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Autor: [s.n.]
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82nd FÊTE SUISSE AND CHANSON DE GRUYÈRE

In spite of advancing years the "Fête Suisse" has lost nothing of its vigour, nor of its popularity; quite the contrary — it becomes younger and younger. One may well ask why this annual reunion still maintains its attraction. There are many reasons and, no doubt, the principal one is that our countrymen living on foreign soil feel the need of meeting once a year to spend a few hours together and to let their thoughts travel to their native land, to which we all owe so much, and which remains ever in our thoughts.

Another reason is that on this occasion occurs an opportunity to meet old friends and acquaintances whom one sees but rarely nowadays. Although the Swiss Colony is blessed (if such can be called a blessing) with many societies and institutions of one kind or another, which meet regularly and have their own functions, still a large number of our compatriots do not belong to any of these, and thus have little opportunity of keeping in touch with each other.

With the alarming dwindling of our Colony due principally to the non-arrival of new blood on the one side and departures on the other, either through death or by return to the mother country, it has become more than ever before a dire necessity to have such a contact, especially in a time when both the political and economic situations are fraught with many dangers giving reasons for anxiety.

Careful studies undertaken lately of conditions prevailing in other foreign colonies in this country have revealed that the Swiss Colony is not only the most active but also the most generous one of them all. This is no mere idle boast nor snobbishness, but an undisputable fact.

Our Colony, which is so rich in achievements in many spheres, must not die; it presents an important link between *this* and our country, a link which can only be maintained if we remain in close touch with each other.

We make, therefore, an earnest appeal to all our compatriots to play their part, either large or small, so that our Colony, regardless of many difficulties, can maintain its status and remain a living force.

* * *

With the approach of this year's "Fête Suisse" it might be appropriate to relate a few particulars about some of the performances in recent years. Whilst in olden times the programme could be supported entirely from local talent, prevailing conditions in post-war days have made this impossible, and the organisers had alternatively either to discontinue this annual festival or to seek help from outside. Owing to the nature of this undertaking such help could only be procured from our homeland.

So in 1949, for the first time, the "Chanson de Lausanne" made its appearance at the Central Hall, Westminster, and this inauguration proved to be at once a great success. The following year — on the occasion of the 75th anniversary — various soloists, well known in Switzerland, were the main-stay of the programme and were complemented by local institutions such as the Male Choir, the "Corale" of the Unione Ticinese, the accordeon club, and the children of the Colony.

In 1951 the "Stadtmusik" Solothurn provided

the principal item in the programme, and, the year after, the "Chanson du Rhône" gave a memorable performance. In 1953 the "Ländlerkapelle and Jodlergruppe" Wattwil performed and the following year our old friends the "Chanson de Lausanne" reappeared. 1955 saw the "Röseligarte" choir from Berne, who gave a fine performance of Swiss folklore, and, the year after, the "Chanson de Montreux" and "La Musique de Huemoz" supplied the main items. In addition a colour film of the "Cortège de la Fête des vigneron" in Vevey was shown.

This year once again we have the pleasure of welcoming guests from our home country; they are the "Chanson de Gruyère" comprising 45 singers and dancers in national costume. They will be accompanied by Claude Gafner, baritone, Marie-Louise Boy de la Tour, pianist, and the "Trio Domino" (the Happy Harmonica Players). The programme will be supplemented by entertainers from the Colony.

As particulars are given in the leaflet which is enclosed in this issue, we need not go further into this matter. One point, however, deserves special attention; it relates to the new arrangements made regarding the catering facilities both before the commencement of the performance and during the interval. Time after time we have in this paper directed attention to the inadequate conditions for serving refreshments in the Foyer, and we are glad to report that a large hall on the ground floor has now been set apart, thus avoiding any rush or overcrowding. Therefore no further complaints should arise, and those who stayed away in the past for this reason should now come back to the fold.

We would also impress on all those who are intending to come along the need to order their tickets as early as possible. These will be sent out in strict rotation, and by ordering now any disappointment can thus be avoided.

The programme which will be put before the audience on Thursday, April 4th, is an attractive and varied one and promises to be first-class entertainment. The committee of the "Fête Suisse", and especially its President, Mr. A. Renou, have spared no effort to make this evening a real happy family party, and it is hoped that the Colony will show their appreciation by attending in large numbers.

To present the Colony with such an ambitious programme which will involve the organisers in heavy expenses it is most important that the Central Hall should be filled to capacity, thus showing the organisers that their efforts are appreciated, and at the same time showing our visitors and artists from the home country how welcome they are in our midst.

Whilst it is foremost an evening for the Swiss residing here, our English friends too are most welcome, and may we suggest that many of our compatriots will bring them along. Those of our countrymen who are prevented from attending should all the same buy tickets and present them to their friends.

Once again we make an earnest appeal to all members of the Colony — young and old — to come in as large a number as possible to the Central Hall — we are sure they will not regret it.

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