

City Swiss Club

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CITY SWISS CLUB. Soirée Familiale.

The "Soirée Familiale" of the City Swiss Club, which took place on Tuesday, March 9th, at the Dorchester Hotel was a very enjoyable affair. The attendance, however, could have been better, only about 70 members and friends found it convenient to come along. It was a great pity, and those who were absent not only missed an interesting lecture, but also a fine dinner. At the last "Soirée Familiale", which took place in October of last year, nearly 150 members and ladies were present. True enough on that occasion the lecturer was a lady (Lady Mary N. Kelly, wife of Sir David Kelly, at one time H.M. Ambassador to Moscow), and it seems to me that the weaker — or is it the stronger — sex, attracts a wider audience.

The subject of the lecture given was "Reflections on the Cinema", and before I make any comments on it, I wonder whether a title such as "Sensational Hollywood Disclosures" would not have registered a "Full House", but, of course, the members of the City Swiss Club, are supposed to be a most respectable body of men, not to be tempted by "hot stuff", but business is business.

After cocktails having been served in one of the ante-rooms, the company adjourned to the Orchid Room which was, as usual, decorated with spring flowers in the Swiss colours. Towards the end of a fine dinner the customary toasts were proposed by the President of the Club, Mr. R. Pfenninger. He extended a warm welcome to the Ladies, and the guests of honour, Monsieur and Madame E. Bernath, Counsellor of Legation, and also introduced Mr. Francis Gysin, M.A. son of the Hon. Secretary of the Club, who was the lecturer of the evening.

In his introductory remarks the lecturer gave fair warning, that his address, illustrated on the screen, might turn out to be rather lengthy, saying that he would have no objection if members of his audience would find it expedient to leave before the end of his lecture. The subject of Documentary Films is a vast one, and could have hardly been cut much shorter without losing cohesion, and that very few left before the finish is a feather in the cap of the lecturer, who, was successful in claiming the attention of his audience right to the end.

As a curtain-raiser the film "The Elephant will never forget", was put on the screen, followed by extracts from Hamlet, for set and costume designs. Mr. Gysin then dealt with the subject of the film as a new art form, and the development of the story films as contrasted with the other arts.

The film "The beginning of the Cinema" (extracts made between 1896-1900) featured the development of silent story films from actualities and static comedy and travel films.

Most amusing to watch was the first American story film "The great Train robbery", comparing it with the up-to-date story films, it looked a rather tame affair, and I am afraid would be "hissed off the screen" by a present cinema audience, but it clearly showed the progress which has been made in this kind of film during the last fifty years.

The showing of extracts from Eisenstein's film "Battleship Potemkin", supplemented by the

lecturer's explanations as to the creation of a new sense of time by editing, as well as of space, was most interesting to watch.

Excerpts from the film "The last laugh" with Emil Jannings and David Lean's "Brief Encounter" (extract) made in 1945 followed.

Mr. Gysin mentioned the development of a new dimension in sound, and the present day mastery of technical problems.

The lecturer closed his interesting exposé, with the words "You can't give people better films than they're willing to accept."

When the lights were switched on again, the President, on behalf of the audience, warmly thanked Mr. Gysin for his entertaining evening, and the loud applause which followed was proof that everyone had enjoyed themselves.

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NOUVELLE SOCIÉTÉ HELVÉTIQUE. Annual General Meeting.

The Annual General Meeting of the London Group of the Nouvelle Société Helvétique took place on Wednesday, March 17th at the "Schweizerbund", (Swiss Club), 74, Charlotte Street, W.1.

A full report of the Meeting which was followed by a dinner, will appear in our next issue.

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