

City Swiss Club

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XMAS DINNER of the CITY SWISS CLUB.

Nearly a hundred members and friends attended the Xmas Dinner of the City Swiss Club, which took place on Monday, December 9th, 1946, at the Café Royal, Regent Street, London, W.1.

There was a real feeling of Xmas spirit prevalent; although, unfortunately, there was no Xmas tree nor any Xmas decorations available, and Xmas without a tree is almost like roast beef without dripping.

The only sign, that we were shortly entering the festive season was the excellent fare served by the Management of the Café Royal, consisting of "Soupe à l'oignon aux Diablotins," "Blanc de Dinde Rôtie à l'Anglaise," "Choux de Bruxelles Saute's Limousine," "Pommes Fondantes," "Charlotte Normande Flambée Négrite" and "Café."

Previous to the dinner cocktails, etc., were served in an improvised cocktail bar, which was well frequented, and for once the representative of the Press was generously treated, was it to make his pen flow more easily, was it remorse or even fear, I wonder?

There were, amongst the company, diplomats, captains of high finance, industrialists, politicians, hoteliers, journalists and lesser fry present, but in spite of all the diversities they sat down in perfect harmony and peace.

Mr. Bon, President of the City Swiss Club, extended a hearty welcome to the members, and expressed his pleasure at welcoming the Swiss Minister, Monsieur P. Ruegger, Monsieur Grégoire Gafenu, former Foreign Minister of Roumania and Roumanian Minister to Moscow, Doctor S. Frey, Director of the Agence Télégraphique Suisse in Berne, and Major Bieri, Delegate of the International Red Cross Committee in Geneva.

Once again the City Swiss Club had assembled a galaxy of eminent personalities at their hospitable table which give the meetings of this Club always a special *cachet*.

The President informed the company that Mr. Wuthrich, Manager of the Oerlikon Ltd., and a member of the City Swiss Club, who is at present in a Nursing Home recovering from an operation, is well on the way to recovery which news was appreciated by all those present.

He expressed his appreciation for the hospitality we Swiss enjoy in this country saying that "We have always been well treated" ending up by wishing the members and their families a Happy Xmas and a Prosperous New Year.

Major Bieri, Delegate of the International Red Cross, in London, then addressed the gathering on the work of the International Red Cross. This short, precise and excellent *résumé* of the great work which this greatest of all humanitarian institutions is rendering, was listened to with the keenest interest, the astounding figures of materials, moneys, letters, parcels, etc., sent to all the belligerent countries throughout the war, and in the post-war period, took almost one's breath away. Humanity owes an immense debt to the founder, Henri Dunant, and to his former collaborators and subsequent helpers. We hope to publish in the near future in this paper a more elaborate report of the work of this excellent body).

Major Bieri, on resuming his seat, received a hearty ovation for his fine *exposé*.

Dr. S. Frey, Director of the "Agence Télégraphique Suisse," then addressed the meeting first in French and afterwards in "Schwyzerdütsch," saying that at home in his many public utterances he usually addresses his audience as "Mitverantwortliche Eidgenossen," but as we Swiss in this country, like our women at home, cannot exercise the vote, he would dispense with the word "Mitverantwortliche," and simply call us "Liebe Eidgenossen."

He then said that, whilst the diplomats are the representatives of their respective governments, we are the personal representatives of the "Volk," and as such through our efforts and our work have contributed to the good name as to the integrity and honesty which our country enjoys in foreign lands.

The speaker said, that although aware of the dangerous times, we Swiss in England have passed through, he could not help but envy us for having been able to witness these epoch-making events at close range sharing the hard and difficult times with the people of this country.

Dr. Frey then paid a warm and enthusiastic tribute to the British Nation, which had, as he said at one time, alone bore the burden, and single handed fought for all those ideals which make life worth living. He closed his address with the wish that our country will continue in unison with this country, to walk the path which leads to freedom.

This fine oration, well delivered, was loudly cheered by all those present.

Dr. Frey was followed by the Swiss Minister, who said that it was his privilege to attend the Xmas dinner for the third time in succession, and that he would like to take the opportunity of thanking the President most warmly for his leadership, hoping that he would continue in his task. "Through the personal efforts of the President," he said, "the members of the City Swiss Club have had the privilege of hearing eminent statesmen, politicians, and men of science, etc."

The Minister also thanked the previous speakers, Major Bieri and Dr. Frey, and in closing said, that although our country has rendered manifold services in many spheres, this should not lead us to indulge in personal pride but that we should consider this as having done nothing more and nothing less than our duty.

The last speaker to address the meeting was Monsieur Grégoire Gafenu, diplomatist and well-known writer (his book "Derniers jours de l'Europe" has recently been published), he paid a glowing tribute to our country, a country, which he said "One feels materially and morally secure."

And thus another Xmas Dinner of the City Swiss Club has come to an end, and all those who had the privilege to attend, left the Café Royal well satisfied at having spent a pleasant evening in congenial company.

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