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OUR NEXT ISSUE

Our next issue will be published on Friday, 24th June 1960. We take this opportunity of thanking the following subscribers for their kind and helpful donations over and above their subscription: A. Rothlisberger, L. J. Faivre, A. Bruschi, A. C. Staehelin, W. Flory, G. Ashley, H. Schmid, O. Rohn.

REMINISCENCES

Disastrous consequences of my first ball.

By ST.

Undoubtedly one of the first exciting events in one's life is the one when one begins to walk; most of us can hardly remember this happening, but perhaps in later years we have heard from our parents or relations with what joy they watched those first steps. It might, of course, be an insignificant event to the world at large, but in the intimate circle of the family it is nevertheless a great and momentous event. Grandparents, uncles and aunts, as well as acquaintances, are promptly informed, and photographs of the "babe" are taken from all angles and exhibited at every conceivable opportunity.

Another event, obviously taking place at a much later stage, but which is equally exciting, and also connected with a pair of legs, is dancing. I do not remember those far-gone days when I first "dodded" along, but I have since been told that on that occasion I promptly fell down the staircase, hitting my tender and innocent little head on each particular step, which undoubtedly must have had, in later years, its consequences! In fact, an old aunt of mine would have it that I have never been the same since; but as I do not remember how I felt previously to this accident, I thought it was a particularly nasty thing to say and henceforth I took a violent dislike to her.

One thing, however, I can vividly remember, and that is my first ball, as it was connected with some disastrous consequences.

At one time I attended, together with my brothers and sister, a dancing-class in my home town; this class was presided over by an Italian dancing-master. I can still see him, in his brown velvet jacket; he was of small stature and his face was adorned with a ruddy-coloured pointed beard. He used to carry a small stick, of which he made rather free use, hitting the legs of his pupils when they refused to move in accordance with the rhythm of the music. Maestro Spaghetti, as we called him, had a peculiar habit; he would disappear from time to time, and slanderous tongues would have it that he went round the corner "to have one". For some unknown reason he used to pounce upon me each time he returned from his mysterious errand; leading me furiously round the room, he would shout "One, two, three, one, two, three", tickling my legs with his nasty stick, but I was far more interested in finding out what stimulant he took, than in the valse tune played, and I *did* find out, it gave me a profound shock — the great Maestro drank common or garden "Schnapps"; had he "fortified" himself with a more dignified beverage I could have forgiven him, but vulgar "Schnapps" — it was too bad!

Otherwise, everything was most prim and proper, the young ladies sat most sedately along the wall, facing the young gentlemen sitting opposite them. There were perfect ballroom manners *de rigueur*; each time one of the ladies was asked for a dance, a neat bow was made, and afterwards she was politely conducted back "whence she came", and another bow concluded the ceremony; none of the rough ball-room manners which are unfortunately so prevalent nowadays.

After a few weeks' tuition it was announced that, in terminating the class, a "Grand Ball" would be held at one of the large halls of the town. This was going to be a grand affair, to which former pupils, friends and parents were invited. Those were exciting times, and for weeks this ball was a daily subject of conversation.

We nearly ruined mother's carpet in order to practise some of the more difficult steps; dances such as jazz, rumba, tango, rock'n'roll and jimmy shake were, of course, not known in those days. I remember, however, a dance called "Washington Post", which was rather an exciting one; it consisted of a "hop" about half the length of the room, and after executing a few neat steps you rushed back to the starting point; this was repeated until either your partner was in a state of utter exhaustion or the band stopped playing. It was this particular dance we used to practise with great gusto, and poor mother's "salon" used to look like a scene after an earthquake had taken place; pictures suddenly became, for no reason whatsoever, dislocated, a large standard lamp took it into its head to lie down, chairs began to dance too, and the atmosphere was full of excitement.

Then the moment arrived when one had to choose a partner for this famous *Soirée Dansante*. It was not an easy matter for me, as both my brothers and I wanted to invite the same girl, but after many animated discussions, interspersed with an occasional fight, I succeeded in being allowed to "approach" the young lady of my choice.

She was very pretty, she had two lovely blue eyes, and a saucy little dimple in her cheeks, and when she accepted my invitation I felt in the "seventh heaven". Her father was a colonel in the army, but the command at home was in the hands of his wife.

So the day of the great event arrived, a cab (taxi were then an unknown quantity) took me and a box of chocolates to the home of my partner. There were many handshakes with the various members of the family, and then the cab took the young lady, myself and the box of chocolates to the appointed place.

The ball proved a great success and the tragedy only occurred subsequently, of which more anon. The ladies looked simply lovely in their pretty dresses, the band played supremely, and Maestro Spaghetti never disappeared once, and like a good boy drank tea and lemonade with elderly ladies, who were present to "*chaperonner*". I do not think I ever danced better in my life; my feet seemed hardly to touch the floor; it was as if I had wings, and my partner seemed to float through the ether with me. Her frock looked like a mass of flowers, and round her slender shoulders she wore an embroidered silk shawl; it was this shawl which caused the tragedy and cruelly ended a romance which had started in such a promising way, and whenever I see a lady wearing a shawl it makes me shudder.

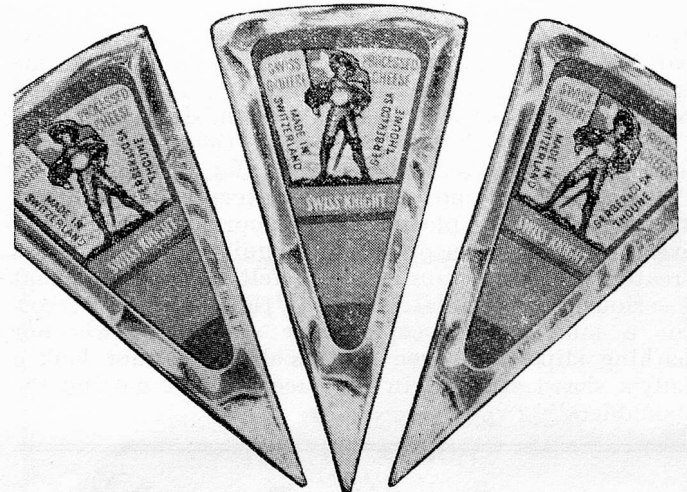
One little happening on that memorable evening pleased me mightily, although it was due to the fact that my fair partner made what is called in French a *faux pas*, or in English "putting one's foot into it".

Amongst the numerous spectators was my aunt — the one who had intimated that my mental faculties were impaired through the fall which I had sustained at a very tender age. There she sat in all her glory,

as if it were *her* show. Her critical eyes scanned the happy faces of the revellers, but the happiness of all the young people, which was written on their faces, did not seem to find an echo in her spinster bosom. Each time we passed her I noticed a sarcastic smile passing over her *visage*, in fact, it was so obvious that my partner asked me who that lady with the "rhinoceros" face was. I could have hugged her for that remark, but, as it rather cast a slur on my family, I had to inform her that the lady with such "distinguished" features was an aunt of mine; which brought forth sincere apologies which, I need hardly mention, were accepted in good grace. In fact this little slip increased her attention to me, and consequently I noticed a little squeeze of her hand, which I took for a happy omen. As all good things come to an end, so this "*Soirée Dansante*" finished up amongst great enthusiasm.

This time the cab took us back minus the chocolate box, but with additional weight of happiness and sweet memories. It would have been an exquisite homeward journey, because there was such a host of little incidents to recall, but it was marred by the fact that my fair partner suddenly realised that she had left her shawl behind. This discovery seemed greatly to upset her, and I was informed that this precious article had adorned various past members of her family, in fact it was considered to be a sort of family heirloom, and the loss of it would be nothing short of a calamity.

Acting like a gentleman, I ought to have instructed the cab driver to return post haste, in order to recover



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the shawl. But there was a snag — I realised that I had only about enough money on me to pay the fare straight home and, as a return journey would have meant additional fare, I suggested that the lost article should be claimed next day by me. This proposal was graciously accepted, and we arrived at our destination without any further trouble. In fact I was pleased that I would have another opportunity to show my gallantry. As promised, I called the next day, and luckily the lost article was handed to me.

Needless to say, I made use of this heaven-sent opportunity to add a little *billet doux* with the parcel, which was duly sent off.

During the next day or two I was in a state of great excitement, because I was sure that my gallant efforts to redeem this historic shawl, and the accompanying letter, would get some acknowledgment. They did!

On returning home two days after the event, I found a little parcel awaiting me. Somehow or other it looked familiar to me, but, after all, parcels have a certain similarity. With trembling hands I opened it, and there a short note — not even signed — met my eyes; it read "This does not belong to me!"

I was at my wits' end. What did it mean? I undid the packet further and — lo and behold! — it contained a pair of red bathing slips — not a costume, with which one is so familiar in this country, often adorning some bathing belle — no, simply an ordinary pair of bathing slips which boys used to wear in those days.

My sister, who watched me, said afterwards that my face reflected all the colours of the rainbow, and no wonder. This was a tragedy. How did it happen? The explanation was simple enough, the cupboard which temporarily harboured the shawl ready for dispatch also contained a parcel of similar size in which the above-mentioned article was packed, ready for the next bathing season; an unlucky slip of the hand made me take the wrong parcel, thus nipping in the bud a romance which started in such a promising way.

Although a detailed report of this most unfortunate happening was at once sent, and an exchange of "goods" effected, no excuse was accepted, and I was accused of having played a very poor joke, and whenever I met a member of this distinguished family I was treated with utter contempt. I felt so miserable that I seriously contemplated leaving this valley of sorrow for a land where people wear neither shawls nor bathing slips, and even to this day I cannot look a lady's shawl straight in the face without getting the "shudders"!

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M. A. ROTH LISBERGER

We extend heartiest congratulations to Mr. M. A. Rothlisberger on his recent appointment as Manager of the Ionian Bank Ltd., 64 Coleman Street, London, E.C.2.

Mr. Rothlisberger was born in London — his father Swiss and his mother English — and was brought up in Switzerland from the age of three.

He received his schooling at the Primary and Secondary Schools in Aubonne (Ct. Vaud), after which he made a three-year apprenticeship (1915 to 1918) with the Union de Banques Suisses in Lausanne, in which Bank he also held appointments at their branch offices in Aarau and Zurich (1918 to 1924).

In September 1924 Mr. Rothlisberger came to London, where he took up employment with the Ionian Bank Ltd. From 1925 to 1928 he held appointments with the Bank's offices at Athens and Piraeus (Greece).

Returning in 1928 to the Bank's Head Office in London, he was mainly in charge of the Foreign Exchange and Documentary Credits Departments. In 1950 Mr. Rothlisberger was appointed Accountant, and seven years later (1957) was promoted to the post of Assistant Manager, and in May 1960 to that of Manager.

Mr. Rothlisberger is a member of the Swiss Benevolent Society, in which he has held the offices of Honorary Assistant Treasurer from 1932, and Honorary Treasurer since 1938. To this Society he has for many years rendered conspicuous and devoted services. He has also been a member of the Swiss Mercantile Society since 1924, and of the Nouvelle Société Helvétique.

We wish Mr. Rothlisberger much success in his new and responsible position.