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“GRUETLI” CELEBRATION SWISS CLUB

Manchester

on Saturday, November, 20th 1937.

AT THE MIDLAND HOTEL, MANCHESTER.

Can you picture a beautiful Summers day in Switzerland around Lake Lucerne, with the sun shining, the Alps standing in their proud setting, and the lake water glittering, and lots of happy Compatriots sitting at the Festive Board celebrating the Grütlifeier? — A real Swiss atmosphere of thorough happiness and contentment. — Well, notwithstanding the fog and the changed surroundings, this was the pleasant impression created to all those lucky enough to attend the Grütlifeier which took place at the Midland Hotel, Manchester, on Saturday the 20th ult., under the auspices of the Manchester Swiss Club.

About 100 compatriots including their families and friends had gathered there for their annual Banquet and Ball.

The guests were received by the very popular President, Mr. Kubler and his wife. The happy way in which the first part of the meeting was conducted is a great credit to the hospitality and *savoir faire* of our Manchester compatriots, and particularly to their very sympathetic President.

Sitting next to the President and Mrs. Kubler were Dr. Schedler and Mrs. Schedler, Mr. Montag, Swiss Consul in Liverpool, Mr. and Mrs. H. Binggueli, representing the City Swiss Club, Mr. P. Brun, representing the Swiss Club of Birmingham, Mr. and Mrs. Hofer, representing the Swiss Club of Bradford, etc., etc., etc.

The Swiss Minister and Madame Paravicini, whose presence added so much grace and importance to the fête last year, were greatly missed this year, but the company was delighted when the President announced that a telegram had just been received from London bringing Patriotic greetings of the Swiss Minister and Mme. Paravicini, together with their regrets at being unable to be present.

When the President rose, amongst great enthusiasm, the usual silent toast to the anonymous donor of wines and “spirit”ual energy was drunk in the venerable manner called for. The President spoke as follows:—

“We are told that “First comes Work” and in the second place comes “Pleasure.” Consequently, the powers which regulate celebrations of this kind, promptly reverse the order and ordain that “Pleasure” must be attended to first and then, evidently with the idea of “assisting digestion,” one is forced to work immediately.

Or is there perhaps an underlying thought which I have not been able to grasp until now: I mean, is the past repast the “Work” and what follows the “Pleasure,” in as much as it enables some of us to get the recommended 40 winks? At least, until the Chairman has prepared the ground for the “Pleasure” to follow.

Moreover, how is it that the Guests of a family such as ours, are not welcomed properly until the hosts have shown what they have in the larder? Quite wrong, for someone might think the welcoming of the Guests is an afterthought, or intended to make the guests overlook any remiss in the bill of fare.

However, I hardly think we need have any fear in this respect, for as I look around, I see happy and contented faces, which do credit to the provider of this, *Ouverture* of our evening. So, “on with the show” — and the curtain rises to Act One.

* * *

Let our imagination wander for a little while to the far South, to that lonely meadow on the banks of the Lake of Lucerne, surrounded on three sides by steep, rocky walls, almost inaccessible from the land side, but open to the lake. A dark still night more than 600 years ago, the only noise the whisper of the pines and the music from the quietly lapping waves.

Suddenly, this stillness is broken by the arrival of three groups of men, coming from different directions. And as they meet, they greet each other and then settle down to their most serious business, feeling ONE in the ideal of Liberty, — their common cause, — which led to the Birth of our Homeland as a Nation.

To-night, we are met to recall in our minds that momentous encounter and so in the name of the Swiss Club of Manchester I extend to all our Guests and Compatriots a very sincere and hearty Welcome, hoping the Evening will be another “Grütlifeier” which will renew and add to the happy memories of each of us.

We are *proud* to do honour to the Memory of the “Oath on the Rütti,” the cradle of our “Heimatland,” and *happy* to welcome our Guests of Honour.

At the same time, however, we regret that our Minster at the Court of St. James and Madame Paravicini are unable to grace our gathering, but at least, I am able to give you his patriotic greetings and their best wishes for the success of our Soirée. The present condition, unfortunately, do not allow Mr. Paravicini to absent himself from London for the time being.

Yet, although the Commodore of the fleet is detained at headquarters, our ship is not without its Captain, for our Honorary Member, our esteemed Consul Dr. Schedler is here on the bridge to keep a friendly and not too stern eye on the crew and the passengers, and they feel very safe and happy under his command, especially, as he is accompanied by the crew’s mother, Mrs. Schedler.

I take this opportunity to thank them very sincerely for all they have done for us this past year, and on your behalf I extend to them our very hearty wishes for their well being in the years to come.

But we have amongst us still another Captain, the chief from our neighbouring station, Liverpool, and we only hope that he, as an old Salt, will take back with him the best impressions of our ship. We are sorry that Mrs. Montag has not been able to accompany her husband and may I ask Mr. Montag to convey to his wife our best wishes for a speedy recovery.

At the same time I congratulate Consul Montag on the achievement of his tenth year of his command and we hope we may see him bring off his silver-jubilee at the helm of his ship.

But our ship is dressed over-all not only for the officers of high rank; we greet among us the Mates of other units of our fleet, those from the S/s “Birmingham” who sent her first Mate, President Brun and a colleague, Mr. Reimann; and the S/s “Bradford,” whom we greet in President and Mrs. Hofer, Mr. Brun and Mr. Hofer jun.

And we have piped aboard too the delegates from headquarters:— Mr. and Mrs. Binggueli from the S/s “City Swiss Club, London” and the S/s “N.H.G.”, whom we have the pleasure of welcoming for the first time among us. The only regret is, that Mr. and Mrs. Suter were not able to join them, but we hope Mr. and Mrs. Binggueli will feel as at home here as their shipmates.

By now, you will be wondering what has happened to *Switzerland* and what new danger is cruising round Britannia’s shores. Well, nothing fresh, just to show that there is such a thing as a *Swiss Navy*, even though the S/s only stands for *Swiss Society*. After all:— “When in Rome, do as the Romans do,” — and so we only show our flag in a very harmless way, the flag of friendship, to our good friend *Great Britain*, who so well looks after us.

Yet still there remains one, to welcome whom everyone is more than glad to be able to count among our faithfuls; so long the first mate of our ship, when it was in its Heyday, and still keenly interested in its well-being, our Honorary Member and friend, Mr. Uli Hagenbuch.

And now we come to the part of our ship which supplies the bunting, the vary-coloured gay dress which makes the vessel what it is, a joy to behold, be it in the harbour or out on the wide ocean, and without which it would be rather drab, and, may be, uninteresting. I refer to our *Ladies*. May they not only be the bunting, but the sails as well, which enable the merry ship to steer its happy course for to-night and in the future.

Here I have, unfortunately, for you, to introduce a change of scenery, for I have to give you a short account from the entries in our log of the last twelve months.

Luckily, I can report that on the whole our ship has encountered fair weather and *never* has it met with a hurricane.

Our *Monthly Meetings* seem to be becoming more attractive of late and it is pleasing to note that at times we almost had to hang out the sign “Standing room only.”

The *Jass Evenings* too go on merrily and soon we hope to show our metals on the field of battle, when it is the turn of Bradford to challenge us in Manchester.

The *Special and Social Events* add several pages to our log and I mention only that this year (the calendar year 1937) will show two *Christmas Tree Gatherings*, of which the second is intended to take place on Sunday, the 19th of December. I take this opportunity to thank our ladies for all the help they have given us on these occasions in the past and I hope we may again count on their support in the future.

The *New Year’s Lunch* was very jolly and the *Jass Match* in Bradford, in February, brought fresh laurels for the M/c team.

The same month also brought a welcome *Whist Drive*.

As regards *Lectures* we have been fortunate to be able to enjoy no less than three, and a fourth will take place on the 29th of this month, which is also the second invitation the Club has received from the *Toledano Society* this year.

In this connection we have introduced an innovation. For the first time the Club has had a lady in the chair with very great success, when Mrs. Bebin introduced our friend, Mr. Inebnit.

We also were able to carry out three *Family Outings*, one of which took the form of the *Bundesfeier* on the first of August.

Again this year we had the pleasure of a visit from Pfarrer and Mrs. Hahn from London, and in spite of the bad weather, the M/c Swiss enjoyed once more a *Schweizer-Gottesdienst* a week ago.

The *Concert of Swiss Songs*, given by the Sisters Amstad, last October, is an outstanding event in the year’s history, and it was enjoyed by a very large gathering of friends and members.

This, Ladies and Gentlemen, is what the *Swiss Club* Manchester has been able to log during the present year and we feel that we have been able within our limited means to strengthen the bonds which bind us together with our Homeland and each other.

And to-night we re-new once again the

— *Oath of the Rütti* —

Einer für Alle — Alle für Einen

and in token thereof, I ask you to rise, clink your glasses “nach guter Altväter Sitte” and drink to men on the Rütti.

Then Dr. Schedler, the Swiss Consul of Manchester, so full of bonhomie, said:—

“I should like, to thank the Chairman for the nice words he said about me and also to the Swiss Club, in my own name and on behalf of my wife for inviting us again as their guests at this gathering. This is an honour which we esteem very highly and a pleasure which we should not like to miss.

The “Grütlifeier” is the outstanding social event of the Swiss Colony and for many the only occasion to meet their compatriots and friends. It enables us to keep up the friendly relations with our countrymen in other districts. I for my part, extend a hearty welcome to my colleague and to our friends from London, Liverpool, Bradford, Leeds, Birmingham, and duly salute the delegates of the C.S.C., S.C.S. and N.S.H.

I am particularly pleased that such a great number have been able to attend and that there are so many “new faces” amongst them. This proves that in spite of all restrictions many Swiss still find their way into England and that in spite of all difficulties and depression the Swiss Club is still able to hold its own and to justify its existence.

Yet when I look round over the splendid array of charming young ladies and at the same time the comparatively small number of young men, I feel somewhat concerned about the prospects and the success of the second part of our programme. Therefore, before we go into action, I want to address a serious word to our lads, and I can do no better, than to quote old Nelson’s famous battle order: England expects every man to do his duty.

My own duty is of a somewhat different kind. I have to give you a report on our activities, about the conditions prevailing in our respective countries and in the world generally. Naturally, I can touch only a very few points. Let us start with our internal affairs. Here is a message which for some of you, will sound almost too good, to be true: It appears that the combined efforts, abroad and at home, of those who know something about the matter and such

institutions as the Nouvelle Société Helvétique, for the abolition of the Military Tax, for those abroad, should at last be crowned with success. A revision amounting almost to a repeal of that obsolete institution, justified in principle but unsuitable for just application, especially under present conditions, has been urged upon the Federal Authorities. Let us hope that this be true.

Our country has in the past year participated to a remarkable extent in the economical improvement that has taken place. This was most obvious in the Hotel Industry, which can look back, for the first time since many years on a satisfactory season.

About the world conditions in general, I need say very little. We all know them only too well. Peace, for which the world is crying is further than ever and war is raging in various parts. Democracy is gone in many lands, the power is in the hands of dictators who have established new theories which will allow them to make war whenever they like and the worst is that these new theories are forced systematically and by all possible means upon indifferent and neutral countries. We are watching developments in our country with anxiety and we are asking ourselves: Will Switzerland be able to keep its independence? The answer is: Only when we remain united. Who contributes towards the unity renders the greatest possible service and in this respect the Swiss abroad can help to a great extent.

What about England? All free nations are looking to England for guidance and help. This time she will not disappoint them. Like all other countries England is arming vigorously to restore her old power in order to save the world from collapse.

We can consider ourselves fortunate, to live in a land, where we are still free and unmoleded and where we can cultivate and develop our own nationality and can criticize and grumble as if we were at home, the only limitation being the consideration which the guest owes to his host. Are we always sufficiently tactful in this respect? There are those permanent grumblers and those very clever people, who within the first week of their arrival can tell this great country, what there is wrong with it and what it should do. Do these people ever look into other countries and realize how quiet they would be there, and do they know that they endanger our relations with the powerful country, which has always been our best friend? As we are here amongst ourselves I thought it advisable to remind you, that conditions might arise, when any lack of tact in this direction might have serious consequences.

I am, however, glad to state, that the Swiss Club knows what his duty is and that this will always be the case, when we have a President like Mr. Kuebler, who's interest, skill and tact we all admire. I express to him our appreciation and thanks. And now I ask you to rise and to drink the Prosperity of the Swiss Club and the health of the President."

Mr. Bingguel was next called and said:— "It is indeed a very pleasant duty for me to represent here to-night the City Swiss Club of London. I bring you their patriotic greetings together with our President's regrets not to attend personally. When he found himself unable, through pressure of work, to come to your annual Grütlifeier, and I was the lucky one to be delegated to represent our Club, I can assure you that most members were exceedingly jealous, as your hospitality is now proverbial and everyone knew what a wonderful time you would give us to-night.

Mr. Suter, President of the N.S.H., who, unfortunately, is also prevented from attending, has asked me to represent him, and the N.S.H., and I bring with me their cordial greetings, together with Mr. and Mrs. Suter's sincere regrets at their inability to be present. Mr. Suter has asked me to tell you he attended the Journée des Suisses à l'Etranger, at Berne in the Summer, and the Swiss President, Mr. Motta, who was present, declared himself thoroughly satisfied with the enormous attendance which showed that the patriotism of us Swiss abroad was still deeply "rooted in our hearts." Mr. Suter brought back with him the Salut de la Patrie, and I am glad to have this opportunity of passing it on to you on his behalf.

As we were travelling up to your beautiful City to-day, and the mist was beginning to show troublesome signs of interference, I enquired as to whether the fog was bad this way. I was told, however, that I had nothing to fear as it always rains in Manchester. Well, Ladies and Gentlemen, I do not believe that, and I do know for I was here last Monday! and partook of the worst fog you have experienced for years, but I can see a silver lining through the dark clouds shining when I look at the radiant smiling faces of all your charming ladies, and I congratulate you, Friends of Manchester, in having so well surrounded yourselves by permanent rays of sunshine.

What a joy it is to find such a happy gathering of Swiss in Manchester. I see compatriots from all over the Country, and I do hope that most of you will find it possible to honour our own, City Swiss Club Annual Banquet, at Grosvenor House, London, which takes place next Friday.

Whilst these Evenings mean very pleasant hours spent together, they also are very important from a National point of view; they enable us to know each other better, they enable us to help each other, and above all as Herr Dr. Schedler has so well said, they make for that unity of our Compatriots which is so important in the troubled time our World is going through.

Believe me, Compatriots, we all want to meet more frequently, we all want to feel each other's elbows so that by constant co-operation and understanding we may keep the flag of Switzerland flying proudly, and put into practice that wonderful National motto of ours "One for all and all for One."

Allow me now to thank you most sincerely on behalf of my wife and myself for the very warm reception you have given us on the occasion of our first visit to your Manchester Schweizer Club. You have made us feel so much at home that we already believe we have known you a long time. We shall take away with us the happy memories of a delightful evening, and the assurance of many new sound friendships.

Before I sit down may I just say Do come to see us in London next Friday, and do ask us to visit you again."

Mr. Brun, Mr. Montag and Mr. Hofer brought the cordial greetings of their respective Clubs, and expressed the hope of seeing our Manchester compatriots attend their own yearly banquets.

After an excellent repast, the company adjourned whilst the room was being prepared for dancing, and a most enthusiastic atmosphere prevailed right through to the end.

The only adverse criticism one may have found was that the clock went round far too quickly. As Big Ben struck twelve and the evening drew to a close a great cheer was given to the very popular and never tiring President and his wife. A well "energised" band of compatriots turned themselves into a powerful "Männerchor" to the delight of the audience, singing old favourite Swiss songs and yodels.

The Grütlifeier was decidedly, from beginning to end, an outstanding success.

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FORTHCOMING EVENTS.

Wednesday, December 15th — Unione Ticinese — Concert and Ball, in aid of the Fonds de Secours, at Pagani's Restaurant, Great Portland Street, W.1.

Friday, December 17th — from 7 p.m. till 2 a.m. — Swiss Mercantile College — Students' Xmas Banquet and Ball, at the Prince's Galleries, Piccadilly.

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