attend this function, an opinion which unanimously agreed that it was a great success in every respect.

The Committee of the Club, and especially the untiring Hon. Secretary, Mr. Ch. Gysin, who helped to arrange this splendid function in such a masterful way, truly deserves the thanks of all those present.

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