

City Swiss Club : Gaymond Lambert at the "Soirée Familiale"

Objektyp: **Group**

Zeitschrift: **The Swiss observer : the journal of the Federation of Swiss Societies in the UK**

Band (Jahr): - **(1955)**

Heft 1248

PDF erstellt am: **13.09.2024**

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CITY SWISS CLUB.

RAYMOND LAMBERT at the "Soirée Familiale".

Through the good services of the Hon. Secretary of the Club, and through the intermediary of his cousin, Mr. Marcel Gysin, Professor of Geology at the University of Geneva it was made possible that the famous Swiss guide and explorer, Mr. Raymond Lambert, was able to address the members of the City Swiss Club, and their ladies on Tuesday, March 22nd, at the Dorchester Hotel, Park Lane, W.1.

That hero worship is not yet a thing of the past was proved by the very large attendance — nearly 200 people being present — and quite a number of would be visitors had unfortunately to be turned down owing to lack of accommodation. If some of the members had not left the announcement of their attendance to the last minute, the committee could have made arrangements for the larger room at the Dorchester.

After a reception, the company filed into the Orchid Room which was most beautifully decorated with lovely spring flowers thus creating at once a festive "Stimmung"; but it was not only the flowers which put everyone in a good mood, but also a very excellent dinner which was much appreciated.

When coffee was served, the President, Mr. R. Pfenninger proposed the Toasts to H.M. the Queen and to "La Suisse", and afterwards welcomed first

the Swiss Minister, and Madame Daeniker, who were for the first time since their arrival in London present at a function of the City Swiss Club, saying: "We all hope that your stay in this country will be a happy one for you both personally as well as in your official capacity. We would not be Swiss if we were not divided in many ways but we also know that this can be a source of value. Above all, we feel united in the essentials, and I am therefore convinced that you can count on the whole-hearted support of all of us in your work".

The President then warmly greeted M. Raymond Lambert, of whom he said that his name has become, even for laymen, a household word standing for undaunted courage, determination, and resourcefulness in adversity. He concluded his address with the following words: "We are very proud indeed, M. Lambert, that you consented to come to London to talk to us about your personal experiences in the high mountains. We have followed your expeditions with keen interest. In our memory stands out above all your assault on Mount Everest in 1952 when you and your friends came nearer to the top than anyone before. You failed, but it was a glorious failure, and you passed on the torch to a British team who were successful. Sir John Hunt himself recognised the great debt which he owes to you and your colleagues. If the real test of man is not his visible success but the qualities deployed in his endeavours, then, M. Lambert, we can feel only admiration and pride in you as a compatriot (Applause).



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Mr. Pfenninger also welcomed the other guests, amongst them were Mme. Claude Kogan, who accompanied M. Lambert on his last year's expedition to the Cho-Oyu, and who is, I understand, planning to join him again some time this year to continue exploring some of the still virgin Himalayan peaks, and Chanoine Jules Detry, the Belgian-born monk of the Great St. Bernard monastery, who is also an explorer and scientist, and who is shortly leaving for India with M. Lambert to prepare the ground for a further expedition.

The hall was then made ready for the showing of slides, and a film, both shows were accompanied by a running commentary. Before the lights were turned out, M. Lambert made a few introductory remarks, explaining that the attempts in the Himalayan Range were sponsored by the "Comité Himalayan de Genève", under the patronage of the University of Geneva, and the Swiss Alpine Club. He said that it may be many years yet before the mysterious mountain kingdom of Nepal becomes a climbing ground accessible to large numbers of alpinists, but that the era of small expeditions would come just as it did in the Alps not so long ago as the result of the ventures of a few enthusiastic pioneers. He also paid a sincere tribute to the conquerors of Mount Everest, Sir Edmund Hillary, Tensing, and Sir John Hunt.

The showing of the slides was unfortunately somewhat marred by the fact that the apparatus proved to be not powerful enough to give a clear view of the very beautiful slides. I have been given to understand, that owing to the overcrowding of the room, it was not found possible to bring the projector nearer to the front; not having any technical knowledge in these matters, I am not qualified to express an opinion, but it might perhaps have been advisable to have tried out these slides previous to the show, when very likely the necessary adjustments could have been made.

In spite of the mentioned handicap it, however, conveyed to the audience a vivid picture of the almost overwhelming beauty of nature in this part of the world. The slides, as well as the film which followed — the latter being more distinct — dealt principally with the territory in the region of the 23,221 ft. high peak of Guari Sankar, and Cho Oyu (26,867 ft.), the 7th highest peak in the world (Mr. Lambert had just failed to complete a second ascent of Cho Oyu in bad weather which followed the success of an Austrian expedition).

The film took us from the various base camps practically to the top of some of the gigantic summits. Much amusement was caused by the pictures depicting the doings of the Sherpas in their leisure hours, some sitting beside a clump of Tibetan prayer flags, whilst others were preparing and eating their

food, the latter not looking very appetising. The "going to bed" in tents which had to be dug into the snow and ice, in order to protect them from the wind, seemed to require special efforts to get into the sleeping bags.

We made the acquaintance of the famous Tensing Norkay, co-conqueror of Everest, and his mother, all smiles and rightly proud of her famous son. I was a little disappointed that nothing was shown of the lecturer's assault on Mount Everest in 1952, when he and his friends came nearer to the top than anyone before.

The description of these epic ascents in howling winds and blinding snow storms, the traversing of vast glaciers and deep crevasses, conveyed a lively picture of the hardship and the almost inhuman endurance the members of the expedition had to contend with.

I noticed amongst the audience a good many of my friends who have climbed in the past a number of "four thousanders" in the Swiss Alps, and without belittling their achievements, I felt that their efforts must now look to them rather insignificant in comparison with the climbing in the Himalayan territory where most of the peaks are about double that height.

All in all it was a very enjoyable evening, and the committee of the City Swiss Club is to be congratulated on having given us an opportunity of meeting and hearing our famous compatriot, Raymond Lambert.

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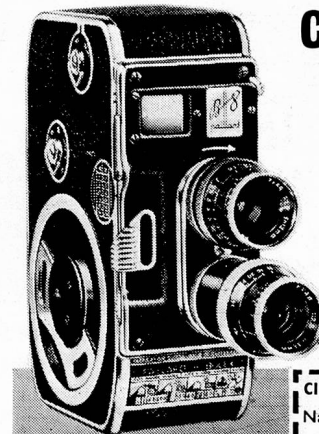


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