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SWISS MERCANTILE SOCIETY.

ANNUAL BANQUET AND BALL, APRIL 7th, 1923.
(Communicated.)

A most successful and enjoyable banquet, followed by a ball and attended by nearly 150 members and guests, took place on Saturday night at the Midland Hotel. The Swiss Minister, Mr. C. R. Paravicini, who came specially up to London for the occasion, took the Chair, and proposed the loyal toast.

Mr. De Brunner, the president of the S.M.S., submitted the toast of "Switzerland," which was received by three vigorous cheers for the dear old country. After extending a hearty welcome to the guests, particularly to Mr. Paravicini, Mr. De Brunner made a few observations on the activities of the Society, as this official occasion was the first of its kind after an interruption of a whole decade. From modest beginnings the S.M.S. has slowly, but steadily grown to one of the most important Swiss Societies in Great Britain, now counting well-nigh 700 members and supporters. The S.M.S. claims to fulfil an important and patriotic mission in reference to the young commercial ambassadors of both sexes, who hail from our native country in order to study the English language and gain business experience and "savoir faire" in Great Britain, for whose institutions, business acumen and—last, but not least—high standard of business morality we Swiss have always entertained genuine admiration. The S.M.S. has two special branches, viz., the Education Department and the Employment Service. Although the Swiss Government have allotted to the S.M.S. a very handsome annual subsidy to enable it to place within easy reach of members most valuable educational facilities, it has been necessary to appeal for assistance to a large body of our countrymen in order to cope with the needs of a successful expansion. Effective help is readily forthcoming, and in no stinted measure.

First and foremost, Mr. De Brunner expressed hearty thanks to Monsieur Paravicini, who agreed to act as Honorary Chairman of a Special Commission, formed to raise the nucleus of a fund for the Educational Department; then to Mons. Martin, Counsellor of Legation, who also became a sponsor of the cause, and whose tireless activities will for ever remain engraved, in terms of keenest appreciation, in the annals of the Society.

Other "Orders of Merits" were bestowed upon Mr. J. Pfander, who, apart from managing his department, the Employment Service, with conspicuous success, had all along the line displayed a most exemplary zeal in the organisation of the Employment Department; and upon Mr. Bretscher, Chef de Cours, and Mr. Gasser, Treasurer who both deserve thanks for the exemplary manner in which they discharge the functions entrusted to them.

May the students and those of the members whose welfare in their early business careers the Society is so anxious properly to take care of, realise and show appreciation of what is being done for them!

All of us who reside abroad and have Switzerland's interests at heart must be alive to the duties we owe the country of our birth. To-day it can no longer be a question of maturing those qualities which in ages gone by have made the name of Swiss famous as faithful protectors of the person and property of foreign potentates. To-day, it is essentially a question of maintaining the highest possible reputation in the arena of intellectual and business life. Let all our compatriots who are gaining their livelihood on foreign territory always conduct themselves in an exemplary manner and put forth their very best efforts for the promotion of the legitimate interests of all those whom they are called upon to serve. It is only in this manner that we can inspire and retain respect for ourselves and our country. Our good people at home have a right to expect that the prestige of our land remain clean and sacred in our hands. The red cross on the white field is to-day the honoured emblem of mercy and charity; let us take care that the white cross on the red ground loses none of its glorious traditions, and that it will forever be universally respected as being the well-merited heraldic emblem of the honesty, sincerity and sterling qualities of the Swiss race.

Monsieur Paravicini replied that he made the acquaintance of the S.M.S. as far back as 1902, when he represented the Minister at the Annual Banquet, Mr. Boehringer being then president. At that time, under the old diplomacy, the Minister was very often otherwise retained, and his attachés had, therefore, a good time in representing him at the many different social functions of the Swiss Colony. Probably to the disgust of his colleagues, things had somewhat changed for he missed no opportunity of personally attending these most enjoyable gatherings whenever this was possible. He was pleased to see the fine progress made since that time, and assured the Society that it could reckon on his whole-hearted support and that of the Swiss Legation.

Mr. Paschoud, Vice-President, proposed the toast of "The Guests and the Ladies." Delegates from all the London Swiss Societies were present, with the exception of the Secours Mutuels and Nouvelle Société Helvétique. The attendance at this banquet would be very small indeed but for the presence of so many representatives of the fair sex.

Monsieur Martin, Counsellor of Legation, rose to reply for the guests and for himself. He felt that his name had been mentioned too often. The Muse of speech, Calliope, ought not to hold our attention, as he was anxious that Tersichore should also have her innings.

Before the dancing commenced, Mr. Boehringer added a few words to thank Mr. De Brunner for having come forward again to take the leadership of the Society, after having been president 24 years ago, and to wish him all the success he justly deserved.

At 9.55 the doors of the ball room were flung open to the enjoyment of everybody. The great majority of the participants took advantage of the excellent band until the last dance.

In every respect this gathering was thoroughly enjoyed, and we hope that next year may see a repetition of such an undoubted success.

UNION HELVETIA CLUB.

The good old U.H. was the scene of animated festivity on Friday evening, April 6th, on the occasion of "Ye Olde Friends' Dinner and Ball." The spacious hall was gaily decorated, and even the old stage adorned new garments which a thoughtful Clubhouse Committee thought fit to provide at the right moment.

On the principle that "old poachers make the best game-keepers," Messrs. M. Wullschlegler, A. Wyss and F. Isler were entrusted with the necessary arrangements for the evening. Accordingly, both the menu and the programme of entertainment left nothing to be desired.

As is usual nowadays, the dinner started when the soup was cold and the cook was beginning to get hot with rage. How he managed to get the soup hot again is one of the many mysteries of the evening. Thanks to Mr. Wyss and the cook, the dinner was excellent; even Escoffier would have to admit the naked truth, supported by hard facts. The meat was soft and sweet. So were the sweets. (Have you got one left, Mr. Cook?—ED.)

The only complaint we have heard was that the otherwise most able Chairman, Mr. M. Wullschlegler, cut down the duration of the speeches to the limit of two minutes. He managed to propose the toast of H.M. the King, plus good old Switzerland, in half the time, but Mr. A. Wyss found it difficult to do justice to Old Friends—past and present—in the allotted space, whilst Mr. F. Isler protested most emphatically that it was utterly impossible for him to do justice to the many charms and virtues of "The Ladies" in the space of two minutes. Nevertheless, he managed to pay some very nice and—needless to say—well-deserved compliments about his very particular friends. And, judging by the applause, the ladies seemed perfectly satisfied, which, after all, is the thing that matters. (God bless the Ladies!—ED.)

The programme of entertainment is more difficult to describe, owing to its mysterious composition.

There is the wireless installation—specially installed at great expense—flashing out messages from all parts of the world, and proving how well known "Ye Olde Friends' Evening" is in high society. Some of the messages received during the evening came from the Swiss Federal Council, the General Direction of the U.H., Lucerne, Mr. Bonar Law, whose message was reported as: "My motto is tranquility; I cannot find it. Your motto is jollity; you have succeeded. Congratulations." Another Marconigram arrived from the Shareholders: "Your dividends are rotten, but your amusements are worth Tons of Money, and a flash message from the Dalston Hospital to announce Dr. and Madame Schroeder, whose presence was highly appreciated by all the Old Friends.

Unfortunately, the apparatus was out of function just when the most important news of the evening arrived from "The Swiss Observer." All we could get was the end, which was duly transmitted, viz.: "Don't forget to subscribe to the 'Observer'."

And then the dancing started. Oh, how lovely! Ask the ladies. Bewitching! Music with gentlemen keeping steps forgotten by the present generation.

Mr. Wyss and Mr. Wullschlegler obliged the friends of old with a couple of songs which will be appreciated by Ye Olde Friends as long as our two friends are able to articulate; Master Fred Maeder (now grown into a Mister) flabbergasted the audience by his marvellous tricks.

And then—last, but not least—came the "pièce de résistance": the presentation of the Luxurious Wonders (not the Wonders of Luxor), discovered by the S.N.P. Exploration Society (Registered Offices: Colney Hatch and Burghölzli). Words fail to describe the wonderful performance. Everything was "wropt in mystery" and kept the audience spellbound. Barnum and Bailey or Maskellyne and Devant never surpassed the S.N.P. Exploration Society. Even the Royal Geographical Society had received information and were full of envy because amongst the wireless messages, received during the evening, was one, reported to come from their Headquarters, as follows: "Have heard of your mysterious discoveries. You must either be wonderful explorers or wonderful liars."

And so ended a really wonderful evening amongst "Ye Olde Friends." F. I.

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Tickets obtainable in advance at the Union Helvetia, 1, Gerrard Place, W. 1, the Swiss Club (Schweizerbund), 74, Charlotte Street, W., the Swiss Observer, 21, Garsick Hill, E.C. 4 and from the members of the Society.

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Dimanche, 22 Avril, 11h.—Sermon de Charité.
(Collecte en faveur de la Fonds de Secours
pour les Suisses Pauvres à Londres.)

FORTHCOMING EVENTS.

Saturday, April 14th, at 11 a.m.—"Basle Fair Party" leaves Victoria Station for Switzerland.

Saturday, April 14th, at 7.30.—UNION HELVETIA: Grand Benefit Concert in Aid of London Hospitals at Wigmore Hall (tickets 3s. and 6s.).

Thursday, April 19th.—UNIONE TICINESE: Annual Banquet and Ball at Gatti's Restaurant, Strand, W.C.

Friday, April 20th, at 8.30.—SWISS INSTITUTE: Lecture by John Clew, Esq., on "Citizenship and its Obligations."

Sunday, April 29th, at 3 p.m.—SWISS CHORAL SOCIETY: Grand Afternoon Concert at Steinway Hall, Lower Seymour Street, W. 1.

Tuesday, May 1st, at 6.45.—CITY SWISS CLUB: Monthly Meeting, preceded by a Supper, at Gatti's Restaurant.

Friday, May 4th, at 8 p.m.—UNION HELVETIA: Annual Dinner and Ball.

Tuesday, May 15, at 8 p.m.—SWISS SPORTS COMMITTEE: Important Delegates' Meeting at Gatti's Restaurant.

Saturday, May 26, at 2.30 p.m.—SWISS SPORTS at Herne Hill Athletic Grounds.

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