

About banqueting

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ABOUT BANQUETING.

It is a debatable point whether it is wise or appropriate to hold banquets in times of crisis such as we are experiencing now. Some people take the view, that only the strictest economy will help the country back to its former prosperity, that pleasures and amusements should, if not ruled out altogether, at least be strictly curtailed. There are others, who say that we should enjoy ourselves as much as we can, in order to forget our troubles and worries. I venture to say, that both are wrong, and I will try to explain why. It is agreed, and I feel sure that nobody will contradict me, that the world is, what one may call, using a slang term, "in a mess." Efforts have and are unceasingly made, with more or less success, to stem the tide of an economic disaster, which threatens almost every country, be it large or small. Such efforts require a large dose of sound common sense; now commonsense tells us, or should tell us, that by pulling a long face, repeating a hundred times a day, what dreadful times we are passing through, and that it is only a matter of months or weeks before we are all ruined and knocking at the door of the work-house, does not help one iota towards the dawn of brighter days. To complain, to feel sorry for oneself, to deprive oneself of a little pleasure or merriment where there is no absolute necessity, has and will, never cause any improvement, morbidity and downheartedness are the enemies of real and lasting success. Has not our celebrated national poet Gottfried Keller written:

"Wohl wird man eiler durch das Leiden
Und strenger durch die herbe Qual;
Doch hoch ergötzen in heissen Freuden,
Das adelt Seel' und Leib zumal."

Yes a little joy, — happy hours spent in congenial company amongst one's friends or countrymen, act as a stimulant, gives one courage to face the sturdy battle of life with its daily disappointments and vexations. With that I do not mean that one should make a vulgar display, indulging in festivities which are not in accordance with the time, when hundreds of our fellow-countrymen are in dire distress. I certainly do not agree with those who advocate a continuous string of festivities, of those who live after the maxim, "let us be merry and bright, because to-morrow we may be dead," that is the surest way to disaster. Here is where common sense comes in, and reviewing the social events, which have so far been made or are in contemplation in the Swiss Colony, I cannot help but congratulate those who are in charge, on their happy initiative to provide us again with a few banquets and dances, it is a happy undertaking which required courage. It would have been utterly wrong to dispense with these social events, considering that many of our compatriots are engaged or interested in the catering world. The curtailment of festivities in comparison to two years ago is effective, and was necessary, and it does not penalize our brethren, who have a right to live and who are entitled to the same consideration which we expect from others.

The first official banquet of the Season will be the one of the "City Swiss Club" at the May Fair Hotel on the 25th of this month.

I am looking forward to this evening, especially as I have been assured by some responsible authority that the speeches will be this year considerably shorter, a City Swiss Club Banquet is always an event in the Colony, and incidentally by attending same, one has an opportunity to help our countrymen, who are in a less fortunate position, as year after year a generous donation has been given on this occasion, to the Fonds de Secours pour les Suisses pauvres. Then I hear that the Swiss Mercantile Society will early next year hold a Banquet, and I am sure this will be an equally enjoyable affair, and personally I am looking forward to meet the many friends whom I have in those quarters.

Now on enquiring amongst one's friends whether one would have the pleasure of meeting them on such and such a banquet, one invariably gets the reply, "I would like to come along, but my wife wants a new frock, etc." Now I make a fervent appeal to all the Ladies, not to make any such stipulation, as times are hard and money scarce, and I can assure them that there will be not a single man remembering what their last year's frock looked like, I am quite prepared to offer a substantial prize to the man, who can accurately describe the dress which my wife wore on the occasion of the last City Swiss Club Banquet, and I may add that I myself have forgotten what it looked like. I used this argument with a lady friend of mine and she assured me, that it is not so much the men she is worrying about, but the ladies, well I told her, if any of her sisters should make a remark about having seen that frock before, she would be entitled to call her a "nasty little cat," so if any Lady should be complimented thus, she will know at once who is the instigator. Then another sweet daughter of Eve assured me that she has not got a rag to her back, this is, of course, a more difficult problem, whilst personally I have no great objection in that particular case, I fear that she would have some troubles to gain

admittance f.i., at the May Fair Hotel, where the most efficient Secretary of the City Swiss Club scrutinizes every arrival with an eagle eye.

In short, let me assure all those who are not attending either of the above mentioned Banquets, because they cannot have a new evening frock, are depriving themselves and their husbands or friends of a real pleasure. (After all it is not a Manequin parade). There will not be any mocking laughter and I shall not mind a tinkers toss whether my good lady appears in a crinoline, so long as she is there. (I have not asked her opinion about this).

Therefore sweet Ladies, use a little bit of that common sense, which I mentioned earlier in my article, and which happily so many of you possess, it is not the beauty of your frocks, nor the jewels you are wearing, be they real or only imitations, it does not matter whether your frock is green, pink, black or blue, low or medium low, waisted or easy; what attracts us men, is your smiling, sweet faces, even if they are rouged, your shining eyes, even if the eye brows are plucked out, your shining little teeth, even if they..., your happy laughter — but, of course, if you can get a new frock, take it by all means.

ST.

LITERARY and MUSICAL EVENING of the
N.S.H. and S.I.O.S.
ALFRED HUGGENBERGER.

A very satisfactory number of compatriots found their way to Conway Hall last Friday for the second Literary and Musical Evening arranged jointly by the New Helvetic Society and the Swiss Institute Orchestral Society. It is no exaggeration to say that this partnership of two of our societies has been to many of us the source of the best, highest and most memorable enjoyment in the life of our Colony for a long time past.

The Jean Bard Evening earlier in the year was a fine and spectacular entertainment. Huggenberger has for many of us been even finer. Jean Bard recited and supremely acted for us some of the world's and of French Switzerland's best and most entertaining poetry and prose writing. Alfred Huggenberger captured his audience in a less spectacular way, but the more deeply, with the quiet simplicity, modest wisdom and robust humour of his own peasant poetry and prose which he spoke in an unassuming, tranquil and dignified manner. Huggenberger is a great poet and prose writer. In the course of the last thirty years he has grown accustomed to reaping a continuous and ever increasing harvest of recognition and admiration by his many thousand readers in Switzerland, Germany and Austria. Yet he remained a peasant, at heart as well as by occupation. His self-possessed manner, his sincerity, his belief in hard work and moral rectitude, his conception of the oneness of man and nature, his concern for nought but vital things of the heart and of the senses are all ingredients of the finest type of the Swiss peasantry.

Such a man we had the privilege to behold on the rostrum of Conway Hall, a spokesman from the Swiss countryside, more sensitive and more expressive than most of his brethren, but still a man of the people. For an hour or so Mr. Huggenberger brought us back into the small village which each of us has from our birth nearest to the heart in our memory. He gave us from his writings a few vivid pictures of the joys and sufferings, the virtues and shortcomings of the seemingly so quiet inhabitants of just that little village where most of us have spent our youth or the most enjoyable of our holidays. For this rare treat we have to thank the New Helvetic Society and the Swiss Institute Orchestral Society, which latter has worthily embellished the Evening with a few well chosen and beautifully rendered orchestral pieces.

After a spirited overture with a March played by the Orchestra our Minister, Monsieur C. R. Paravicini, who was accompanied by his eldest daughter, introduced Mr. Huggenberger to his expectant audience, numbering about three hundred. Monsieur Paravicini was, I fear, a little too optimistic in assuming that most of us knew our famous literary guest from his writings. I have in vain approached several likely friends to borrow a Huggenberger from. Like so many other good things of our country I am afraid most of us knew of our Thurgauer poet only from hearsay. But now that we know him personally and a few selections from his work there ought to be a roaring trade in his books in our Colony. By the way, Mr. Huggenberger is a Züricher by birth. He was born 1867 in Bewangen near Bertschikon, but since 1908 lives on a farm in Gerlangen, a neighbouring village just over the Thurgovien border.

Mr. Huggenberger began his recital with two dialect poems, the first one, perhaps not without malicious intent, depreciating and poking fun at the Swiss mania for festivities, on which occasions everyone seems to roll in money, while the day before and the day after nothing but the loudest complaints can be heard about the bad times and the exorbitant demands of the tax collectors. In

order to show that he is not at all averse to occasional relaxation and merrymaking, Mr. Huggenberger described in his second poem in most appreciative terms a "Bergler-Chilbi" in the upper Toggenburg, accompanying the lusty lads and lasses along the stony and strenuous paths to the mountain inn, where after months of hard labour a healthy need for a relief in laughter, fun and flirtation is given free reign.

There followed a touching short story called "Mädeli," the remorseful reminiscences of an old, selfish and hard-hearted peasant about the unkind treatment he meted out to his shy, loving and most devoted wife. Because she had a red mark under one eye the poor thing grew up with the terrible fear that no one could love her. When her future husband proposed to her, mainly on account of her money, the foolish fellow flattered himself no end for his generosity in overlooking the slight fault. But he made her pay for it ever after, not by any physical cruelty, but by refusing her the smallest token of real tenderness without which the heart withers and life is so dark. He would not once call her "Mädeli" again as during their courtship, although she begged him for it so touchingly. Only after her death, at the end of thirty years of married torture, he realises what happiness he has wasted, and he pays her grave the small homage of tenderness he denied her all her life.

The second part of Mr. Huggenberger's recital was devoted to a series of humorous dialect poems, mostly of a strongly ironic note. The Jass-manias, the misers and other queer folk who waste their very lives in the pursuit of stupid, un-beautiful passions and desires were denounced. The dreadful prospect — partly already materialised — of machines swallowing up more and more of our natural existence and contemplative happiness was forcefully depicted by the poet, the danger of excessive cultivation of sports at the expense of the soul, the continual inroads of the bleak growing towns into the countryside. And what will become of the world, when "the gas of gases" is invented, threatening universal destruction? An amusing parody on the mania for laurels and records was put into the mouth of an Italian brick layer. The eternal grumblers who continually say "me sött" — this, that and the other ought to be done — and themselves neglect to do their own duty are amusingly held up to ridicule. The last poem described a dream of the poet listening to the grudging acknowledgements of his contemporaries assembled round his bier. How foolish if he had conformed to their ideas for the sake of a cheap applause, he concludes.

The rich applause of the audience was of an other kind. His hearers as well as the poet regretted deeply that there was no time for more, especially as the lyrical, constructive and vitally intimate side of Huggenberger's work had not had its appropriate share in the recital. May there be another occasion to make good for this unavoidable curtailment of the poet's readings! And may the New Helvetic Society continue this excellent work of cultural rapprochement of our Colony to our homeland by inviting other representatives over here, in which endeavor they might reasonably expect the assistance of some other societies if need there be. Very special thanks are due to the Orchestral Society for their active help in this gathering. Under the direction of Mr. Dick the orchestra is progressing remarkably. There is a most lively spirit in its ensemble playing which gives an admirable frame for occasions such as these literary evenings. Some Strauss waltzes, Hungarian dances and Swiss airs were played most effectively as was shown by the warm applause of the audience.

Dr. E.

MEMORIAL SERVICE.

Sunday October 30th, 1932 at:
Hendon Park Cemetery.

This Service arranged annually, by the Union Helvetia Society, to render homage and respect to their deceased Members, resting in our own Graves at Hendon Park Cemetery, was conducted by Pastors C. Th. Hahn and R. Desaulles, the latter representing (l'eglise suisse). We regret to state, that Pasteur Hoffmann-de Visne, who always conducted this service personally, was unable to attend.

Despite the small attendance, the assembly was greatly touched, by the sincerity and simplicity of the service, wreaths being laid down on every grave.

Pastor Desaulles preaching in great eloquence the meaning of honouring the dead at the graveyard; and Pastor Hahn, with a great understanding elucidating the task and duties, our Members should have towards each other and towards their compatriots in general. We wish to express again in this place, our sincere thanks, for their kindly words, as they were spoken from heart to heart and truly well meaning towards our Society.

The time chosen, as well as the weather conditions prevailing, were most unfavourable, but despite this, we regret that such a small number of our large Society, should have attended this service!

The Secretary.