

Swiss Mercantile Society : annual dinner and dance

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*Mr. André Jaccard
in the Chair.*

SWISS MERCANTILE SOCIETY ANNUAL DINNER AND DANCE

The President, in his address of welcome, had expressed similar appreciation of his colleagues on Council and Committees, of the Principal and Vice-Principal of the College and of the Secretary and office staff.

Other guests welcomed by Mr. Jaccard were Monsieur Marcel Heimo, Counsellor of Embassy, accompanied by Madame Heimo, the Swiss Consul and Vice-Consul, the Chairman of the Presidents' Assembly of the Swiss Societies in Great Britain, representatives of the Swiss Churches, and Mr. C. W. Westcott, Vice-President of "The Times" Football Club with whom the Society have friendly and close soccer and social ties..

The President alluded to the work of the College in the following way:

"This is not the time or place to refer at length to the activities of the College during the past year. These will be fully reported upon at our annual General Meeting and in the Annual Report but I feel sure, however, that you will be interested in learning that we are more than holding our own at the College. Students admitted to the day-school during the year numbered 573 and we had 861 enrolments for evening classes. Out of 348 day students who sat for the Diploma Examinations, 336 or 96% were successful and out of 23 evening-class students who sat 15 obtained passes in the Cambridge Proficiency Examination in June. The results of the December examinations for which 32 candidates entered are not yet known.

"As usual we benefited from a subsidy granted by the Bundesamt für Industrie, Gewerbe und Arbeit in Berne.

"This support from the Federal Authorities, which is gratefully acknowledged, enables us to provide for our students facilities which would be denied to them elsewhere."

A guest who had come all the way from Switzerland was Dr. H. J. Halbheer, Director of the Secretariat of the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad in Berne. We Swiss living outside Switzerland owe a great deal to the ASO and its Secretariat, ever vigilant and active in our interest.

During his stay in England, Dr. Halbheer took part in a meeting of the Presidents' Assembly and gave a talk at the Nouvelle Société Helvétique. To attend the Swiss Mercantile Society's Dinner was an opportunity not to be missed. As one of the two delegates of our "Parliament", the Commission of the Swiss Abroad, I have learnt a great deal about the work of the ASO, and I am convinced that the contacts Dr. Halbheer established with the Colony during his stay will be turned to good account. The President referred to him in the following words:

"Dr. Halbheer is at present attending a symposium at Wilton Park under the auspices of the British Government. He is a doctor of juris-prudence of the Universities of Zurich and Geneva and a scholar of the University of California. Widely travelled, his presence in England at

Having had close ties with the S.M.S. for three decades, I not only enjoy attending their meetings and social gatherings, but really and truly like to write about them. This time, however, the President, Mr. André Jaccard, who was in the chair at the Society's Annual Dinner and Dance at the Dorchester Hotel on 25th January, put me into a real spot. He had a few well-chosen words for each of the Society's guests, and when my turn came as Editor of the "Swiss Observer", he kindly commented on my report of the S.M.S.'s seventy-fifth anniversary last October, which, he said had been so flattering that he could not but invite me again. Hence my dilemma — if I write with all the enthusiasm generated during the pleasant and successful evening at the Dorchester, coupled with my warm feelings for the Society, it certainly looks as if I were after yet another invitation to be the Swiss Mercantile Society's guest. If, therefore, this report shows a certain restraint or brevity, it is by no means due to lack of goodwill or gratitude, but merely to my sense of modesty! I hasten to add, however, that there is not the slightest ill-feeling on my part — the S.M.S. and their President are well aware of my affection for them, and that I shall attend their gatherings as a member in my own right, just as I had done for twenty-six years at the side of my late husband, himself one of the Society's Honorary Members. Incidentally, it is remarkable that six of them were present. I believe that no other society usually musters such a large number for any social function. As the President pointed out, most of those attending are still actively connected with the Society and the College. The widow of another Honorary Member, Mrs. J. Pfaendler, was also present.

The first of the distinguished guests to be welcomed by the President after an excellent dinner, were the Chargé d'Affaires and First Counsellor of Embassy, Monsieur Jean de Stoutz, and his wife. Monsieur de Stoutz knows a great deal about the S.M.S. and their College and takes a keen interest in their affairs. This was revealed later when he proposed the toast to the Swiss Mercantile Society and the College. He talked about the everyday problems facing the students, which are so well taken care of by the Council, committees, teaching staff and clerical staff. Monsieur de Stoutz considered all the unscheduled activities of a practical nature nearly as important as the actual teaching of the language, and he thanked all concerned for "the extra, unsung devotion shown throughout all these years to our young",

this moment when we are about to engage in delicate negotiations in regard to the Swiss Centre, is most opportune and only last week we enjoyed the benefit of his vast experience during a talk he gave us on matters affecting the Swiss abroad. I am confident that Dr. Halbheer will give the Swiss Colony every assistance in reaching its objective and I should like to take this opportunity of wishing him a pleasant and profitable stay in this country."

Dr. Halbheer replied for the guests and the ladies, the latter having been accorded a specially charming and hearty welcome by the President. In Dr. Halbheer we women had a very able and attractive spokesman. He brought greetings from Switzerland, amongst them from National Councillor Arnold Meier-Ragg, Secretary-General of the S.K.V., our parent society, and a great friend of the S.M.S. He also congratulated the Society on "the marvellous work accomplished by many members present on a completely voluntary and disinterested basis". He referred to his visit to the College which had impressed him greatly. He assured the gathering that he would take back happy memories of stimulating hours spent within the Swiss Colony, and also valuable and lasting impressions of London and the British way of life. He quoted Dr. Johnson "to be tired of London is to be tired of life".

To this I feel inclined to add that loss of interest in the S.M.S. would be synonymous with lack of belief in the future of the Swiss Colony. No loss of interest was noticeable at the Society's Annual Dinner. There was gay and energetic dancing by young and old. The atmosphere was happy, carefree, marked as usual by the absence of too much formality but abounding in good fellowship. If the "they are jolly good fellows" spontaneously accorded to the President and Mrs. Jaccard at the end was tinged with regret, it was only because midnight came too soon and most of us would have liked the successful evening to go on. But here I must leave off, or I am in danger of appearing to cadge another invitation . . .

Mariann.

* * *

List of guests and specially welcomed members and friends:

The Swiss Chargé d'Affaires and Madame de Stoutz; Monsieur and Madame Heimo; Consul and Mrs. Tosio; Vice-Consul and Mrs. Burgunder; Dr. H. J. Halbheer, Director of the ASS; Mr. V. Berti, Chairman Presidents' Assembly, and his daughter; Mr. and Mrs. C. W. Westcott, "The Times" Football Club; Mrs. Mariann Meier, "Swiss Observer"; The Rev. Father Scherer of the Swiss Catholic Mission; Pasteur and Mrs. Jacot of the Eglise Suisse; (apologies received from Pfr. Kaegi of the Schweizerkirche); Mr. J. J. Boos, President 1939/47, Honorary Member of the S.M.S. and of the Central Society, Trustee; Mr. L. W. Krucker, Vice-President, Chairman of the House Committee, Honorary Member of the S.M.S. and of the Central Society, Trustee, who generously donated several prizes during the evening; and the following four additional Honorary Members: Mr. W. Burren, Secretary and former Chairman of the Education Committee; Mr. R. Chappuis, President 1961/62; Mr. O. Grob, President 1958 to 1962; Mr. A. Stauffer, President 1918; Mrs. J. Pfaendler; Mr. C. Slade, Principal, Mr. E. W. Makin, Vice-Principal, both accompanied by their wives; Miss Beier and Miss Rhyner (office staff); Mr. A. Faes, Chairman of the Education Committee, to whom a Gold Badge was presented which he could not be handed at the Jubilee Dinner due to absence overseas.

NOTICE TO SOCIETIES

In order to prevent any clash of meetings and other functions, the Societies are asked to inform the Editor as soon as possible of all forthcoming events, even though they may not be open to outsiders. Dates are regularly published under "FORTHCOMING EVENTS", and this should be of great help to societies and individuals.

OUR NEXT ISSUE

Our next issue will be published on Friday, 28th February. We shall be grateful to receive reports and contributions not later than the first post on Wednesday, 19th February. Short news items only can be accepted later.

WELFARE OFFICE FOR SWISS GIRLS IN GREAT BRITAIN

11 Belsize Grove, London N.W.3.
(Nearest Underground Station: Belsize Park)

RECEPTION HOURS

Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Saturday
2 p.m. to 5 p.m. or by appointment

Telephone: PRImrose 4260

The Committee regret to announce that Miss Hilde Sieber gave up her post as Secretary of the Welfare Office on the 17th January last. Miss Sieber joined the Staff in February 1960 and besides proving herself an excellent correspondent quickly adapted herself to the demands of the Welfare Office. During the past four years she has rendered invaluable service to girls seeking advice and assistance, sparing no effort to understand their problems. Although not a fully qualified welfare worker Miss Sieber was from time to time called upon to run the Welfare Office singlehanded and this she did very successfully.

Miss Sieber is taking up another form of employment in Switzerland and the Committee wish her every success in the future.

Nouvelle Société Helvétique

London Group

Tuesday, 25th February, at 7.45 p.m.

Swiss Hostel for Girls,

9/11, Belsize Grove, N.W.3

OPEN MEETING

Dr. Alfred Roetheli

Chief Justice, Olten

will speak on the

administration of justice in Switzerland

All Swiss and Friends are Welcome