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E. R. COTTET,
President, Swiss Club, Manchester.

SWISS CLUB MANCHESTER

Annual Banquet & Ball

at the

MIDLAND HOTEL - MANCHESTER

on

SATURDAY, 14th NOVEMBER, 1953

In the Chair : E. R. COTTET

One hundred and three years old, — " and still going strong " — is the verdict, after having attended the Annual Banquet and Ball of the Swiss Club Manchester.

This was the third visit — including the centenary celebration in November, 1950 — which I have paid to Manchester to have the pleasure of spending a few hours with our compatriots up North ; and what has impressed me each time very vividly is the friendly atmosphere which prevails at each function held by this Society.

What, one may ask, is the secret of this feeling of friendship? I venture to say, that it is foremost due to the fact, that there exists only *one* Swiss Society in this great industrial centre, its members being recruited from all walks of life. Thus, there is greater intimacy and cohesion between the members than f.i. in the Metropolis, where there are many — far too many — Clubs and Societies, some of which desirous of keeping their membership more or less exclusive.

This annual feast is, and has always been, a spontaneous demonstration of friendship and patriotism. Young and old, rich and poor gather together, to spend a few hours in happy companionship, as members of a country which we are rightly proud of, and which is for ever in our thoughts.

* * *

The official reception at the Midland Hotel was preceded by a small gathering in the private quarters of the President, where the invited guests were introduced to the Lord-Mayor of Manchester and Lady-Mayoress, and the Mayor and Mayoress of Salford.

Punctually at 6.30 p.m., the Swiss Minister, accompanied by Madame de Torrenté, Mr. E. R. Cottet, President of the Swiss Club, Manchester, and supported by the Lord-Mayor and Lady-Mayoress of Manchester, the Mayor and Mayoress of Salford received the members and friends of the Club, whilst cocktails were served.

At the conclusion of the reception the red-coated Toast-Master announced that " dinner would be served " and after Grace had been said by the President, the company sat down to an excellent dinner for which the famous *chef* of the Midland Hotel deserves special thanks.

Towards the end of the dinner, the President of the Club, gave the Toasts to H.M. the Queen and Switzerland, which were duly honoured, after which the company, in an expectant mood, prepared to listen to various speakers who were mentioned on the programme.

The first speaker was Mr. E. R. Cottet, the popular and genial President of the Club, who, on rising from his chair was loudly cheered. He started his oration by extending a hearty welcome to the official guests comprising the following personalities : The Right Worshipful the Lord-Mayor of Manchester, Alderman Abraham Moss, J.P. M.A. and the Lady-Mayoress, the Right Worshipful the Mayor of Salford, Alderman Dr. Joseph Shlosberg and the Mayoress, the Swiss Minister, and Madame de Torrenté, Dr. E. M. Bircher, 1st Secretary of Legation, Mr. & Mrs. A. Stauffer, Editor of the " Swiss Observer ", and Mr. Oscar Schneider, Swiss Consul in Manchester.

He then continued by expressing his gratitude to the two Mayors for the warm hospitality our compatriots have always enjoyed in their respective cities, and his appreciation to the Swiss Minister, Monsieur Henry de Torrenté, for having kindly consented to attend this celebration, thanking him for the interest he has always shown in the welfare of the Club. The speaker regretted the absence of Mr. E. Hofstetter, Swiss Consul in Balloch (Scotland), and Professor and Mrs. Inebnit, who unfortunately met with a motoring accident in Switzerland some months ago, when especially Mme. Inebnit was badly hurt, wishing them a speedy and complete recovery.

The President then gave a short *resumé* of the various activities of the Club, such as social parties, meetings, lectures, excursions and rambles, mentioning that during the year the membership had increased by 9 and numbers now 76. Referring to the Manchester Swiss Rifle Association, — a section of the Club — he said, that owing to bad weather conditions the activities were somewhat curtailed, and that the winner of the Challenge Cup was Mr. Kenneth Sohm, scoring 88 points out of a possible 100.

Concluding his address, Mr. Cottet thanked the members for having tolerated his frequent absence

from meetings, which was mainly due to his transfer to London. He expressed his gratitude especially to Mr. E. Berner, Vice-President, and Mr. H. Monney, Hon. Treasurer, for having so ably carried on whilst he was absent.

The applause which greeted the speech of the President had hardly died down, when it was announced that the Swiss Minister would address the company; a hearty ovation was accorded to him, he said:—

" At the occasion of previous visits to Manchester, my wife and I stayed in this very comfortable Hotel over which, I believe, your President has some little influence. In this very same room, I told you how I had asked the Lord Mayor whether the Swiss of Manchester behaved themselves and how he assured me, that there were no complaints whatsoever. This time, my wife and I have the great honour of staying at the Town Hall. I cannot but conclude that the reason why we have risen in the graces of the Lord Mayor and the City of Manchester is, that you have behaved even better than before.

I realize that it is not easy for you, to maintain the standard of eminence set by some of our earlier compatriots. Take the case of Dr. Pierre Mark Roget, a citizen of Geneva, born in 1779. He was one of the founders of the Manchester Medical School, a Fellow, and for 22 years even Secretary, of the Royal Society. He is best known to-day as the author of the " THESAURUS of English Words and Phrases ". In the preface to the first Edition of 1852, he says: " It is now nearly fifty years since I first projected a system of verbal classification, conceiving that such a compilation might help to supply my own deficiencies ".

Then there was Johann Georg Bodmer of Zurich, born in 1786, whose important textile machinery inventions contributed to the rapid expansion of Manchester as a textile centre.

In engineering I would refer you to Hans Renold, born just a hundred years ago, in Aarau. He founded the " Renold and Coventry Chain " factory, whose chains and transmissions are of world renown.

In more recent times, compatriots in Manchester have made names for themselves in the chemical industry and even in gas-turbine development. — You know that even better than I do. The point is, that the Swiss Colony has integrated itself well into the cultural and commercial life of this great City and so contributed its share also to the recovery of Great Britain.

We have long enjoyed the fruits of Pax Britannica. We rejoice therefore all the more in the economic improvement recently announced by Her Majesty's Government. The increase in the tourist allowance may only be small, but it is of importance to thousands of our people. Many more will benefit by the progressive liberalisation under O.E.E.C. agreements. Here, once again, Great Britain has taken the lead and gone ahead with the courageous step of liberating 75% of its trade with Europe.

We Swiss of course are firm believers in the policy

Left to right: **Alderman A. Moss, Lord-Mayor of Manchester, E. R. Cottet, President, Monsieur Henry de Torrenté, Ministre de Suisse.**

of the open door, that policy which originated under Cobden and has made Manchester and this country great. None to-day will seriously demand a return to full free trade. Other factors than economics have to be taken into consideration. Both our countries must, for strategic and sociological reasons, protect for instance their agriculture. The experiences of two world-wars has taught us both that "iron rations" *must* be grown at home. This in turn demands that farming has to be supported even if there is no war. Whether you do this by subsidies and custom duties, as Great Britain seems to prefer, or whether you prefer the quota system, as we do in Switzerland, is not of great importance. Both systems are intended to assure us a more evenly balanced demographic social structure and a minimum of food in times of stress.

We cannot but hope that the thunder-clouds on the political horizon will disperse. More and more the struggle seems to lie between the giants of the East and West. Some might think that Switzerland is too small a country and of no account between those contending factions, and that our concepts of Neutrality are out of date.

Do not believe that, my friends, do not believe that for one moment! Just because it is essentially a clash of ideologies it is important that we reaffirm in all our actions the faith we have in our Democracy. No other country in the world to-day is governed so directly by the will of its own people. No other country provides such peaceful, happy co-existence for people differing so much in language, race and creed.

If we Swiss, at home and abroad, stand by our convictions of tolerance, fairness and mutual help, we are bound to add our share to the great effort towards peace which all men of goodwill make to-day. And in the end it will not be brute force which will decide the issue — but the integrity of our purpose and the sincerity of our faith. If those two remain the guiding principles of our behaviour, we will continue to be welcome wherever we may be, and our country keep a place in the affairs of man of which we need not be ashamed."

The Minister's excellent oration was acknowledged with long applause.

The last speaker was the Right Worshipful, The Lord-Mayor of Manchester, Alderman A. Moss, J.P., M.A., who received a tremendous reception on rising from his Chair. He spoke of the very friendly relations that had always existed between the Swiss Colony and the City of Manchester, saying that he himself knew of no Swiss who had caused any trouble there.

The Lord-Mayor mentioned how very pleased he had been to receive the Swiss Minister and Madame de Torrenté at the Town Hall, and congratulated the Colony on having such an able, cultured and understanding diplomat representing our country at the Court of St. James. He also wished to impress on the Swiss, who were making their home in the City of Manchester, that they were always very welcome, and could, in due course be absorbed into the British way of life, tho' stressing the fact, that this did not mean that they need forget their homeland, but that the bonds of friendship that had always existed between the two countries would thus be strengthened.

The Lord-Mayor then referred to the great humanitarian work of the International Red Cross in Geneva, and the eminent services our country is rendering by looking after British interests in Teheran, and their efforts made as members of the Mixed International Commission in Korea.

In conclusion he thanked the President of the Swiss Club, Manchester, for having given him, and the Lady-Mayoress, an opportunity to meet members of the Swiss Colony, and raised his glass to drink to the prosperity of the Club.

This most friendly address was greatly appreciated by the company and acknowledged with long and sincere applause.

Before closing the official part of the evening, Mr. K. Sohm, a member of the Swiss Rifle Association, was presented with the Challenge Cup by Madame de Torrenté, for which he expressed thanks.

* * *

After a short interval dancing began, to which, no doubt, some of the pretty young Ladies were looking forward to with pleasant anticipation; unfortunately there were not enough male partners to go round, but the various Paul-Jones enabled each of the Ladies to have at least one or two "hops", which judging from their smiling faces, they hugely enjoyed.

When the hour of midnight struck the band played God save the Queen, followed by Auld Lang Syne, and this happy evening came to its close.

In summing up, I would like to congratulate the committee most heartily for the way in which this most enjoyable function had been arranged, not one single hitch occurred, everybody was "happy and bright". I hope I shall not awaken any feelings of jealousy if I attribute a large share of the success to the untiring and devoted Hon. Treasurer, Mr. H. Monney, who for the last twenty years has rendered such conspicuous service to the Club.

I can do not better than close this report with the same words, which I had written on the occasion of the Centenary Celebration, three years ago, namely,: "We, who live in other parts of this hospitable land, are proud to know, that in some little part of this great realm there exists a corner where Swiss traditions and Swiss culture are upheld with such dignity.

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