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SWISS YOUTH CLUB. New Year's Eve Celebration.

Two years ago, on January 10th, 1948, I had the pleasure of attending the official opening of the Swiss Youth Club, at 86, Duke Street, W.1, by the then Chargé d'Affaires, Dr. A. Escher.

This institution was founded and sponsored by the London Group of the Nouvelle Société Helvétique.

Dr. Escher, in his inauguration address, expressed the hope, that this Club, which was started to create a common meeting place for our young compatriots in London, might serve a real need and be a help to many of our youngsters of both sexes, who were paying only a temporary visit to this country.

The many engagements in the Colony, which I have to fulfil, throughout the year, unfortunately prevented me attending any of their usual Saturday re-unions and dances since its opening.

Shortly before Xmas I received a most pressing invitation by the very active and charming President of the Swiss Youth Club, Madame A. Isacco, to attend the New Year's Eve Dance at 86, Duke Street, W.1.

Having had lately a more than usually busy time, in attending the numerous functions of various Swiss Societies, and having intended to spend the last evening of the year quietly at home, by the fire-side, listening in to Beromünster and the bells ringing in the New Year, I felt inclined to decline this invitation. On second thoughts, however, I decided to put in an appearance, and I am glad to say I did not regret it.

About 225 of our young compatriots attended this gathering, which was in full swing when I arrived. The happy revellers danced and sang to their hearts content to the music of a small and active band. The two spacious rooms as well as the entrance hall were gaily decorated with balloons and garlands, thus creating a real festive atmosphere. Mr. G. Bonner, a faithful servant of the Swiss Youth Club, acted most efficiently as M.C.

New and old dances, Paul Jones', etc., followed each other at a bewildering pace, and judging from the happy faces and gay laughter of the revellers, they seemed to enjoy every minute of it. Paper hats were worn and little paper umbrellas were carried by the dancers and added to the picturesqueness of the scene; some of the young ladies looked very saucy and attractive, and brought back pleasant memories when I was once young and carefree. *Tempi passati!*

There were rumours in the air, that a surprise item was in store, some thought, that Father Xmas might appear in person, but considering that Xmas had passed and his functions had become obsolete, this had to be ruled out. Other guesses were made, still further puzzling the participants.

During an interval, when the company regaled itself with Tea and delicious cakes and "Gutzli," many of which were home made, it was announced that the Swiss Minister and Madame de Torrenté, accompanied by Monsieur and Madame Weibel, had arrived, and on entering the Ballroom they were accorded a real hearty welcome. That the Minister, in spite of his many social engagements, had made it convenient to spend some time in the midst of his young compatriots, was indeed a *beau geste* and greatly appreciated by the entire company.

Dr. H. W. Egli, President of the Nouvelle Société Helvétique, extended in "Schwyzerdütsch" a cordial welcome to Monsieur and Madame de Torrenté, he thanked the Minister especially for having put the future Legation building at the disposal of the Swiss Youth Club.

He also paid a well deserved tribute to the indefatigable President of the Club, Madame A. Isacco, for the great work which she so successfully has rendered to the Club since its foundation, saying, that by her tact and charming manners she had endeared herself to everyone. He also rendered thanks to Mr. and Miss Bonner for their ever ready help.

The speaker was followed by the Swiss Minister; speaking in French, he was vociferously cheered by the whole company. He too, expressed thanks to the President, Madame Isacco, and her co-helpers for the splendid efforts they had made in carrying on this good work. He used this opportunity to introduce to the gathering the newly appointed social secretary, Mlle. Wolfer, who, as he said, would be at the disposal of our young countrywomen whenever they should require help or advice.

The Minister finished his short address by wishing everyone present a happy and prosperous New Year.

The words of the titular head of our Colony were long and loudly cheered.

Dancing then re-started, only to be interrupted for the singing of "Stille Nacht, Heilige Nacht" which was sung with great emotion and deep feelings.

Many of those who attended this festival, were for the first time away from their country and from their homes, and in their thoughts they wandered back to their dear ones far away. Many an eye became moist and many a voice trembled just a little.

A touching little incident took place when the band played a slow valse specially reserved for M. and Mme. Isacco; the *encore* of which all the youngsters joined in.

Midnight approaching the atmosphere became tense, and when Big Ben announced that the year 1950 had arrived, a great cheer echoed throughout the Ballroom and many a little kiss was stolen or given, and why not? New Year comes but once a year!

So ended one of the most pleasant functions, which I had had the privilege to attend, and I extend to the Swiss Youth Club my most heartfelt wishes for a

HAPPY AND SUCCESSFUL NEW YEAR.

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