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NEWS FROM THE COLONY.

UNIONE TICINESE.

31st Annual Concert, Supper and Dance.

When on a certain Tuesday evening, at Paganì's Restaurant, the genial President of the "Unione Ticinese," Mr. W. Notari, waved to me across the tables of a splendid supper party and made some sort of telegraphic signs, I understood that he wanted me to write this report. Why he should have chosen me, I do not know. There I sat just like so many other ordinary guests, quietly to enjoy the good things to come, and incidentally to contribute my half-crown towards a good cause. So I began to pity the poor readers of the "Swiss Observer." Why Only a few weeks ago they were served with columns and columns of my prose, all about a banquet, speeches and a dance, because the Committee of another Swiss Society "in corpore" had shirked this pleasant duty, and now the same thing was going to be repeated.

It is true they say that nobody reads these reports, so I suppose it does not really matter who writes them and how. But that is another pity, because the "Unione Ticinese" entertainments always go so well that there would be lots of very nice things to say about their President, their Vice-President, their other Committee Members, the organisers, the artists, the very life they put in all their doings. And so it ought to be easy to find somebody with a better pen than mine to do full justice to the subject and write a report which would also be read with pleasure by all.

However, that's that.

On that particular Tuesday — it was the 12th December — the "Unione Ticinese" gave their 31st Annual Concert, Supper and Dance, at Paganì's Restaurant, under the Chairmanship of their President, Mr. W. Notari. It was the most delightful, informal evening one could wish for; well they knew the treat that would be awaiting them the 200 members and friends who assembled for this feast of fun, charming music, excellent food and wines, and "last but not least" plenty of dancing.

Of course, the "Unione Ticinese" have a well-known reputation for organisation; they seem to have a secret of their own which makes a complete success of anything they undertake: everything runs so perfectly smoothly, without effort it seems. And over and above the carefully selected items of a most enjoyable programme, there is that pleasant atmosphere: the true family spirit. "Una serata famigliare" stands there for what it means.

Mr. Berti, the devoted Vice-President of the Society, who, I understand, was personally responsible for the engagement of the artists and for the programme arrangements, deserves very hearty congratulations and the thanks of all for the very pleasant entertainment he provided for their enjoyment.

The programme opened with Stanley Collins puzzling everybody with his many clever tricks, at the same time causing plenty of good fun with his patter.

Then we had Reginald Morphew, baritone, who gave a very good rendering of the Prologue to the Opera "Pagliacci," followed by one of those mysterious negro melodies, with a touch of sadness in them.

Molly Seymour, entertainer, brought up some other aspect of life; she told the audience how "she lost one boy friend after another" and how "she kept the old gentleman..."

No "Ticinese" gathering is complete without some accordion music and this was most generously supplied, both during the concert and afterwards during the dance, by Maestro Pevesi's interesting interpretations. Among his many contributions, I would give pride of place to his "Ave Maria" of Gounod, which he sang beautifully with his own accordion accompaniment.

But rich and fine as this programme was so far, a "peach" was yet to come. And what a delight it was to hear once again Miss Eva Cattaneo, soprano, whose very charming "Cuckoo" song and fine and impressive singing of a Christmas aria "Holy Child" were a sheer joy to hear. One wondered at first why Miss Cattaneo did not give us, as on former occasions, some selection from her nice operatic repertoire, but the change made her singing perhaps the more interesting yet in that it showed her equally at ease in the more delicate art of the "lieder" singer. Both her songs, as well as her duet with Mr. Morphew, which concluded the programme, earned much applause.

And so the musical part of the programme came all too soon to an end.

Mr. Notari then invited those who were partaking of supper to adjourn to the "Alexandra Room" upstairs. As usual, an excellent meal was served, at the conclusion of which Mr. Notari thanked the guests on behalf of the "Unione Ticinese" and also on behalf of the "Fonds de Secours pour les Suisses pauvres à Londres" for whose benefit this function was held. The Chairman said he could not show the work and needs

of that benevolent institution better than by reading some extracts from the speech made by one of its Vice-Presidents, Mr. F. M. Gamper, at the recent annual banquet of the "City Swiss Club," as published in the "Swiss Observer" at the time, pointing out how in six years the total expenditure had increased from £2,300.— to the enormous figure of £4,400.—. Mr. Notari paid a tribute to the work done by Mr. Dupraz, Mr. Baume, Mr. Gamper, President and Vice-Presidents respectively of the "Fonds de Secours," who were present, and remarking that the guests had been given value for money, he said he would be pleased to collect any spare cash for that very deserving institution.

Then the Chairman addressed some complimentary remarks to the "honoured guest" of the evening and staunch friend of the "Unione Ticinese," Mr. George Marchand, saying that no function of theirs is complete without his presence.

He concluded his short speech by thanking the artists and paying a special tribute to Miss Eva Cattaneo, the "Ticino nightingale" — as he appropriately called her — who had come, so to speak, from a sick bed to sing and delight everybody. He also mentioned that Miss Cattaneo was proceeding to Lugano and would be broadcasting from there in the evening of the 27th and 28th December.

And finally Mr. Notari expressed thanks, very heartily endorsed by all present, to Mrs. Linda Meschini, Mr. Arturo Meschini and his son, Mr. Carlo Meschini, for all they had done.

It seems hardly necessary to add here further words of praise to Paganì's excellent cuisine. Everybody is agreed about that. "Ben faranno i Paganì" is their motto and they kept true to it. More than that: Mr. Arturo Meschini and his family treated the guests with such generosity as to fully deserve being called a charitable institution.

Mr. Dupraz and Mr. Carlo Meschini responded very heartily and Mr. Notari promptly reminded the guests that the band was playing down below for the dance. His invitation to adjourn once more was gladly accepted and dancing went on merrily well past the appointed time of 1 a.m.

During the late evening, the Don Sesta Orchestra (formerly members of the famous Gerdal Orchestra) with the favourite vocalist of these functions, Mr. Berni, contributed handsomely to this most successful entertainment.

Altogether, it was a very enjoyable affair. Well done "Unione Ticinese!"

Un sincero ammiratore.

SWISS MERCANTILE SOCIETY, LTD.

At the Monthly Meeting of the Society, which was held at Swiss House on Wednesday, December 13th, Mr. J. J. Boos, Vice-President of the Society, gave an address on his "Impressions of Rome." Mr. A. Steinmann, President of the Society, was in the Chair.

Mr. Boos said:—

"Rome — caput mundi — Capital of the world in the time of the Roman Empire, the 'Eternal City,' when, after the downfall of the Roman Empire, Christianity revived old glories and to-day still has its heart in Rome. Rome — Fascist birthplace, the capital of a new thought and idea — what does a visit to Rome not imply?"

At Rome we are together with great events of thousands of years and yet can enjoy the pleasure of a modern city. There can be but few people outside Rome who do not cherish the hope and vision of a visit to Rome. I certainly always had the desire of going to Rome and I have seen my wish fulfilled this year.

"Rome was not built in a day," says an old proverb and during the short time at my disposal it is only possible to give you just glances of the splendour of Rome.

Whatever one may think of Fascism, Dictators, etc., anyone visiting Rome and Italy to-day is amazed at the change that has come over the country. Sig. Mussolini has certainly been able to change chaos into order — unruliness into discipline and most of all bring about harmony between Church and State.

I cannot talk on the political aspect — I never muddle in politics. I will only say that Sig. Mussolini has worked wonders in Rome. He has been able to bring out the attractions of Rome — old and new — in such a way that whereas only a few years ago Rome's attractions were chiefly Old Rome and Christian Rome, to-day Modern Rome and Fascist Rome claim and get world-wide interest.

The "Via dell Imperio," the latest attraction of Rome is no doubt one of the great masterpieces, combining the Colosseum — symbol of Rome's eternity — with the "Vittoriano" — symbol of new Italy. This street will not find an equal in the world. On one side of the street we have ancient Rome, the other side modern Rome, yet both beautifully blended.

Very similar are the arrangements made in other parts of Rome — and there has been a slum clearance not even equalled here in London.

Let me now tell you about my own experiences.

My visit to Rome was in connection with and as a Director of the English National Pilgrimage. There have been some 50-60 organised English Pilgrimages during this year ranging from 20-600 at a time; the most interesting perhaps being the pilgrimage for some 450 unemployed. You may ask "Why these pilgrimages during these bad times?" There are always pilgrimages to Rome but this year there was a specially large number because 1933/1934 is a "Holy Year."

What is a "Holy Year" and why is 1933/1934 a "Holy Year?" Briefly a Holy Year is a "Year of Jubilee" to celebrate a special occasion to call the faithful to special religious services to enjoy a new life of spiritual peace that such services offer.

It is a custom that goes back to the Old Testament and ever since about 1300 there have been "Holy Years" proclaimed in cycles of 25 or 50 years, and occasionally special ones were celebrated — the last "Holy Year" was 1925 so that the present "Holy Year" is an extra one called specially to commemorate the 19th Centenary of the Crucifixion — called in the words of His Holiness The Pope "that Christ may command peace and happiness to the world."

Now anyone thinking of going to Rome on a "Holy Year Pilgrimage" as a holiday trip is greatly mistaken, these are strenuous times, visiting churches, etc., and for me especially it was no holiday as I had to look after 5 Bishops and some 500 pilgrims, very few of whom had travelled abroad before. Only those who have been behind the scenes realise what tremendous amount of work is needed to make such a large party a success.

Our pilgrimage was specially authorised by Cardinal Bourne. We travelled in 2 sections, the direct section going on October 3rd and the "no night travel," leaving on October 2nd stopping at Dijon and Turin on the way out. I was in charge of the latter section numbering 180 people, 80 first class and 100 second class passengers."

Mr. Boos then vividly described the outward journey, full of trying and yet amusing incidents connected with conducting such a huge party through three countries.

There followed a collection of well-chosen slides depicting Old Rome with its immortal glories of the past; the beautiful churches with the famous St. Peter's and the picturesque architecture; the Catacombs; a few glimpses of Modern Rome and the touches of the Fascist régime. The lecture was concluded with a visit to the Vatican City and an audience with the Pope and the world-renowned Swiss Guards.

The lecturer received a spontaneous applause for his most interesting and instructive address. The Chairman, Mr. A. Steinmann, expressed thanks on behalf of the Society which were amplified by Mr. W. Deutsch, Member of the Council. This concluded a very interesting evening.

W.B.

A SEMI-JUBILEE IN OUR COLONY.

The XXVth Swiss Annual Christmas Tree Party.

Nearly a quarter of a century ago, a dear old Swiss lady, whose house in Highbury was called "Swiss Villa," was talking to one of her paying guests. She had at heart all the little compatriots for whom no one in the official circles of the then Swiss Colony, seemed to care very much. — "Why could you not get some money from your colleagues at the Bank to give them all a real Christmas treat?" she was saying to him. And lo! the thing happened, because the boarder in question was no other than the one we all mourn: Henri Jenne, the large hearted.

He started collecting quietly and persuaded his friends to give generously, and the writer of these lines well remembers his surprise when he opened a letter containing a cheque for £19. 11s. on December 19th, 1909. That sum was the first entry in his books. And how the thing has grown since!

It started modestly in Percy Street, with some 40 children, and now it is just as the original promoters hoped it would be: the all-embracing gathering where, at least once a year, all Swiss children, up to or over 400, tiny tots and bigger ones, poor and rich, "Wälsch and Düttsch" can come together and constitute, for one afternoon, a real diminutive "Swiss Landesgemeinde" in the big English metropolis. And this year, as it is a kind of Jubilee, the Swiss Minister and Madame Paravicini have promised to patronize the fête and to add to it the lustre of their presence.

Alas, our thoughts go back over the past 24 years and it is with a heavy heart that we discover the gaps death tore in the small company of the initiators of the Party: both its former presidents, Madame Adolf Steiner and Madame Hoffmann-de Visme and its financial sponsor Mr. Henri Jenne, have gone to a higher service, where death is no more.