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SWISS CLUB MANCHESTER.

National Day Celebration.

As for the last two years, our National Day celebration consisted of an outing by motor coaches. The place chosen this year was Morecambe, on the Lancashire Coast. Although the weather was rather indifferent, it was not actually what one might call raining. The sky was clouded and the visibility very poor, so that the lovely hilly country of Furness across Morecambe Bay was only seen in a haze. A contemplated walk to the picturesque old village of Heysham was abandoned and the younger set — and many of the not so young also — had a happy time on the Pleasure Beach. A visit to the Swimming Pool was missed by many, who had brought their bathing suits, but without sunshine and a sharp wind, it would have been risky to bathe.

The main event was a gathering of over 80 of us at the Midland Hotel, Morecambe, where an excellent High Tea was served. The room was tastefully decorated in the Swiss colours — red and white flowers on the tables — and our flag was prominently displayed. Several of the young ladies wore Swiss National Costumes. The meal over, our president, Mr. G. Senn, addressed the assembly with a few words of appreciation to the organizers and of thanks to the participants for attending in such good numbers. He then read the message of M. Max Petitpierre, President of the Swiss Confederation, in French and German. He ended by reading in full the "Bundesbrief" of 1291. This was greatly appreciated by all on such an occasion.

Mr. Senn left the task of a patriotic address to our esteemed Consul, Mr. J. J. Huber, who gave us a speech of such excellence and so admirably suitable to the occasion, that I reproduce it in full.

Mr. Huber said:

"On Tuesday evening, our compatriots at home will celebrate in the traditional manner — with church bells ringing and mountain fires burning — the 659th birthday of our Swiss Confederation. And at many of their gatherings will be read out the venerable "Bundesbrief" of 1st August, 1291, our country's first constitution.

"In the name of the Lord, Amen", so it starts. "Let it be known to all that the men of the valley of Uri, the commune of the valley of Schwyz and the mountain community of Unterwalden, in order that they may better defend and preserve themselves, have promised in good faith to assist each other personally and materially with help and counsel, within the valleys and beyond, in all they can and with all their efforts against all and everyone who shall intend violence, injury or any ill whatsoever against them."

"Whatever the circumstances, each commune promises to come to the aid of the others, at its own expense, with all that may be necessary for their assistance, to resist the attacks of their enemies and to avenge their injuries. To consecrate these things, they have sworn their solemn oath, thus renewing their earlier alliance, and by the grace of God, this Pact shall endure perpetually."

The main purpose of the Pact was to safeguard the threatened liberties of the Confederates, not only against attacks from without, but also against oppression or disruption from within. Thus they would no

longer tolerate foreign emissaries to sit over them in judgment. "By common consent", says the Pact, "the Confederates will neither recognise nor accept any judge who is not their own freely elected countryman".

To be strong without, the young confederates had to be united within. Hence the statesman-like provision in the "Bundesbrief" for compulsory peaceful arbitration, should differences ever arise between the Confederates. And should any one of them not submit to such arbitration, he would be considered a common enemy.

Finally, our ancestors embodied in their Pact civil and criminal legislation, protecting both the person and the property of the individual, in a way which shows clearly their respect for the personal rights and the dignity of man.

Small wonder then that other courageous and freedom-loving mountain and town communities soon joined the Confederation, building it up first to the League of 13, out of which finally grew, after a period of trouble during the Napoleonic wars, our present Swiss Confederation of 22 cantons.

But however well the foundation was laid, our country could not have survived and developed as it has if succeeding generations had not been imbued with the same ideals of freedom and justice, the same trust in Providence, the same determination to defend themselves, and the same readiness to settle differences in a spirit of goodwill, and mutual understanding.

There is another reason for our preservation: That wise policy of neutrality already advocated in the 15th century by Niklaus von der Flüe, who said: "Eidgenossen, mischt Euch nicht in fremde Händel ein".

This policy of permanent neutrality is not due to selfishness or to opportunism on our part, but simply takes account of historical and geographical facts. It is by no means a passive neutrality. It is based on the one hand on the maintenance, at all times, of a well trained, well equipped and reliable citizen army, ready to defend our country to the utmost and against any would-be aggressor. On the other hand we consider it as our moral duty to act as the "Good Samaritan" to those in distress outside our borders, to the limit of our resources, in times of war or other calamities.

There is no doubt that in our generation Switzerland's neutrality has received additional justification

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by the humanitarian mission which she has been and still is able to fulfil in a variety of ways.

We need only to think of what the Swiss Government, as protecting power of over 40 nations, was able to accomplish during and just after the last world war, and in a few cases even to-day; or of the blessings which the Red Cross idea and the work of the International Red Cross has brought to millions of victims of war and of civil strife, and still brings to tens of thousands at this very moment; or of the diplomatic Conference, called by the Swiss Government last year, which has led to the signing — by over 60 countries — of the four new Geneva Conventions to humanise the treatment of war victims, of sick and wounded, of prisoners of war and civilian internees. For the first time one of these conventions makes provision for security zones to shelter women, children, aged persons, and the sick and wounded.

Pour un nombre de vous c'est la première fois que vous célébrez notre fête nationale à l'étranger. Comme vous le voyez, ceux de nous qui ont été loin du pays depuis des années, n'ont pas oublié de commémorer le jour natal de notre Confédération. Au contraire, plus longtemps nous vivons à l'étranger, plus notre mère-patrie nous est chère, plus ardent sont nos vœux pour son bien-être et sa sécurité.

Que Dieu protège cette patrie, diverse dans sa géographie et l'histoire de ses cantons, diverse dans la culture et la langue de ses citoyens; complètement unie cependant par les sentiments nationaux de son peuple, par l'attachement de tous à la patrie commune et à son patrimoine spirituel.

Es isch a Tage wie am hütige wo eus d'Iheit und d'Stärki von euserm Bundesstaat so richtig zum Bewusstsein chonnt. D'Vielheit und d'Verschiedenheit von euse Gmeinde, Bezirke und Kantone mag gross sie, aber allen isch gmeinsam de Glaube an euse staatlich Gmeinschaft, an euse demokratische Regierigsforme, a die persönlich Freiheit vom einzelne Bürger und a d'Rechtsgleichheit von allen Eidgenosse.

Es isch nid nu für d'Unabhängigkeit vo sim Land, dass de Schwyzer je und je gwillt g'sie isch, sich mit Guet und Bluet iz'setze sondern an um sini persönliche Recht und si Menschwürde z'verteidige.

Euse Staatsdevise isch: Mit andere Länder luege Friede z'ha, aber frei und unabhängig z'bliebe und deheime euses Läbe of eusi eigni Art und Wies z'gestalte.

Für eus Schwyzer im Usland ergit sich da drus vor allem d'Pflicht, mit der Heimat verbunde z'bliebe und defür z'sorge, dass au euse A'ghörige, vor allem euse im Usland erzogene Chind d'Gläheheit händ, euses Land und euse Lüt, euse politische, wirtschaftliche, soziale und kulturelle Irichtige, känne und schätze z'lehre.

Was mir in der hütige Zyt wieder alli — die deheim und die im Usland — müend beherzige, sind d'Wort wo de Heinrich Zschokke vor meh als 100 Jahre an Schluss vo siner Schwyzergschicht g'setzt hät:

“Nicht der Pfeil des Tellen und nicht der Dolch des Camogaskers haben die Banden schweizerischer Knechtschaft gelöst. Nicht bei St. Jakob, nicht auf der Malserheide war die Unabhängigkeit der schweizerischen Eidgenossenschaft erfochten. Auf Grütli und unter dem Ahorn von Truns wurde nur die Losung des Kampfes gegeben. Wir kämpfen ihn noch, Eidgenossen! — Und Ihr, unsere Enkel, werdet ihn kämpfen über unsern Gräbern! — Wachtet, dass ihr nicht in Anfechtung fallet! — Vertrauet Gott! — Alle Eidgenossen für einen und jeder für alle!”

H.M.

“SCHWEIZERBUND” (Swiss Club).

The half yearly Meeting of the “Schweizerbund” (Swiss Club), took place at 74, Charlotte Street, W.1, on Wednesday, July 26th, 1950.

Mr. W. Schneeberger was in the Chair and there were about fifty members present.

Mr. E. Ritzmann, Honorary Treasurer, presented the accounts which were unanimously passed with thanks for the efficient way in which he had looked after the finances of the Club.

The President made a sincere appeal for more support, especially as far as the Swiss Colony is concerned; he acquainted the Meeting with the measures the Committee has taken to improve the standard of the Club, and to keep out any undesirable persons.

Mr. & Mrs. L. Portman, the able and painstaking stewards, were heartily congratulated on the efficient work they had rendered in the catering line.

Although the Club has not yet been able to solve all its financial troubles, a decisive trend for the better has taken place since the last accounts were presented, and with the support of its members, and the Colony as a whole, a brighter and more hopeful future can be predicted.

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