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SWISS CLUB MANCHESTER 110 Years Old (1850-1960)

Next month — on 6th November to be exact — the Swiss Club Manchester will have reached the venerable age of one hundred and ten years, and we tender to our compatriots of the North our heartiest congratulations on this remarkable anniversary.

It might be an appropriate occasion to cast a look back to 11th November 1950, when the Club celebrated its Centenary at the Midland Hotel Manchester under the presidency of the late Mr. G. Senn.

Amongst a large contingent of guests from London and the Provinces was the then Swiss Minister, Monsieur Henry de Torrenté.

The President, in his Centenary Address, mentioned that the official records for the first twenty years were unfortunately missing, but that, according to references made in the minutes of the year 1880, it was established, without a doubt, that the Swiss Club Manchester was founded on 6th November 1850. It was amusing to hear from the speaker that in the early years of the Club's existence, although the membership of the committee was restricted to four, two offices were reserved for a "Kellermeister" and "Vice-Kellermeister" (butler and assistant butler), which goes to prove that the "Swiss of old" were just as fond — or even more so — of a "little drop" as the present generation.

I heartily recommend to the various Swiss Societies in Great Britain that they include these offices in their respective committees of to-day; what a blessing it would be if, when tempers at meetings, as they sometimes do, get somewhat heated, one could call upon the "Kellermeister" to hand round the "loving cup"!

Mr. Senn said that it was also reported in the minutes that meetings as a rule started at 9 p.m., but that more often than not the assemblies were prolonged until the early hours of the morning, keeping the "Kellermeister" and his assistant exceedingly busy, which surely shows that these offices were fully justified, and of no small importance.

Referring to the history of the Club according to ancient minutes, the speaker related that one of the most important annual events was the "Grütlifeier" (1st of August celebration), which often lasted until 5 a.m., and was followed by a subsequent celebration during the afternoon of the next day, which shows that things were thoroughly done in those days; here again I presume that the butlers had their work cut out!

It is also reported in the annals of the Society, the Chairman said, that some of these gatherings were far from "tame", in fact the feelings of patriotism and enthusiasm on these occasions seemed to have run wild, so much so, that at least once the Swiss pastor, then residing at Manchester, started the celebrations on the following day with a stiff lecture, exhorting his flock to abstention and moderation. For this homily the Pastor was apparently prompted by reports which reached him from the wives of some of the members, complaining that the "home-coming" of their respective spouses was "far from amusing".

The speaker also mentioned a rather amusing entry in the records of the year 1873, when a parcel coming from Switzerland was presented to the members, containing "Winterthurer" sausages,

"Landjäger", "Glarner Schabzieger" and "Leckerli"; it is reported therein that some of the "Schüblig" had to be done away with, "owing to the vile odour that emanated from them". (Einige Schüblig mussten wegen ungünstigem Gestank unschädlich gemacht werden.)

It also seemed, according to the minutes, that in the eighties there existed two Societies in Manchester, the Swiss Club and the "Alpenrösli", which apparently faithful to our national motto "Un pour Tous, tous pour un" fought each other like cat and dog. It appears that the Swiss Club represented the "capitalists", whilst the "Alpenrösli" was supported by the "workers" class. What happened to the "Alpenrösli" is not recorded, and only the so-called "capitalists" apparently survived.

The President then dealt with the more recent history, and the then Swiss Minister, Monsieur Henry de Torrenté, made an excellent speech congratulating the Club on its Centenary. Monsieur Max Petitpierre, at that time President of the Swiss Confederation, sent his, and the Swiss Government's, greetings during a programme presented that evening over the "Landessender Schwarzenburg" and dedicated especially to the Swiss Club Manchester, relayed to Manchester by courtesy of the B.B.C.

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