

75th birthday

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emergencies arises from her determination to hold successfully to her neutrality. The Swiss people are convinced that their contribution will involve restrictions of all kinds and often a painful sacrifice. The existence of Switzerland is interwoven with world economy. In any case, the laws of world economy do not allow for one country a greater share of this world's goods than is granted through mutual exchange with other partners to the world collective bargaining contract. This can be deducted from the official communique issued on the agreements in which it is stated that efforts are being made to insure Switzerland the share of world stocks belonging to her'.

The Berno "Bund": 'It must be emphasized that general developments in Europe have facilitated the conclusion of the Berno agreements and that Swiss interests are in harmony with the requirements of the Allies. Trade with Germany based on the principle of an exchange of goods is due to the constant drop in German production and production possibilities in a state of insecurity and dissolution. This is also the reason why the commercial agreements with the Reich could not be renewed. Just now anything like a solid foundation for an understanding is lacking. Therefore, Switzerland has had to draw conclusions in harmony with a just defense of her own interests. The situation would become unbearable and would not get the approval of Swiss public opinion should German transit of coal and iron to the north of Italy be permitted at a time when on the basis of "you give, I give" Germany's payments show heavy arrears. It would also be unbearable morally if the Gotthard line would be allowed to be used for the transportation of goods confiscated by the Germans in Italy and sent northward. Here too, Switzerland wants a clear situation. Our people look at these matters not only from an international viewpoint, but also from a political, economic and moral viewpoint as well.'

The "Gazette de Lausanne" writes: 'Our neutrality, our independence and the good reputation of Switzerland have emerged from the negotiations fully intact. At no time did our neutrality become a bargaining point or a matter for concessions. This in particular allows us to envisage the future with courage, on the conditions of course that interior peace shall continue to prevail throughout the country, for nothing would be more damaging to the country in the present critical circumstances than a period of trouble and dissension among us Swiss.'

The "Tribune de Lausanne" remarks on the relations with France: 'Switzerland has always manifested a firm desire to co-operate in the measure of her strength and her resources in the reconstruction of countries that have been devastated by invasion and ruined by foreign occupation. This desire is particularly strong when our close neighbour is involved. Therefore, if Swiss industry is in a position to facilitate the re-equipment of factories on the other sides of the Jura, and furnish French agriculture and tradesmen with the machinery and instruments they need, we shall be very willing to do all we can. And, inasmuch as under present circumstances, cash payments are out of the question, very logically credits will have to be extended. Before the war Switzerland was by far the best per capita client France had. Our desire is that these excellent relations shall soon be resumed again. If the granting of certain facilities to our Western neighbour can hasten this resumption, all the better.'

75TH BIRTHDAY.

Probably in the quietest manner imaginable, our greatly esteemed friend and compatriot Mr. L. Mettan, recently celebrated his 75th birthday on his Farm "Helvetia" in Riverside, Whangarei. The same day he completed 40 years of sojourn in New Zealand, as he landed on his birthday in Auckland. Few of our fellow-members respect and love Switzerland as he does. This he has expressed in many of his letters sent to the Benevolent Society, as well as in practical manner. Every year Mr. Mettan makes by far the largest donation towards the funds of our Society, which are invariably made with genuine expression of pleasure and beneficence.

We have been fortunate in obtaining a short description of Mr. Mettan's early travels, which we are happy to publish below. The Committee of the S.B.S. is the same time taking the opportunity of congratulating Mr. Mettan and especially expressing hearty thanks for the great practical interest taken by him in our cause. We all wish him "MANY HAPPY RETURNS".

"My love and respect for Switzerland seems to grow the older I get, and I always look forward with the greatest of pleasure to receive the monthly Helvetia. It is now just 40 years since I left my dear Fatherland, and it seems but yesterday! I remember well when Joseph Werder of Oberwil wrote to me in Montreux how his brother Johann advised him from Taranaki, how well satisfied and pleased he was in this prosperous country of New Zealand. Being young, I gave my boss a month notice and booked my passage. The shipping agent at Zurich gave me an address of an acquaintance of his at Matamata, and having no job to go to, I was rather grateful for his help. At the breakfast table on the "Scharnerd" from Genoa, I met two other compatriots, Messrs. Hans Elsener and Kaspar Staub both from Zug. The trip to Auckland I will not describe, as all of you had the same experience.

We landed on October 9th, 1904 and went straight to the Albert Hotel to meet our agent. We were rather un-nerved when told that we had to go 4 miles out of Matamata, as none of us knew a word of English. However, in repeating the owner's name innumerable times, we finally reached destination. Mr. Staub was refused on the farm, as he never "worked on the land", and Mr. Elsener and myself finally were permitted to work at a magnificent wage of 10/- per week, although the standard fee was 20/-. This we accepted on the understanding the employer teach us English; in any case we hardly could do otherwise, knowing no language but our own. However, this promise was never kept, not a word of English, and it soon struck me that the intention of the employer in keeping us ignorant of the language was so that he could keep us indefinitely at 10/- per week. He knew that we had to stay with him at half wages as long as we were unable to speak the language of the country. The position soon became intolerable and we both gave notice and quitted the job.

After working in various other positions, I decided to return to Switzerland with the intention of inducing some of my countrymen to come out to this land of wonderful opportunities. This proved an easy job indeed.

Soon I was on the high sea again. This time I travelled by way of South America, with first stop in Buenos Aires. The Argentine Capital is a great city, with evidently a "fast life", but I had little time to spare and went to Rosario where a very considerable Swiss colony exists. The dairy industries in these parts of the Argentine are very extensive. The mobs of cattle I saw were simply enormous, larger than any in New Zealand or Australia. What astounded us more, however, was the heartless cruelty of the "Gauchos". These Rangers would think nothing of dragging cattle along the ground by horses, if they could not be made to go where wanted. Many of these animals had their skin torn away through such treatment, besides which we witnessed other cruelties, which so disgusted a Swiss friend of mine, that he changed his mind about settling in that country. On our way back to the capital by rail, we had a panoramic view of immense flocks of sheep grazing on the vast prairies. Along the wharves of the port Buenos Aires I saw incredible stocks of wheat, and it is no exaggeration when I say that there must have been millions of sacks awaiting shipment.

After visiting Uruguay, we soon reached Rio de Janeiro the Capital of Brazil. This city is not far south from the Equator and I found it the hottest place I ever visited. However, there is plenty of compensation when one sees the marvellous sights along the waterfront; the famous 2,000 ft. "Sugarloaf" and the wonderful harbour. From there I went direct to England, with a short stop in Teneriffe. In London I spent a full week, just arriving at the time of the World Exhibition and the opening of the famous Crystal Palace.

When I left Switzerland in 1904, hardly any of my friends believed I would ever come back, particularly so after they received some "wild" looking Maori photographs which I posted home. Some of my good friends firmly believed I would be eaten by cannibals!! You may imagine therefore, the astonishment at my return! I had a few weeks of great entertainment and the festivities were endless.

Whilst in London I cashed a draft in English money, and I was handling my sovereigns and banknotes rather freely in shops, inns and public places of my hometown. Soon my compatriots thought I must have come from a rich country, and after hearing of my intention to return to New Zealand, many asked to be taken along. Finally a few joined me and on arrival here we settled in Gisborne where we all worked together for a while, but soon drifted apart to various places in lovely New Zealand.

L. METTAN.