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H. MONNEY,
President, Swiss Club, Manchester.

SWISS CLUB MANCHESTER

Annual Banquet & Ball

at the

MIDLAND HOTEL - MANCHESTER

on

SATURDAY, 10th NOVEMBER, 1956

In the Chair : H. MONNEY

For many of us an Annual Banquet and Ball may be just another occasion for merry-making, an agreeable pastime, or the opportunity for looking one's best. This is all to the good, and for myself I wholeheartedly enjoy being in such warm and brilliant company. Apart from the purely social side however, I think that we ought to remember, for a little moment, the more serious aspect of such an evening, take stock of past achievements, and prepare ourselves for further efforts.

My life with this Club can be counted in only a very few decades, but the Club itself is already venerable in age, and we should feel thankful to all those past members who devoted so much effort to the development of our Swiss Family here in the North, support those who are still doing the job, and the ones who will one day follow in their footsteps.

We never wanted our Club to be a " closed shop " or a respectable " Altersheim ", but rather an everliving symbol of our people at home. I mean " The whole people " and today when many of our Societies are lacking in vitality, not just through their own faults, we welcome all those young newcomers, men or wives, for however long they are able to stay with us. Let us extend all our sympathy and support to them, and be happy in their midst, thankful for any fresh and healthy air which is reaching us from our faraway homeland.

The Swiss Club is our larger Family, and my wife and I felt completely at home in the friendly foyer of the Midland Hotel, meeting young and old alike, enjoying the atmosphere of festivity and happiness, the great variety of tongues and temperaments, reminding us of the miracle of a people who have found unity through their diversity.

We were all received by our President and Mrs. Monney and presented to our guests of honour Monsieur René Faessler, Commercial Counsellor of Legation, and Madame Faessler. After cocktails had been served we were invited to proceed to our seats in the Banqueting and Ball Room, very attractively decorated with flowers and flags, of which the Swiss and British were well blended.

After grace had been said, we started on what a gourmand would have called an excellent dinner provided by the cuisine of the Midland Hotel and its Chef, a dinner well accompanied by a good selection of wines.

Towards the end of dinner, and whilst coffee was being served, the Toast to H.M. the Queen was proposed by our President who briefly referred to the present difficulties, and he expressed our full confidence and good wishes for the good fortune of our country of adoption, and our hope for a quick and durable solution of all international problems.

The Toast to Switzerland was given in a most unusual and brilliant way by our old friend Dr. Curtis, and I could not help feeling how intimate a knowledge many of our English friends have of Swiss affairs, and how much we Swiss can still learn from them, and rightly so. His well-earned reward was thunderous applause from the happy audience.

Our President then welcomed Monsieur René Faessler and Madame Faessler, deputising for Monsieur Armin Daeniker, Swiss Minister in London, and Madame Daeniker, who were, unfortunately, prevented from coming to our Annual Banquet, adding that we were all delighted to have them with us and able to show them what our Manchester Group is doing, proving that there is little difference between Swiss in the Provinces and Swiss in the Metropolis. After requesting M. Faessler to convey to His Excellency the assurance of our esteem, he expressed the hope that we might have the honour of M. Daeniker's visit next year at this function.

He also welcomed our Consul, Monsieur Max Buchi, although it was deeply regretted that Madame Buchi could not be with us, and wished her a speedy and complete recovery. He thanked him for the interest he has shown at all times for our welfare and expressed our appreciation for his opinion and advice at our various functions. Thanks went also to the Staff of the Swiss Consulate for the secretarial work done in the interests and for the benefit of our Club.

He had a specially warm welcome for the many English friends sitting at our table, telling them how grateful we were to their country, for the hospitality extended to us, and expressing the sincere hope that we shall see them, not only on such occasions as our Banquet and Ball, but also at our other social events.

Addressing himself to the Ladies, he explained that it was not being discourteous to mention them last, as for some obscure reason it was customary to do so, but he endeavoured to pacify them with some very warm and appropriate words, and I hope he succeeded. In this connection he made a very important announcement, which I give here in his own words: "We have recently changed the rule of our Club relating to membership. Swiss Ladies can now be active members with exactly the same status and rights as the men have enjoyed for the last 106 years. We created also a new class of members, that is associate members, intended to non-Swiss, under certain conditions. For instance non-Swiss children of a Swiss or whose grandfather or grandmother are or were Swiss, husbands married to a Swiss, and lastly but by no means least, non-Swiss with close cultural or moral relations with Switzerland or who have rendered continued and active support to the Club. The scope of our Club will now be greatly enlarged and we think there will be a rejuvenated Swiss Club in Manchester, success depending on all of us."

He then proceeded to mention all our activities since the last Banquet, and these made quite an impressive list, reflecting very well the vitality of our Club and giving credit to the organisers and supporters, both morally and materially. Without entering into too many particulars, I should just like to say that we were offered during the past 12 months over 40 occasions on which to enjoy the ordinary men's or ladies' meetings, parties, luncheons and dinners, film and other shows, music recitals, lectures and such outstanding functions as the yearly Landsgemeinde of the Swiss in the North, the National Day Celebration, the Christmas Party for the Children, and many more.

Our President finished by mentioning the Rifle Section, and introduced to us this year's champion Mr. John Scheiwiller, inviting him to receive the coveted cup from the hands of Madame Faessler. It is the second time that the winner, through no fault of his own, has had to forfeit the most treasured reward of a kiss from the presenting Lady, because all he could get hold of was the wooden pedestal, the cup having been left behind. Perhaps we ought to appoint a sub-committee to ensure that next time this short but charming function is brought to a proper end, as we all have the right to expect.

Loud applause greeted both our President's address and the prize presentation, after which our guest of honour, Monsieur René Faessler brought us the warm and friendly greetings of our Minister and Madame Daeniker, and their regret at not being able to attend our Ball this year. He then continued:

"I cannot tell you how much we welcome this chance of getting to know the Swiss Colony in Manchester. It has also been a very great pleasure to see the town and the surrounding region, where by your work, as well as by your devotion to Switzerland and to your country of residence, you have done so much to enhance the reputation of both lands.

"As you must have gathered, this is my first contact with the City of Manchester, although its name has been familiar to me for many years, having engaged my attention under varied aspects. The first time was probably when, at the age of six I began attending school in a country-district where I found myself the only boy from a professional family among the local farmers' children. For this great event my mother had tried to disguise me as an Eton boy, but I soon discovered that all my friends wore what in Switzerland we call 'Manchester trousers'. I fought a battle royal with my mother in order to persuade her to let me dress in accordance with local custom, and I am glad to say that Manchester won over Eton,

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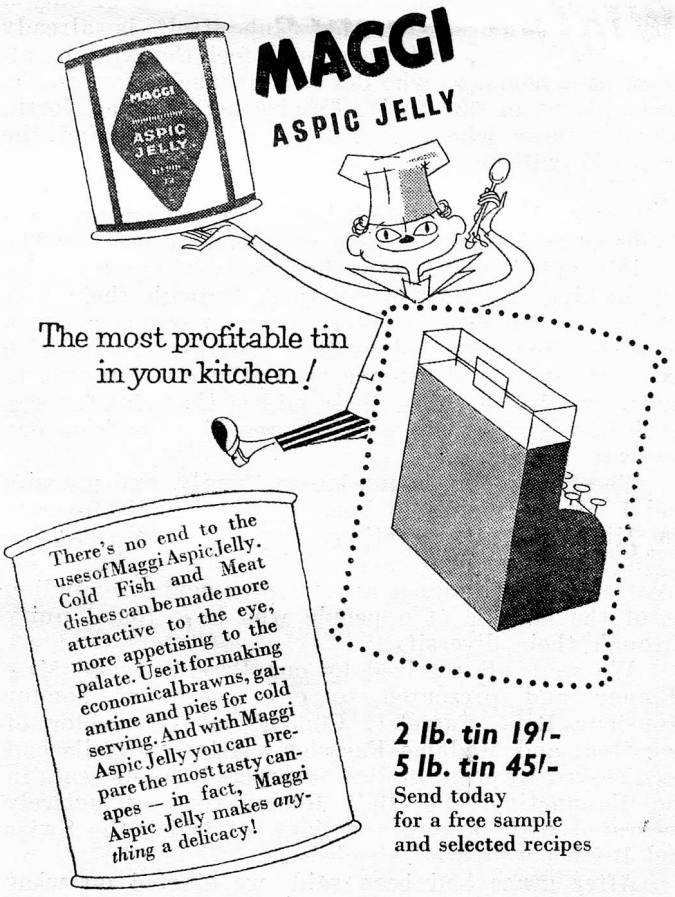

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which was perhaps no tribute to elegance but certainly one to the quality and sturdiness of Manchester.

" The second time Manchester cropped up in my life was three years later, when we had a holiday at the seaside in France. There was staying in our Hotel a big textile manufacturer from Manchester, who was a bachelor and who insisted on wanting to buy my brother; but my father would not hear of it. Our Manchester friend refused to take no for an answer and kept on pressing his plea, saying that, as my father had seven children, he would hardly notice the difference that one less would make. I must confess that for my part I did not quite understand my father's attitude, and thought that he was missing a jolly good business deal.

" However, it was only in my student's days, after our professors had told us how many ideas in the field of political economy had their origin in this city, that I really came to understand what Manchester stood for. To me it long remained the industrial and commercial centre that had propagated those ideas about free economy which contributed so much to the industrial development of Europe; but when I arrived in London I soon realised that this old liberalism had had to give way to other economic views and that, despite the continued existence of its Free Trade Hall, Manchester had to submit to the influence of protectionism. I am nevertheless convinced that, with the initiative and drive that are typical of them, your industries would soon adapt themselves to Mr. Macmillan's ideas about the creation of a European free trade area. For my part, I feel certain that Manchester and the surrounding region would know how to triumph over all the difficulties that might arise, just as they did at the time of the conclusion of the Cobden Treaty with France in 1860.

" I should also like to congratulate you on the wonderful organisation of this Ball. I read last Friday in " The Economist " an article about the ideal number of members constituting a government or a committee. The article maintained that the extreme limit was 21, beyond which complete inefficacy began. From the success of this evening, I deduce that your Committee must be as near as may be to the ideal number of eight, which seems to figure in the composition of no Government in the world today. On the other hand it was that of the King's Council under Charles I, which had for consequence that the latter last his head. If, by any chance, your Committee has eight members, my only wish is that the Swiss Club, far from sharing the same fate, will continue to organise their ball year after year with equal success. "

Monsieur Faessler's words were very warmly greeted, and our thanks expressed to him with long and sincere applause.

After retiring for a short and well deserved rest, dancing began, assisted by a very lively and active orchestra, and we all enjoyed the few remaining hours in the midst of a happy array of young and vivacious Ladies, some of us doing our best to forget our years and feeling young and happy again.

Eventually, to the tune of " Auld Lang Syne " a brilliant and successful evening came to a close, and I hope, as many of us must do, that Providence will allow us to meet again soon, happy and in good health.

E. Berner.

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