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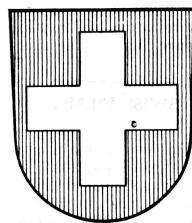
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68th

FÊTE



SUISSE

*"Lasse strahlen Deinen schönsten Stern,
Nieder auf mein irdisch Vaterland."*

So concluded our national poet, Gottfried Keller, in his unforgettable poem "O Mein Heimatland," and this wish was echoed a thousand times last Thursday at the Central Hall, Westminster, where the 68th "Fête Suisse" took place.

This annual event is going from strength to strength, last year all records were beaten with an attendance of about 1,200, this year, I am told this figure has been exceeded, a truly wonderful result.

There might be several reasons for this increasing attendance, some may go there to meet old friends, and to make new acquaintances, others to have a good time in the "Foyer" amongst the various delicacies, such as delicious "Wienerli's," Strawberry tarts, etc., but I have not the slightest doubt, that the majority attend to pay a tribute to our small and beautiful country.

We have every reason to be proud of this land of ours, when one looks around and perceives in how many countries there is turmoil, distress and unrest, one cannot help but feel grateful that we have the privilege to belong to a country where order prevails, and where liberty both of thought and action are still the guiding principles.

This gladness and gratefulness expressed itself on the faces of all those who were present and thus created, right from the beginning a happy and carefree atmosphere.

Long before the start of the concert the "Foyer" was filled with an exuberant crowd, handsome maidens, some of them in their becoming National costumes, sold little flags of the various cantons, others went round with trays of Alpine flowers such as "Alpenrosen" and "Enzianen." These flowers were gathered the previous day on the heights around Meiringen by the school children of this famous little village and were dispatched by Air through the good services of the "Secrétariat des Suisses à l'Etranger de la N.S.H." This greeting of our little compatriots across the sea is a touching one, and their patriotic action has been universally acknowledged with deep gratitude. —

Previous to the start of the concert I had a glance at the hall which was wonderfully decorated, the large platform was one mass of flowers, and Mr. J. Scheuermeier, who was responsible for this artistic display deserves high praise. In addition huge Swiss flags intermingled with the different cantonal flags and the Union Jack, gave the Hall a festive appearance, and here too Mr. E. Hungerbühler (Messrs. Godfrey) must be heartily congratulated, the collaboration of these two Gentlemen to surround us with a real Swiss atmosphere was most successful. —

Soon after seven o'clock, a gentleman of the committed made frantic efforts, carrying a large cow-bell, which he shook violently to get the people into the Hall, where Mr. E. A. Seymour, F.R.C.O., opened the concert with Guilmant's "Grand Chœur en D.," masterfully played, but somehow the Hall seemed too small for the mighty sounds of the organ.

Then followed the singing of "O Mein Heimatland" and a prayer by Pastor C. Th. Hahn.

The official opening of the "Fête Suisse" was performed by Monsieur de Jenner, Councilor of Legation, who informed the committee that the Swiss Minister, Monsieur Ch. Paravicini, was unfortunately prevented from attending, delivering, on behalf of the Minister and Mme. Paravicini, a message of cordial greetings. The speaker voiced his regrets, which were shared by all present, that Pasteur Hoffmann-de Visme, who had always played such a conspicuous part at the "Fête Suisse" was unable to be present, owing to ill health; he wished him a speedy and complete recovery in the pure air of our native land. M. de Jenner said he was glad that he had not to use the, by now, stereotype phrases about

the terrible crisis, which has visited almost every country during the last few years; he mentioned, amongst applause, that conditions at home show a decided improvement, unemployment has decreased and exports are on the upward trend, so that one may look forward, if no unforeseen events intervene, to a better and more prosperous future.

The short allocution and the optimistic note which it struck, were acknowledged with great applause, so was the reading of the telegrams received from the Minister and Mme. Paravicini, Pasteur Hoffmann-de Visme and M. Jobin.

Pastor C. Th. Hahn then addressed the audience, voicing his regrets at the absence of his colleague, M. Hoffmann-de Visme and wishing him an early recovery. He compared the "Fête Suisse" to a family gathering, a gathering where the children speak different languages and yet are "one" united family. After having quoted an extract from the writings of Jeremias Gotthelf, he made a strong appeal for unity, he said that the Swiss Colony in this country is badly in need of young recruits, who are willing to work for the common good. "The heavy task," he said, "of keeping the flag flying, always falls on the same people, let some of the younger ones enlist, and fill the ranks of those who perform the patriotic work."

The address of our popular Pastor, delivered in the three national languages was greeted with much enthusiasm, and I sincerely hope that his words, which so ably expressed the need of the present time will bear fruit. It is now, more than ever necessary, in view of the uncertainty of the future, to stick together so that we shall be ready to encounter any crisis which might arise at any moment.—

The next item on the program included "Zwei Choräle aus der Cantate Gott der Herr" from J. S. Bach, "Les Glaneuses" G. Doret, and the charming "Adieu Petite Rose" by J. Dalcrose, rendered by the "Chœur mixte." A tribute should be paid to the "male" members of the Choir, who worked like Trojans, but somehow their efforts seemed to be minimised by the more numerous "female" members, who sang with such eagerness, and let me say beauty, so that the "stronger" sex had an almost impossible task to assert themselves. It is to be regretted that this choir under the conductorship of Pastor C. Th. Hahn, does not attract more "male" members, what a chance for some of the lonely bachelors. Apart from some differences as regards the "Einsätze," the choir gave a very creditable performance, which received the acknowledgement it deserved from a grateful audience.

The applause had hardly died down when M. Wladimir Czernikow, from Geneva, gave a piano recital of "Dances anciennes et modernes." His fine nuancing and distinguished rendering earned him an almost vociferous acknowledgement.

Then followed four songs in "Schwyzer-dütsch" sung by Mme. Pauline Widmer-Hoch, a newcomer to the Colony, her singing was so exquisite that I hope we shall have the pleasure to hear this gifted artiste on many more occasions. Mme. Widmer-Hoch sang in the second part of the programme a number of French songs with equal beauty, and the loud applause which she earned, on making her final bow to the audience was richly deserved, a fine artiste indeed. M. P. E. Dick was in charge of the accompaniment.

The next number brought on the platform three old friends of the Colony, namely, Messrs. Pellet, Weil and Dick, who played a Trio for Violin, Violincello and Pianoforte, it would be a waste of time to deal at any length with their performance, it is sufficient to say that they played with their usual efficiency and accomplishment, thus adding one more feather to their cap of musical triumphs.

In my last year's report on the "Fête Suisse" I voiced the disappointment at not having heard any "yodelling," this was promptly

rectified in this year's programme which goes to prove that a little constructive criticism is a good and useful thing at times.

Messrs. F. von Bergen and A. L. Gandon, who need hardly any introduction, saw that these always popular items were duly represented. They were joined in the second part of the programme by Miss G. Niederhäuser, also, if I am not mistaken, a newcomer, and a welcome one at that. They sang, yodled and played with an enthusiasm hardly to be beaten, the audience simply refused to let them leave the platform, in spite of almost super human efforts of some committee members, who were anxious to give the other artists a chance. No doubt they were not aware that the following notice was printed on the programme: *La Longueur du programme ne permet aucun "Encore,"* still I think they might be forgiven for their "tenacity." M. Gandon, a master on the accordion then played two numbers which were greatly appreciated.

An interval of an hour then was announced 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, supplied by our sausage King, M. O. Bartholdi, 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's" 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 I dare anyone to find a better host and hostess. It is not an easy undertaking to feed over 1,200 hungry mouths in the restricted 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 tummies filled, everything went off without a hitch. The staff worked like heroes, and like their "boss" kept on smiling. A hearty vote of thanks is due to Mr. and Mrs. A. Schmid for their splendid catering arrangements and to their staff, who simply refused to get ruffled even against the greatest onslaught.

During the interval the popular Swiss orchestra regaled the audience with numerous Swiss folk songs, in which, on the invitation of the conductor, everyone joined in singing.

After the interval the Swiss Orchestral Society, under the efficient leadership of M. E. P. Dick, gave us a fine rendering of Boieldieu's Ouverture "La Dame Blanche," and later on played a selection out of Verdi's opera "Rigoletto" in fine style. The "Gladiators' Farewell" by Blankenburg might have been truly taken for their "Swan Song," but, of course, we all are most eager to welcome the "Gladiators" at some future occasion, a Swiss Fête without their collaboration would be unthinkable.

Once again, M. E. P. Dick the "smiling" conductor of the orchestra and his colleagues are heartily to be congratulated on their fine performance, which kept even some of the most unruly tongues quiet.

This year's programme gave us a number of "debutantes," and not the least of these were the recently founded Swiss Accordeon Club under the conductorship of M. H. Wenk. They number only a small number at present, but having heard them, I have not the slightest doubt, that their membership will increase by leaps and bounds in the near future.

M. H. Wenk, who is himself a fine artiste, is imbued with great enthusiasm for the "cause" and I am sure he will, in spite of various difficulties, succeed in carrying the Swiss Accordeon Club, — which gave such an enjoyable performance, — to ultimate success, and I sincerely trust

that we shall have the pleasure of hearing him and his colleagues at many future Swiss events.

The programme finished, most appropriately with the "Krönungsmarsch" from J. Meyerbeer played by M. E. A. Seymour on the organ, and the Swiss National Anthem.

It was a fine evening indeed, and those few golden hours in the midst of our countrymen will linger for a long time in the memory of those who attended the 68th "Fête Suisse."

Before I close my narrative, I would like to thank, on behalf of this numerous gathering, most heartily the members of the Committee of the "Fête Suisse" who have worked so hard so that we should have an enjoyable evening. They have indeed succeeded splendidly in making us feel, more than ever, that we belong together and that we should endeavour to work with new enthusiasm and new vigour in the interest of that dear land of ours, which we call

"La Patrie."

ST.

CITY SWISS CLUB.

June 14th, 1937.

One hundred and twenty — Cent vingt. Pour une fois le Comité était content. I do not know exactly why one hundred and twenty enthusiasts decided to foregather at the Brent Bridge Hotel on the evening of June 15th. It was certainly not the weather. The less said about this the better unless we desire to come within the Censor's clutches —

Perhaps it was on account of the alluring entertainment and delights promised to us for so many weeks past by the Swiss Observer. Oh! great is the power of the press, sweet are the uses of advertisement and marvellous are the results of journalistic "Trommel Feuer."

But the unbridled use of the printing press is a double edged weapon. Those who indulge in it must take care. — As I write I have before me one of the communiqués which appeared in the Swiss Observer and which emanated primo facie from the Committee. —

We are bidden to the Brent Bridge Hotel in Hendon on the evening of the fifteenth of June in this Coronation year of 1937.

We are enticed by the statement that the spacious grounds are most inviting during this time of the year.

I admit that the weather is outside the control of the Committee of the City Swiss Club but it should have been more careful and should have qualified the above statement, when it saw how the weather was behaving. Do not exasperate shivering and rain-sodden mortals by adding insult to injury.

We are then told that as the Committee had been unable to arrange a social gathering during the Coronation week (For this and other small mercies, let us be duly thankful), it was now anxious to make amends for the omission.

And then comes the bait which is artfully dangled before the voracious readers of the S.O.

It is proposed to give this gathering a special cachet, artistes having been engaged for the occasion. —

And now let me tell you all about this wonderful and much advertised evening.

It is some time since I was last at the Brent Bridge Hotel, and many changes have taken place, both inside and outside. It is a pleasant place on a summer evening. The view from the windows makes one feel as if we were in a country mansion, and the floral decorations inside are a reminder of our cinderellas.

As usual the dinner which should have begun at 7.15 started at 7.45. This is a good old Swiss custom, and I fear we all should feel that something had gone wrong if we were to begin at the time announced.

However, the dinner was excellent and towards the end our popular President, Mr. Boehringer announced that he was not going to make a speech. Loud and prolonged applause.

He said that he did wish to congratulate Mrs. Bingnely on her two recent successes. He also wish to extend a hearty welcome to the visitors present and in reply Mr. Colberg from America made an amusing speech.

We then prepared to dance, in pleasant anticipation of the surprises promised us by the Committee for our entertainment.

After a time Mr. Chapuis made an announcement which was inaudible except to those in his immediate neighbourhood, and two gentlemen belonging to the Orchestra performed one on a violin and the other on one of those modern instruments, of which I know not the name, but which looks like a glorified concertina. —

And a most excellent performance it was.

We then continued to dance and later in the evening the two gentlemen from the orchestra again played and this time they were joined by a charming young lady, Signorina Cattaneo who sang for us.

In the meantime there was a distribution of embroidered Swiss caps and someone asked me if they were going to form a Yodel choir, as something apparently had happened to the artistes.

More dancing took place, and we spent a most enjoyable evening.

I once was foolish enough to attempt a description of the ladies frocks, but wisdom has come to me in my old age, and I will leave such a difficult subject alone.

I left at 10 minutes to 12, while the Secretary was still searching for the missing artistes. ok.

SWISS FILMS.

We regret that owing to a misunderstanding, our readers were informed, that the Swiss film "Snow Water" was shown at the "Monseigneur Theatre" two weeks ago; in fact it was only a trade show, and we sincerely apologise to those of our readers, who met with disappointment. This film is now shown at the Marble Arch Pavilion, and we are informed that the film will also be shown at the Tatler News Theatre, Charing Cross Road from July 5th for a week.

It might interest our readers to hear that other Swiss films will run within the London area as follows:

"Spring Comes to Switzerland" The Centre Cinema, Great Windmill Street, W.1, 3 days from July 29.

Cameo News Theatre, Victoria, S.W.1, 3 days from August 12th.

Cameo News Theatre, Charing Cross Road, W.C., 3 days from August 12th.

The World's News Theatre, Praed Street, W.2, 3 days from September 20th.

"Water Symphony" Cameo News Theatre, Victoria, S.W.1, 3 days from August 26th.

Cameo News Theatre, Charing Cross Road, W.C., 3 days from August 26th.

The Centre Cinema, Great Windmill Street, W.1, 4 days from September 9th.

"Flying Feet" (a skiing Film). The Empire, Wood Green, N., 6 days from August 2nd.

The Centre Cinema, Great Windmill Street, W.1, 3 days from August 12th.

Cameo News Theatre, Victoria, S.W.1, 3 days from August 16th.

Cameo News Theatre, Charing Cross Road, W.C., 3 days from August 16th.

The World's News Theatre, Praed Street, W.2, 4 days from September 23rd.

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YOUNG SWISS GENTLEMAN wishes to spend his holiday (three weeks, beginning July 10th) in England. Parents would be prepared to take young Lady or Gentleman of Swiss parentage in exchange for same period. First class reference. Write to: Box No. 10, c/o Swiss Observer, 23, Leonard Street, E.C.2.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS.

July — City Swiss Club — No Meeting.

Wednesday, July 7th, at 7.30 p.m. — Société de Secours Mutuels — Monthly Meeting, at 74, Charlotte Street, W.1.

July 19th-31st — Haslemere Festival — under the direction of Arnold Dolmetsch, at the Haslemere Hall — Haslemere (Surrey.)

Wednesday, August 4th, at 7.30 p.m. — Société de Secours Mutuels — Monthly Meeting, at 74, Charlotte Street, W.1.

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