

# 65th fête suisse

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## 65th FETE SUISSE.

That the annual Fête Suisse, which took place last Thursday for the 65th time, at the Central Hall, Westminster, is still as popular as ever, was proved by the large attendance, which, I am informed, reached about last year's figure, i.e., nearly 900 of our compatriots gave themselves rendez-vous at the spacious Central Hall.

There were, however, a good many familiar faces missing, which was a great pity, as both the programme and the arrangements were excellent.

The imposing staircase was once again ornamented with sweet little ladies, dressed in the various Swiss national costumes; they carried small trays containing cantonal flags or the artistic postcards designed by our compatriot, M. Pierre Savoie. On all and sundry they bestowed a bewitching smile, for which no extra charge was made; but it made one more willing to part with the money. I shall try in future to adopt a similar policy vis-à-vis the subscribers to the "Swiss Observer." I shall screw up my face in a continual grin, in the hope that some of my countrymen who, for some reason or other, have not yet become regular readers, might feel inclined to reward me for my, no doubt, painful efforts.

A pleasant surprise was, indeed, the sight of a large table full of "Alpenrosen," which were gathered by schoolchildren of Meiringen and Sigriswyl, and arrived by aeroplane the very morning of the fête. I understand that this splendid idea originated from the Secrétariat des Suisses à l'Etranger, and the fact that almost everybody wore that little flower is proof enough that this touching thought was appreciated. The schoolchildren of the two villages far across the sea deserve our heartiest thanks; in gathering these flowers for their brethren in a foreign land, they have given us a proof that, although we are far away, we are not yet forgotten.

The concert hall itself was wonderfully decorated; the large platform was one mass of flowers, and Mr. J. Schenernermeier, who was responsible for this artistic display, deserves the thanks of everyone present. In addition, huge Swiss flags intermingled with the different cantonal flags and the Union Jack, gave the hall a most festive appearance, and here again Messrs. Godfrey (E. Hungerbühler) must be heartily congratulated. Both these gentlemen can claim a large share of the success of the evening; they were fortunate in creating the real "Stimmung," and thus making everybody feel at home.

At 7 o'clock sharp the programme was started with Bach's "Toccatina" and "Fugue" in D minor; huge applause greeted the fine rendering of this majestic piece of music by that clever organist, M. E. A. Seymour, F.R.C.O.

Owing to the greatly regretted absence of Pastor R. Hoffmann-de Visme, M. A. F. Suter, the vivacious President of the N.S.H., acted very efficiently as announcer, using as an accompaniment, the by now proverbial cow-bell.

Monsieur C. R. Paravicini, the Swiss Minister, received a great ovation when he appeared on the platform. He expressed his great pleasure to be able to again open the 65th Fête Suisse; he voiced his deep regrets at the absence of Pastor R. Hoffmann-de Visme, who for so many years has been the moving spirit of the Fête Suisse. He wished him a speedy recovery in the pure air of his native land. The Minister also thanked the organizers of this splendid fête and expressed the hope that all those present would take home an unforgettable impression.

After the audience had sung the Swiss hymn, M. R. Desaulles offered a prayer to invoke the Lord's blessing on this gathering and on our Homeland.

Pastor C. Th. Hahn then addressed the gathering, and his sincere and patriotic oration, spoken in French and German, created a deep impression. He explained just why this annual gathering of Helvetia's children has become such a splendid institution, and what the aims were.

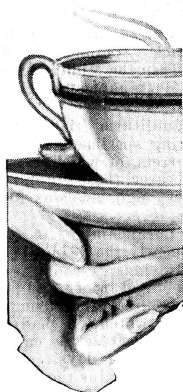
The applause which greeted the words of our Pastor had hardly died down, when Miss Sophie Wyss appeared on the platform and received a hearty welcome. She sang three songs, "Mein gläubiges Herze," by Bach; "Pergolesi's "Se tu m'ami" and "The Lass with the Delicate Air," by Arne.

Not so long ago I read in a Press cutting a notice that our charming compatriot had decided to give up appearing on the concert platform. I am glad to know that this news was not correct, because it would have deprived us of hearing a very accomplished singer, with a really and truly golden voice. Miss Sophie Wyss ranks easily amongst the great Lieder singers one hears in

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this country; both her technique and rendering are magnificent. I shall not forget her singing of Bach's "Mein gläubiges Herze" for a long while. It is good to know that her recent illness has not impaired her voice, and the almost riotous applause which this artiste received at the end of her performance was richly deserved.

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She was followed by Miss Josephine Southey John, who excellently rendered Bach's "Sarabande," "Rhapsodie No. 2," by Brahms, "No. 1," by Schumann and Henselt's "Si Oiseau j'étais" at the pianoforte. The phrases of Bach's "Sarabande" were measured and shaped with graceful insight. Miss Josephine Southey John is a fine artiste; perhaps the four pieces which she played were a trifle too long for an occasion like the Fête Suisse," but the hearty applause was nevertheless spontaneous, and, I may add, deserved.

M. W. Fischer then introduced the children of the Sunday School of the "Schweizerkirche," in one act out of the little play, "If We Were in Switzerland," of which he is the author. The little artistes acted splendidly. It was a happy idea to bring these little children to the Central Hall. They brought a touch of our Homeland into the programme, which the audience knew how to appreciate, judging by the applause.

The next number on the programme was entitled "Fragments," and Mlle. Adrienne Campart entertained the company in some character studies, which were much applauded and which proved that she is a capable and intelligent young artiste.

The first part of the programme finished with two songs rendered by a "Chœur mixte," under the conductorship of Mme. Weber. Both conductor and choir are to be congratulated on their performance, especially the "Prière patriotique" by Jacques Dalcroz, which was excellently rendered.

An announcement was then made that an interval of an hour was to take place, in order to allow the artistes and their audience to look after their more material requirements. The "Foyer" was filled with tables containing the most tempting delicacies, such as strawberries and cream, delicious pastries, ices, sandwiches, and there was also a coffee bar. But the chief attraction proved to be the kitchen, where delightful hot sausages were cooked. Each purchaser took his "Pärli" away in a piece of paper, with a little dash of mustard "spread out." Knives and forks were not supplied; but that did not matter. The "Wienerli" and rolls tasted just as good without those encumbering implements.

The catering, as in former years, was entrusted to Mr. and Mrs. A. Schmid, from the Glendower Hotel, and no better choice could ever have been made. It is not an easy undertaking to feed about 900 hungry mouths in the short space of an hour; but in spite of a congestion here and there, principally caused by some over-anxious people, who were frightened that they might be too late to get their little tummies filled, everything went off without a hitch. The staff worked like heroes, and like their chief, kept on smiling. I must say that some of the young ladies behind the stalls were as "appetising" as the goods they were selling, especially a young lady behind the "Wienerli" counter. She must have kept at least one of my good friends entranced, as he confided to me that he must have eaten an enormous quantity of sausages, so as to make his presence at the counter not too obvious.

Once again Mr. and Mrs. Schmid deserve a hearty vote of thanks; they know how to do it, and they do it well.

During the interval the Swiss Orchestral Society regaled the audience with some popular Swiss tunes, in which, on the invitation of the conductor, everyone joined in singing.

The second part of the programme was started by a selection from the opera "Il Trovatore," by Verdi, and I am sure that all those who heard this splendid orchestra play will agree with me that they played exceedingly well. Mr. P. Dick, its able conductor, has every reason to be proud of his players, and the Colony, too, ought to be proud to call upon such excellent artists. The progress which the orchestra has made since I heard them for the first time, some years ago, is remarkable. The nuancing, for instance, in the overture of the opera "Rienzi," by Wagner, was of the utmost fineness. It was, indeed, a grand performance for an orchestra of amateurs, and the long, almost unending applause was a befitting acknowledgement for such fine entertainment.

A Swiss concert without some yodeling is almost unthinkable; it would be like roast beef without dripping. This want was supplied in the person of Mr. F. von Bergen, who sang exceedingly well. The songs listed on the programme were: "In üsem lieben Aemmtal," arranged by O. Schmalz, and "Geissbühler Trutzliedli," by R. Fellmann. He was accompanied on the accordion by Mr. A. Gandon, a very fine player, and both these gentlemen simply brought the house down. Mr. von Bergen, who time after time had to give some encores, has indeed made a name for himself in the yodeling fraternity.

The Swiss Choral Society, under the conductorship of Mr. E. A. Seymour, F.R.C.O., rendered two songs, "Der Lenz ist angekommen" and "Im Walde," by J. Dürrenmatt and E. Marsch-

ner respectively; both songs were performed with feeling and restraint, and were loudly applauded.

Mr. Seymour then played the "Marche Triomphale," by S. Karg-Elert, on the organ in his masterful way, and the singing of the National Anthem by the audience terminated the 65th Fête Suisse.

This year's fête was again an undeniable success, and the organising committee, the artistes and helpers deserve the thanks of all those who were privileged to attend this splendid function.

ST.

### SENTINELS OF LUCERNE.

Already in the dim ages of the lake dwellers there stood silent guardians on the fair shores of the Lake of Lucerne, Mount Pilatus, the Rigi, the Bürgenstock, the Stanserhorn and the Seelisberg, each and every one with magnetic qualities of its own. But mountains in that era were not climbed by convenient railways, and while their presence and the existence of many other beautiful peaks in the environs provided valuable protection against invaders, Lucerne, which had settled itself on the lake, at the efflux of the Reuss, needed further security.

Thus, in the 13th century, a regular plan for fortifications was worked out. The 108 feet high octagonal Water Tower which adjoins the covered wooden Kapell Bridge was built as a safeguard for Lucerne's lakefront. It also served as a prison, being equipped with a dungeon and a torture chamber. In later years it accommodated the town treasury and to-day it is used as the storehouse of the municipal archives.

Another pioneer among Lucerne's man-created sentinels is the Rathaus Tower. In this case the original structure was already replaced in 1350, and then equipped with quarters for a fire watchman and a trumpeter. The rather striking helmet with which it is now crowned was added in 1618, increasing its height to 141 feet.

Quite a sturdy representative of Lucerne's watch towers is the Nölliturm, bordering the Reuss. The present tower dates back to 1513, for its predecessor had proved inefficient in times of siege. The structure is 98.4 feet high. Its exterior diameter measures 42.65 feet and its walls are over seven feet thick. While the Nölliturm was equipped with guns in the Middle Ages, its 20th century rôle is to serve as headquarters of one of the ancient guilds.

The neighbouring "Männliturm" is of 1408 vintage. It is an interesting specimen, with a flat roof flanked by two turrets, of which one is surmounted by a standard-bearer, the "Männli." This structure is 754 feet high, and was formerly also a watch tower.

Adjoining rises the "Luegisland." It was built in 1291 and is consequently the dean of the Musegg "guards." The watchman's room used to be directly under the pointed roof, and an hourly signal was given to the fire watch throughout the night. Later these watchmen had to play their trumpets on the tower for the entertainment of the public on market days. The venerable "Luegisland" now contains the municipal water pressure reservoir.

Next comes the Heuturm, now known as Wachturm. Its origin dates back to 1408, and property owners of that precinct were allowed to keep their hay in this building until 1582. Afterwards it served as a storage place for gunpowder. Lightning in 1701 ignited a vast quantity of the same, and after reconstruction had

been completed, the watchman's room and the fire bell from the "Luegisland" were transferred to this tower.

Quite popular in this line of medieval sentinels is the Zitturm, which had its origin prior to 1408. It is equipped with the first town clock existing already in 1385, and for many centuries it was adorned with paintings.

The last of this company of sturdy guardians is the Allenwindenturm, erected in 1408, and used for storing gunpowder. In the same year the Musegg wall, connecting these towers, was heightened and reinforced.

The carefully maintained ramparts of Lucerne are no longer necessary for the safety of its inhabitants, but they are of immeasurable value for their great historic and artistic interest and contribute in a small degree to the rare beauty of this much-sung spot.

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