

**Zeitschrift:** The Swiss observer : the journal of the Federation of Swiss Societies in the UK  
**Herausgeber:** Federation of Swiss Societies in the United Kingdom  
**Band:** - (1943)  
**Heft:** 1015  
  
**Artikel:** Swiss National Day celebration  
**Autor:** [s.n.]  
**DOI:** <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-688037>

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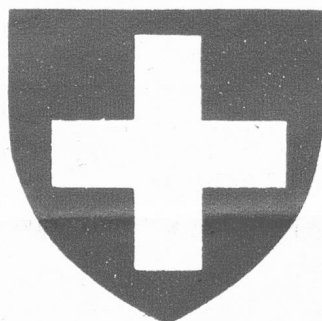
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# SWISS NATIONAL DAY CELEBRATION

1291



1943

at

**STOLL THEATRE, KINGSWAY, W.C.2**

on

**AUGUST 1st 1943**

For the fourth time since the war has started, the Swiss Colony in London assembled in great numbers to celebrate the 652nd anniversary of the foundation of the Swiss Confederation.—

Four years of bitter fighting, untold miseries, merciless persecution and wanton destruction, finds Switzerland still an oasis of peace in a desolate desert. Surrounded on all sides by belligerent nations, involved in a life and death struggle, our country has so far been spared the ravages of war.

On this day, when across the sea in our homeland the bells are ringing in every town, village and hamlet to celebrate the birthday of a free and peace-loving nation, it behoves us to lift up our hearts and to bend our knees in humility and gratitude for the mercies shown to us by a divine providence.

Faithful to its ancient traditions our valiant army is still manning the frontiers to defend against any aggressor the independence which our forefathers have won in many a bloody battle, often against overwhelming odds.

Glorious are the pages written in the annals of our history of heroic deeds performed on the battlefields of Morgarten, Sempach, St. Jakob and der Birs, Grandson, Murten, Marignano, etc., but no less proud can we be to-day of the achievements of our country in the sphere of humanity.

Right from the beginning of this war, Switzerland has stretched out a helping hand to all those who have suffered and been stricken down through the ravages of war; thousands have found a harbour of refuge within the borders of the Confederation.

Many an unkind word has been spoken or written about neutrality or neutrals, mostly, let it be said, by people who are ignorant of the relevant facts. Neutrality may, in some cases, be dictated by selfishness, for material gains or even cowardice, but nobody acquainted, in only a small degree, with the history and tradition of our country can accuse Switzerland of having kept out of a struggle for any personal or mercenary gains.

Switzerland is to-day suffering great hardship and privations, her industry is to a large extent paralysed, her national debt has reached alarming dimensions, chiefly due to the costs of maintaining its army at full strength.

It is therefore not out of place to enumerate a few striking facts of the part our country plays in this greatest of all wars.

One, if not the biggest service rendered to the belligerent nations, is the work carried out by the International Red Cross Committee in Geneva, founded by our countryman, Henry Dunant, in 1864.

It would fill pages to relate the merits of this organisation, which receives substantial financial support both from the Swiss Government, and individual supporters throughout our country. The tremendous task is carried out almost entirely by a large staff of voluntary workers. Thanks to their efforts, in exchanging the maimed and wounded, collecting funds for medicaments and bandages, giving information about the whereabouts of prisoners of war, sending food parcels to the four corners of the globe, collecting children from all countries for recuperation in our mountains, etc., etc., many a tear has been dried and many a broken heart has been mended. Indeed it has humanised war, if such a thing is possible.

Then again the Swiss Government has generously granted temporary or permanent asylum to political refugees and to those who had to leave their country owing to religious and racial persecution. In addition thousands of soldiers belonging to the Allied forces, who crossed the Swiss frontier after the collapse of France, have found a haven of rest within our borders.

Furthermore, the Federal Government has been asked by almost all the fighting nations to act in the capacity of "Protecting Power" to watch over the interest, and the well-being of their respective nationals, though our diplomatic and consular representatives.

Although this burdens our country with huge responsibilities, necessitating a vast organisation, it

is at the same time a compliment, and a testimony to our integrity, fair play, and humanitarian precepts.

These are only a few of the efforts Switzerland is making, to help wherever help is most needed. The relating of these facts is not done for any glorification, it is our duty to do so, but it should be an answer to those who talk about the neutrals as being outside the pale of human Society.

The danger of an invasion has by no means passed, and our authorities are fully aware of such a possibility, it is therefore more than ever necessary to show a united front both at home and abroad. Let us then, dear compatriots, be united in brotherly love, let us look steadfastly forward to the parting of the clouds, when the golden rays of the sun will, once again spread their light over a world of Peace.—

This year's 1st of August celebration was held at the Stoll Theatre in Kingsway, for two reasons, first of all to give as many of our countrymen as possible a chance to attend this patriotic gathering, and secondly to make sure that the film which was going to be shown should be adequately produced. The organising committee, headed by that untiring worker, Mr. A. F. Suter, is to be congratulated on having acted with foresight in acquiring a theatre which ranks amongst one of the largest in London.

Thanks is due also to all those generous donors, who by their splendid gifts made it possible to hire these premises.

It would not be according to facts, if I should report that everything worked smoothly; although there was seating accommodation for about two thousand three hundred people, the theatre was full to its capacity long before the programme was timed to commence.

The organising committee and the hardworking stewards, who did not expect such numbers, can hardly be blamed that hundreds had to be turned away, it was unfortunate, and I fully sympathise with those who were unable to gain admittance.

If I might be allowed to make a suggestion, I should propose that in future admission should be by ticket only, this would prevent unauthorised people (and there were many) attending this gathering. A number of tickets were issued to the various Societies in order to accelerate admittance, this was somehow nullified by the fact that a large number of ticket holders were obliged to queue up. I am told that this was done by the Police in accordance with L.C.C. regulations. To avoid in future, disappointments, and to appease the tempers of those who threatened the stewards with all sorts of retaliations, I would invite the organisers to find for the next celebration still larger accommodation.—

The Theatre was gaily decorated with huge Swiss flags and the twenty-four cantonal escutcheons. In front of the stage was placed our National Emblem in white and red carnations. The decorations were supplied by our old friend Mr. Godfrey and the flower arrangement was presented by Mr. Ch. R. Jaeger; these ornamentations which to all of us are symbols, which we deeply treasure, greatly added to the "Stimmung."

The programme started with the singing of the patriotic song "Eidgenossen Gott zum Gruss" by the Swiss Choral Society, and was followed by an impressive Prayer by the Rev. M. Pradervand.

The Swiss National Hymn, "Sur nos monts, quand le soleil" was rendered by the Choir and Community. I must admit I have heard this lovely hymn sung with more feeling and *entrain* on previous occasions.

The appearance of Mr. A. F. Suter, President of the Nouvelle Société Helvétique, on the stage was greeted with applause, he said:

In the name of the Committee, who have arranged this impressive gathering for us, so that we may again feel more deeply that we belong to Switzerland and that we belong together I bid you *Welcome* — in the words of the song:—

*Eidgenossen, Gott Zum Gruss.*

We have foregathered here on our National Day to honour the memory of our forefathers, to take fresh pride in their achievements, to remember and renew our own pledge to follow worthily their example of *Honneur et Fidélité*, and in particular to render thanks most humbly for the inestimable boon that the work of their hands and brains and hearts has been spared the devastations of war up to this moment. We also hope to gather from this meeting greater courage and a deeper confidence, both in ourselves and in the might that lies in *Honneur et Fidélité*.

At Home in Switzerland they know very well that our colony has gathered to celebrate this day, and they are sure not to have omitted to send us fervent patriotic greetings and messages of comfort and encouragement. These have not arrived yet, probably still awaiting censorship, but we have here the greetings of the Manchester Swiss Club which we shall heartily reciprocate.

When I look upon the vast number of compatriots in this splendid building, I like to think that there is not one single Canton in our Confederation which is not represented by one or more of its citizens, so that it may be said with justice that to-day the whole of Switzerland is united here in fraternal community to do honour to our Homeland, and to assert and prove anew the existence of an ineradicable cohesion in the Swiss Colonies abroad — a civic virtue more vital and more necessary to-day than ever.

We are fortunate, my dear compatriots, to have among us to-day our Minister, Monsieur Thurnheer, our beloved diplomatic leader and head of our colony. He has kindly consented to speak to us on this solemn occasion and, when we remember the crushing duties and worries which lie upon his shoulders at this time of danger and uncertainty, and the great work he is doing for Switzerland and our colonies in Great Britain, we shall listen to him with rapt attention and learn from him more of the inner meaning of what it is to be a citizen of Switzerland.

This short address by Mr. Suter was warmly applauded.

The patriotic oratory on this memorable day was declaimed by the Swiss Minister, Monsieur Walter Thurnheer, who received a hearty reception on appearing on the stage, he said:

We have all come together here to-day to celebrate the Foundation of our country. We are all happy to spend this day — as we have been accustomed to do since our childhood — with our families and friends. For every Swiss the First of August



has been the most important date on the calendar. This year, and for the 4th time, our National Day is celebrated in wartime, during this second world-war which weighs so heavily on everybody.

At its beginning, the Neutrals were numerous and counted amongst them countries of greatest importance. By and by, however, our numbers have shrunk and consist now of only a small group of States. As the only neutral country in the heart of Europe, Switzerland is in a specially exposed position. We must thank Almighty God, deep from our hearts, for the fact that so far we have been saved from war.

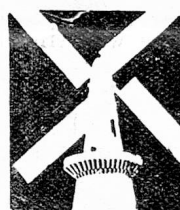
During the Napoleonic wars, Switzerland was in a position very similar to that of to-day — our experience is not altogether new. At that time, we were surrounded by many countries which had partly or altogether lost their independence. Also we, however, were then drawn into the war; our military preparations were far from adequate and we were lacking in unity and purpose — as a result we were a relatively easy prey in spite of heroic resistance here and there. Because of Napoleon's blockade against England, we became sadly lacking in many necessities and were put in a difficult position. The Swiss historian Galiardi describes the years 1811-12 more or less as follows: "Trade and handicraft suffered. The lack of raw materials made itself more and more felt at the same time as the increased prices of all products. In certain districts there were no materials for clothing to be had, not even beds; food was bad, meat, bread and milk unobtainable. People lived on substitute coffee and potatoes. The governments of the different cantons were afraid of the openly expressed opinions of the people and put up a strict censorship."

The only difference Napoleon made in his treatment of Switzerland to that of other countries was to permit us to retain our constitution. Several Swiss regiments were by old treaties with France in the service of Napoleon, these were the so-called mercenaries; but no forced commandeering of our soldiers ever took place. Sometimes these mercenary regiments were reduced in numbers — through being killed and wounded — to only a tenth of the original size. It was not an easy task to get men to volunteer to fill these gaps — only by promise of much higher pay could they be induced to join up.

When we compare the position of Switzerland in 1811 and to-day, we can state with satisfaction that the present can stand such a comparison with honour. We have so far escaped war and we have not had to complain of actions of war caused by hostile intentions. We have enough work for our population — there is practically no unemployment, to some extent thanks to the mobilisation of our army.

One of the most difficult problems which our country has to face during this war is the food problem. In the early centuries, Switzerland was almost entirely an agricultural country. At the beginning of this war, only 23% of its population was agricultural and we are therefore greatly dependent on imports. Realising the danger connected with such a position, we started immediately after the outbreak of war to extend our tilled area. Many people began to farm, a process which was greatly facilitated by the wholesome fact that most of our industrial and

town people have in some way or other roots in our villages. The result is surprising in a country like Switzerland which is already so intensely cultivated. The tilled areas have expanded, since the outbreak of the war, by 65%. Just the same we have had to enforce a very strict rationing system of our foodstuffs; thus the food problem has, on the whole, been satisfactory. The same can be said regarding clothing. For the fact that these two most important requirements, food and clothes, are to some extent satisfactory, we have in great part to give thanks to the Allies; in spite of their own pressing needs they have allowed us to buy, at current prices, such necessary products as cereals, fats, wool, etc., from those world markets which they control. Merchant ships, which are at our disposal for transport of goods, have been leased to us by one of the Allied States, by Greece. Other ships again we have been able to buy in agreement with the British Ministry of War Transport. The central Powers, on their side, have given us the possibility of transporting our shiploads by rail from Genoa to Switzerland. They also provide us with coal, iron, etc. Both belligerent groups have been giving us their guarantee for safety at sea against attack. We are grateful to our Federal Council for having been so far-sighted, as to early and in good time having realised what would be necessary for our country and for having taken precautions, as far as possible, against want. But, of course, the longer the war continues, the more difficult these problems become.



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The well-trained and well-equipped Swiss army and our strong fortifications protect us against aggression. The two most important railways across the Alps are in Switzerland. Concerning invasion of Switzerland, General Guisan declared: "the first who tries to penetrate into our country will be our enemy"; and this is as true to-day as it was when he first said it. Together with our army also our mountains are a strong guard.

When we speak of our mountains, we often forget the fact that we belong to them, just as much as they belong to us. The mountains form our physique, they make us strong and sturdy, they influence our character. Mountain people are generally serious minded people, a bit heavy perhaps, tenacious and courageous. If separation into valleys is fostering originality and federalism, so the mountains have a uniting influence in bringing the men together for communal, necessary work, such as the building of roads up to the Alpine pastures which have always up to our times been communal property.

In these days when everybody is intensely interested in economics, labour questions and social welfare, it is perhaps appropriate to point out this old tradition, the communal property. The co-operative idea, as one finds it in modern times in the form of "Konsumvereine," "Migrös," etc., was therefore readily accepted, to-day they have hundreds of thousands of members.

The social welfare work in Switzerland is partly in the hands of the State, partly in those of private institutions, the State taking charge of the bigger problems.

The State takes care of the public education, which is altogether free — children have to go to school up to the age of 15 — only then can they start working to earn their living. Sunday and nightwork is not permitted for young people below the age of 18.

The Federal Laws concerning professional education provide for their training for occupations of different kinds, such as merchants, the crafts, and so on. The Federal Laws concerning insurance against unemployment, sickness and accidents have their source in our strong feeling of responsibility to each other.

The difference between the payment given to a soldier on active service to what he earns as a civilian is partly compensated by the State. A federal law concerning old age insurance, as well as insurance for dependants, does not yet exist, but the State already to-day contributes for this purpose 18 million francs each year.

The private social work is of *great* importance for filling up different gaps. According to the Year-book "Die Schweiz," the capital of the private organisations was, in 1931, 200 million francs and the expenses of only a few of the leading ones amongst them amounted in the year 1939/40 to 35 millions.

This enumeration of the different welfare organisations seems perhaps a bit dull on our day of celebration, but you will no doubt have forbearance with me, when we consider the fact, that through them millions of our compatriots have been spared much sorrow and worries during the years gone by.

Bundesrat Stämpfli was therefore right when he recently stated that Switzerland has no reason to

feel inferior to other States on the Continent in her measures for social security. Amongst the most important social improvements after the war, he sees the creation of work, the care of the unemployed, the betterment of the old age pension and the introduction of motherhood insurance.

From the above, we see what Switzerland is doing in social matters for *her own* people. We would not, however, be worthy of Pestalozzi and Dunant, if we were content with this, especially not in our times. Thanks to our more than a century old status of neutrality, Switzerland is the home of the International Red Cross, at the head of which numbers of our most important compatriots are working. From all over our country thousands of people have put their work at the disposal of the International Red Cross. Also financially we contribute to a considerable extent. Time does not allow me to talk about the important work carried out by the Swiss Red Cross for the needy children of foreign countries and for the many thousands of refugees who received asylum.

I have spoken to-day of labour, of social welfare and agricultural conditions. I have done so because in wartime they are for our isolated country of such great and direct importance. But above this tilling, struggling and saving, there are higher things. Our belief in our ideal of democracy and, higher still, the shining star which we have followed since the foundation of our country, the star of independence and freedom.

The Minister's speech was much applauded.

The first part of the programme was concluded with the singing of two songs, "In einem kühlen Grunde" and "Dr Bärner Bär" by the Swiss Choral Society under the conductorship of Mr. E. P. Dick.

This choir has given us much pleasure in the past, their readiness to help at the many entertainments in the Colony deserves high and unstinted praise, and their contribution to the programme was a valuable one. I would, however, like to make one or two remarks which I sincerely hope will not be taken amiss. I am ignorant as to who chooses the songs, but scrutinising the programme I noticed that all five songs rendered by the choir were sung in German or Swiss Dialect, would it not have been possible to render one or two songs either in French or Italian, the other two of our four national languages? It would have been, apart from a change, a generous gesture to our French and Italian speaking "minorities."

I have nothing against the song, "In einem kühlen Grunde," but with all due respect I do not consider it suitable for such an occasion, we require something more lively and something more typically Swiss. It must have been agonising to our friends in the Gallery, to listen to the "Muehlrad" turning in "einem kühlen Grunde" whilst they sat in a sweltering and almost tropical heat, and to prolong their agony, the "Muehlrad" turned rather slowly, a quicker tempo would have been all to the good. "Dr Bärner Bär" with yodel solo, was well rendered.

An interval of forty-five minutes was then announced, so as to give everybody a chance to partake of some refreshments.

The announcer, through the medium of the microphone, verbally said: "start with your right side to take tea," I utterly failed to grasp the meaning of this



announcement, I started both with my left and right side, including back and front, and yet did not succeed in getting a cup of tea.

It is a well-known fact that the fighting spirit handed down from our ancestors through centuries, still slumbers in us, and it wants but little encouragement to kindle it; well if the Swiss ever fight as bravely and fiercely for their country as they fought on this 1st of August for a cup of tea and a bun then we need not be afraid of the future, but I would rather see them fighting, if fighting has to be done, for a worthier cause.

The arrangements made for refreshments were adequate, and were in the competent hands of Mr. and Mrs. Schmid, and with a little more consideration on the part of some of the visitors, everybody could have been satisfied; as it was, a large number had to go without refreshments, my sympathy goes out to all those who have been pushed and squeezed to no avail, and to Mr. and Mrs. Schmid and their efficient staff, who heroically withstood the onslaught.

Whilst the battle was raging in the various Foyers, community singing took place in the theatre. On former occasions we used to have the excellent Swiss Orchestra or Mr. Dick at the organ to give a lead, as our fiddling friends and the organ was not available, the singing fell rather flat, what a boom it would have been if the excellent accordeon players could have been brought into action at this stage, or failing them, the choir by their lead would, no doubt, have been able to bring a little more life into the performance.

The second part of the programme again brought the Swiss Choral Society on to the stage, they sang two songs "Heimweh" and "s'Brienzerpuurli," their rendering met with much applause.

The lights were then lowered for the sound film of J. Dahinden, entitled "La Suisse Primitive" with a commentary spoken in French.

There were divided opinions on this film, but I feel sure that the majority of the onlookers enjoyed it as much as I did. The photography was good, if the technique of the film did not altogether come up to expectations, it has to be remembered that Dahinden, who by profession is a ski-ing instructor, does not claim to be a Hollywood Film Producer, nor had he the resources of an up-to-date Film Industry at his disposal.

I venture to say, that he succeeded in spite of these handicaps in giving us a true and vivid picture of the hard life of our mountain people, who fight laboriously and with great tenacity for their daily bread, against heavy odds.

It has, amongst other things, been mentioned that this film imparts to our English friends a wrong idea of our country, and that they were left under the impression that every fourth Swiss is adorned with a profic beard, and that apart from cows, goats, pigs, etc., our homeland is devoid of any marks of modern civilisation. I beg to disagree with them entirely, first of all, and with all due respect to our English friends, the showing of this film was meant for the Swiss first and last. Neither the producer, nor the committee, who has chosen this film, meant it to be a propaganda film for the Swiss Hotel and Tourist Industry or the mountain railways. The title of the film "La Suisse Primitive" denotes clearly and unmistakably the subject, the pictures shown awakened in all those, who

in their younger days spent happy and care-free days with our sturdy mountain people, sharing their simple repasts and taking part in their amusements, treasured memories.

These vigorous people are sparing of words, God-fearing, hard-working and imbued with a deep love for their country, they are in fact the true descendants of the men, who on the 1st of August, 1291, swore on the Rütli the oath of allegiance and self-protection against the Hapsburgs.

Looking at some of the weather beaten faces, who could not detect in them some of the traits of Walter Fürst, Arnold von Melchtal and Werner Stauffacher, who freed our land from oppression and serfdom.

The scenes of this film were laid entirely in the precincts of the "Waldstätten" consisting of the cantons Uri, Schwyz and Unterwalden, showing the Mythens, Titlis, Uri Rothstock, Fronalpstock, Bristen, in their Alpine splendour. The wild and awe inspiring water falls of the Reuss, the cruel looking Devils Bridge evoked expressions of admiration amongst the audience.

Reproductions of pictures, partly from the Tell's Chapel and partly from the brush of our famous painter Ferdinand Hodler featured the deeds of our national hero William Tell. A shudder went through the gathering when the view of the Bone House at Stans was shown.

Very interesting, it was to watch the proceedings of the "Alp Genossenschaft" or Alpine Co-operative Society, one of the oldest institution in Switzerland, distributing various products produced by co-operation, and the sharing out of the profits in hard cash.

How jolly, was it to follow the goings on at the "Chilbi" or Alpine Festival complete with band and pretty maidens in their picturesque national costumes, enticing their partners to a hop. The wrestling and flag-throwing of the men was another enjoyable feature.

No less instructive were the views thrown on the screen picturing the world famous cloister of Einsiedeln with its impressive interior, and the Benedictine monks at work, painting sculptoring, weaving and gardening, showing that, far from leading an idle life, the monks are doing in their spare time useful and skillful jobs, keeping up the traditions when cloisters and monasteries were almost the only seats of culture and learning.

Who did not feel a lump in his throat listening to the "Alpsegen," invoking the Almighty's blessing and protection at the closing of the day, or to listen to the Angelus from the bells of the many churches clustered on the mountain sides.

The film came to an end showing the proceedings at one of the "Landsgemeinden," an institution which is still reverently treasured in the Forest cantons, where rich and poor, learned and simple gather together in the open to decide over the welfare of their co-citizens.

The long and hearty applause of the audience, when the lights were switched on again were a striking proof that this film was greatly enjoyed and I, for my part, wish to thank the organisers of this celebration for having shown us a film which brought us our country still nearer to our hearts, and inspired us with admiration for the simple folk who dwell in this earthly paradise unspoiled and ever ready to shed their

blood for the liberty and independence of our land, in sacred memory of their forefathers.

Once again the curtain was raised and the Swiss Accordion players in our national costumes were enthusiastically greeted. They gave us a generous selection of Swiss tunes which were immensely appreciated. Mr. Gandon has certainly got together a most efficient team of players, and it is only to be regretted that they were not given a chance earlier in the programme to brighten things up a little. They richly earned the applause which was so spontaneously given.

The programme came thus to a befitting end, and Mr. A. F. Suter, in a closing speech said:

Now that we have come to the end of our Celebration I have a very pleasant duty to perform.

We have all enjoyed ourselves; we have again looked upon the White Cross in the Red Field, and the escutcheons of our native States; we have again admired the beauties of our Homeland in this grand film, and we have been reminded most forcibly of how our hardy and patriotic Swiss character has been formed and built up in us, and how thankful we have to remain to our forefathers for their industry, their frugality, their tenacity and their never-flagging spirit of independence. The songs of the choir and the strains of the concertinas have lifted our hearts and spirits; we have found wonderful comfort in the shining eyes, the happy faces and the warm greetings of the multitude of our compatriots.

But above all, the presence of our Minister and Madame Thurnheer has been a great delight to us. Their kindly gift of Edelweiss, the rarest of our Swiss flowers, symbol of the peace and serenity of our Eternal Alps, will be treasured by us no less than the weighty and heartening speech M. le Ministre has addressed to us. We thank him for those words of comfort, advice and encouragement, for his wise guidance of our colonies through the stress and strife of the present time, for his example of true neutrality, a deep obligation upon every Swiss, born not of emotion, but of traditional necessity.

In the name of the Committee, I thank all those friends who, by their splendid generosity, have made it possible for us to hold this Celebration in such a desirable place and on so vast a scale. Our thanks go to the donor of the magnificent Swiss Cross in flowers; to the artists who have given us of their best and to you, dear audience, for the way in which you have filled this extensive theatre so artistically, with so much colour, and so completely.

Please allow me one more reflection. A simple saying comes into my mind which appears to me to be particularly appropriate for us Swiss, whether at home or abroad, at this present time:— "*Look Backwards and be Thankful — Look Forward and Take Courage.*" When you are disappointed or depressed, when you suffer from "*Heimweh*" until you can bear it no longer, you will discover the great store of comfort in this saying.

My dear compatriots, I say to you all Good-bye, good luck and au revoir.—

In summing up we can all be satisfied in the way this celebration was conducted, without pomp, simple and dignified and in accordance with the times we are passing through.

I associate myself with the President of the Nouvelle Société Helvétique in thanking the organisers, the performers and not least those Ladies who, by wearing their national costumes added greatly to the brightness of the occasion.

Making use of the privileges which are usually accorded to the Press, to pass here or there a few critical remarks, I would respectfully point out that the "*Voice of a Swiss friend over the Air*," has not amused me, nor have, to all appearance thousands of Swiss hearts beaten quicker in listening to the improvised voice of a cow.

We do not seem to get away from the cows, I have no grudge against them, quite the contrary, I find them most useful specimens of the animal fraternity, but no sooner have I succeeded in getting the cow bell out of the way, with which some of our former patriotic gatherings were opened, when I find the cow appearing in a different guise. Why oh! why must we, by hook or by crook drag the animal world into our proceedings, it is not fair to them nor it is fair to all of those who do not yet include the four footers in the circle of their personal friends.—

This year's celebration of our National Day has once again proved that we Swiss in this hospitable land are more than ever attached to our homeland. I am told that lately there have been a number of rumours going round at home, that the Swiss Colonies in the British Empire have lost their spirit, and that our authorities view this happening with great concern. This is news to me, and I am sure to many of my compatriots. Speaking from some experience, I have never found our countrymen more united and more willing to collaborate together for the good of the whole community, with perhaps one exception, which, on this Day, when we proclaim our unity, must be mentioned, although I do so with some reluctance.

For some time, alas too long, the two institutions who are looking after the spiritual welfare of our countrymen in this Metropolis are not in agreement. Without going into any details or the merits of either case, I would make a sincere and passionate appeal to them to try and come to an understanding; thus showing to all of us that they are following in the footsteps of their Master who taught us that brotherly love and forgiveness are the pillars of the Christian teaching. If we can attain this, then there is not the slightest discord amongst us, and our people at home can rest assured that the spirit of collaboration and goodwill has never been higher.—

In conclusion I can do no better than to reproduce the closing sentence of a speech made by the President of the Swiss Confederation, Monsieur Celio, on August the 1st.:

... "Confederates, soon the shadows of night spread over our country. In our homes there will be peace and silence. Tomorrow at dawn, God's resplendent sun will show us that our world has remained intact — our houses, our fields, our schools, hospitals, churches and factories. The whole country is intact. Faced with this vision, sweet for us, but tragic for others — I promise with you to become something better, more human and just.

Thus we shall have rightly celebrated the country's anniversary and justified to our selves and other nations the fact that Switzerland still deserves to survive. Long Live our Fatherland."

ST.