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100 PER CENT DEMOCRACY.

Some time ago a friend living in the United States of America, sent me various Paper cuttings dealing with the happenings on the occasion of the last Democratic Convention, when President Truman was re-elected as a candidate for the Presidency.

In these cuttings it is reported, that one well-known senator, greeted his political antagonist with the homely phrase "How are you, old potato?" whereupon the latter responded heartily with a handshake and a cheerful smile, saying "Al my boy, this is from the heart", whilst the Convention Hall was shaken by roars of approval.

Now that is, what I call, real 100 per cent. democracy.

We Swiss often pride ourselves, rightly or wrongly, that we have a sort of privilege concerning democracy, but after having read how statesmen of our great, and by the way, much younger sister republic, exchange greetings in public, I have some serious misgivings as to whether we are really and truly a democratic country.

I have not yet been able to get an accurate or even plausible definition of the word *democracy*, there seem to be various and contradictory opinions about it, and some of my English friends will have it, that their country has at least an equal claim to that title; but never-the-less every true born Swiss thinks (God bless him) that he is a fine specimen of a read democrat.

The example which our brethren and fellow republicans across the sea have given us, has greatly impressed me, it sounds honest and it lends colour to political phraseology, and I hope that my countrymen will imitate these "breezy" conversational habits. —

A few months ago, a bust of the late Federal Councillor Giuseppe Motta was unveiled in the Grand Council Chamber in Bellinzona, on which occasion a great number of eminent personalities, in all walks of life, were present, amongst them Federal-Councillor, Dr. Celio.

I have read with great interest the numerous and unavoidable speeches made on this occasion, but oh! most of them sounded so formal, so stereotype; now, if a similar event would have taken place in America, our brethren from the sunny south, would have shaken hands with one of our country's chief magistrates, exclaiming "How are you, old blood orange?, we are right glad to see you;" this would have, undoubtedly pleased our Federal Councillor immensely, as he would have taken the allusion to an orange, as a compliment to his native canton.

Then again there was the 34th Swiss Industries Fair in Basle last April, when a special delegation comprising high officials of the Confederation and the canton of Berne, travelled first class, and free of charge, to the ancient city of Basle, in order to have a good feed, and tell each other in mutual admiration what clever fellows they were; here again most formal speeches were delivered, now if they only would have addressed each other on that auspicious occasion as "Old Bärnermutz" and "Basler Beppy", it would have, undoubtedly greatly added to the "Gemütlichkeit" of the gathering.

There are innumerable festivities of one kind or another in our country, and when weekly perusing the Swiss papers, I often wonder, if they ever do anything

else but make speeches and have banquets; I read *f.i.*, that on the occasion of the last Federal Shooting Competition at Chur, 26 speakers said 26 times the same things, and not one of these orators ever addressed the various sections coming *f.i.* from Lucerne or Solothurn, as "Dear Katzenstreckers" or "Old onions", etc., etc. Surely this would have also shaken the "Festhütte" with roars of approval. —

Some time back, I had the privilege of attending a complimentary dinner given to a near relative of mine in Switzerland. There was a great array of "Herr Direktors", "Herr Doktors" and even "Herr Professors" present, it was a most impressive affair, let me tell you, and as it happened, I was almost the only one present who did not have "a handle" to his name.

Each of the various speakers referred to my relation as "Herr Direktor" in a most solemn manner, and everyone addressed each other as "Herr Doktor" or "Herr Direktor" as the case may be. I had the honour, or was it an ordeal?, to sit between two "Herr Doktor's", and when after innumerable toasts had been proposed and drunk, I felt a wee bit shaky due to great emotions, I naturally enough looked instinctively to my two table neighbours for help and assistance, but lo and behold, my appeal met with no response, I was politely informed that one was a doctor of law and the other a doctor of philosophy and they knew nothing of medicine. Two other doctors of one kind or another gave me the sound advice though to



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retire and put my head under the "pump", which I did, and returning back to the banqueting table felt all the better for the "spray", I philosophically reflected on the high intellectual attainments of my country, which can produce at a nominally small gathering such a number of "Herr Direktors'" and "Herr Doktors'".

No really and truly we are not democratic enough, Uncle Sam is beating us hollow, and I have a good mind to start a big campaign for the restoration of a real simple and homely democracy, similar to the one initiated by our American friends.

There is no reason why we should not commence experimenting in the Swiss Colony, only recently an article appeared in the "Swiss Observer", by a subscriber, who rightly complained that the various meetings of Swiss Societies were badly attended. I fully agree with him, that it must be a most disheartening experience for the officials of a club or society to see, that members take such little interest in the affairs, but there is another side too to the picture, are they not often to be blamed themselves for this deplorable lack of co-operation? Most of the Meetings are dry, there is no "ginger" in them. I do not mean by that, that one should only attend a meeting, when there is a chance of witnessing a capital row, no, but there are ways and means to make a gathering of this kind amusing and homely. If we would forthwith follow the example of the two American statesmen mentioned, an entirely different atmosphere would hover over these deliberations, one need, of course, not confine oneself to the vegetable class, but could borrow names from

the animal or other fraternities. It is, however, understood, that the laws of politeness and good taste should not be violated, *f.i.*, it would hardly do to address a President, who for some unknown reason, is adorned with a beard, as "old beaver" or "nanny goat", but there are innumerable ways to address him without offending his sensibility, and yet make him feel that you have more than a sneaking regard for him personally.

As an example, I would suggest that the President of a Rifle Club should be addressed as "Old William Tell", or the head of a Choral Society as "Old Caruso", then again Chairman of a Benevolent Society could be called "Dear Old Mother Hubbard" and so on *ad infinitum*, we would then get, what is often missed, that friendly atmosphere, when one feels that men are men, and women are women.

The same would apply to Banquets, dances, etc., what tremendous applause would greet a speaker, who would stand up and start his oration to the Ladies, with the following words: "Dear old Daisies", I feel sure that the Banqueting Hall would be shaken by roars and roars of applause.

Be it mentioned here, that on the occasion of a Banquet some time ago, by a Swiss Society, a member referred to me as the "jovial monk", he thus forestalled me, and I take the opportunity of congratulating him on his foresight, he thus becomes one of the pioneers for the creation of a homely and real democracy, founded on mutual forbearance and real understanding.

ST.

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