

With our Ticinesi

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WITH OUR TICINESI.

There is not a week passing by without a record being broken, this time the Unione Ticinese is in the picture. More than 800 people attended their Tea-Dance, on Sunday, March 13th, at the Dorchester, Park Lane, W.1, which can be registered as a record in the annals of this Society.

At this junction it is only fair to mention that a large percentage of the attendance is not strictly recruited from the Ticinesi, but as these functions are held under their patronage, they never-the-less are entitled to claim credit for it.

How is it, that this Society, with an obviously restricted membership can get, without apparently much effort, an attendance of such magnitude, whilst other Swiss Societies often find it difficult to muster enough participants to make their functions a "payable proposition"?

There are various reasons, and I will try to find the key to this remarkable fact.

First of all there is only *one* Society embracing our Italian speaking compatriots, whilst the French and German speaking Swiss allow themselves the luxury of several Societies. Thus the Ticinesi cut out any competition, and their members are not put into a quandry as to which function, of the many, they should attend. They have an identity of their own, and do not much mix in the Colony apart from functions such as the Fête Suisse and the 1st of August celebration.

Secondly their "socials" are as a rule "free and easy", devoid of any ceremony, in short, there is no "chi-chi" about it. With few exceptions they do not expose their members and friends to the agony of having to listen to long, and not always interesting speeches.

Furthermore it does not matter a scrap to them what you are wearing, whilst some appear dressed up to the hilt, others come along in their everyday garb, and why not, as long as they are decently attired.

This then, to my mind, is the explanation why our brethren from the sunny Ticino can always count on a fair attendance at all their celebrations.

* * *

When I arrived at The Dorchester, soon after 5 p.m., dancing was already in full swing.

To dance, or not to dance that was the question; with such a numerous attendance dancing became a very difficult problem, but with amazing agility the couples managed somehow, by twisting and turning, to get through, and in spite of much buffeting the revellers seemed to enjoy themselves.

One of the pleasant features of this jolly gathering was the presence of so many pretty ladies. Yes, our Ticinesi ladies, with their dark complexion, fair or black hair, sparkling eyes and snow-white teeth can successfully compete with any "seaside beauty Queen" pictured in the daily illustrated press or on the TV screen.

It was about 6 o'clock when the Swiss Minister, and Madame Daeniker arrived, both received a very hearty ovation on their entrance in the gaily decorated ballroom. A charming young lady dressed in the Ticinese national costume presented Madame Daeniker with a lovely bouquet of red roses.

During the interval tea was served, and two cabaret items were presented, one by a very vivacious young lady, who sang some saucy songs, and the second by a conjurer and cartoonist.

As this was the first time since the Minister had arrived in this country, that he had attended a function of the Unione Ticinese, it was only right and proper, that an official welcome should be extended to him. This pleasant task was allotted to the young and popular President of the Society, Mr. Pietro Jacomelli, who addressed the company in Italian.

The President started his oration by extending a hearty welcome to the Minister and Madame Daeniker, saying that their visit bore witness to their attachment to the Ticinesi.

He also greeted Sig. Albertini, Secretary of Legation, who also for the first time was the guest of the Society as successor to Dr. Lepori, and Mr. and Mrs. A. Stauffer, Editor of the "Swiss Observer", of him he said, "he has a warm corner in his heart for us Ticinesi, we look upon him as a sure friend".

Sig. Jacomelli continued by giving a short outline of the history of the Society and its aims. He expressed the pleasure that once again a Ticinesi, in the person of Sig. Giuseppe Lepori, has entered the Federal Government, saying that "without the concurrence of the Italian race the concept of modern Switzerland would not be complete".

The President concluded his address with the following words:

"Monsieur le Ministre, we are grateful for your

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understanding, for your patriotic gesture in accepting our invitation. These visits contribute to the tightening of our attachment to the Mother Country, whilst personal contact is conducive to the better comprehension of our needs and aspirations, for counsel and encouragement, and above all it affords us an opportunity to cultivate our Swiss traditions without which there cannot be in the individual a Swiss conscience nor would there be a reminder to the Motherland which is an encouragement to our colonies abroad." (Loud applause.)

Monsieur Daeniker, who was loudly cheered on rising from his seat, replied in Italian, as follows:

"The warm and cordial reception you have accorded me, and the kind words which your president, Sig. Jacomelli, was good enough to address to me in your name are proof of your loyal sentiments which have touched me deeply. I thank you.

My wife and I are glad of the opportunity of meeting you to-day and to make the acquaintance with this Ticinese community which is justly proud of its long tradition of social activity.

I am well aware of your patriotic spirit and of the beneficial work which the Unione Ticinese performs not only to assist our Italian-speaking compatriots but as an important unit in the Swiss colony of Great Britain. Both sentiments and works do you credit.

It will always be a pleasure to return in your midst on future occasions and renew the enjoyment of this meeting."

The Minister's words were warmly greeted by applause. The last speaker of the evening was Sig. Albertini who said, in Italian, that he was glad to keep up the tradition of his predecessor, Sig. Lepori, by taking an active part in the social life of the Unione Ticinese. He gave a vivid description of the beauties of his native canton with its lovely lakes, mountains, flowers and loggias. He paid a high tribute to its population for being hard working and modest. "Our principal aim", he said, "is to remain independent, and loyal to the Confederation." Sig. Albertini encouraged his compatriots of the south to visit their canton and keep up the "esprit de corps" which is such a feature of the Ticinesi. In

concluding, he too expressed his satisfaction, that the canton of Ticino is again represented in the Swiss Government. (Applause.)

Then the "Corale" attired in their national costume, sang a number of songs of their native canton, which were greatly enjoyed. Mrs. Berti, a former President of the Ladies section was presented with a diamond bracelet, necklace and earrings as an appreciation for the long and faithful services she had rendered to the Society, and in a few words voiced her thanks for this "beau geste".

Once more Harry Vardon's band lured the revellers on to the dance floor, and dancing continued until 10 p.m., when this happy gathering came to a close.

Thanks "cari Ticinesi" for this afternoon and evening, where so much gaiety and good fellowship were such distinct features, thanks also are due to the organisers, especially to the family Berti, who have handled a difficult task with remarkable efficiency.

The Unione Ticinese has thus passed another mile stone in their long and distinguished history, of which they have every reason to be proud.

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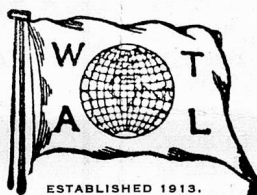
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