

100 per cent democracy

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100 PER CENT DEMOCRACY

Recently I read in a magazine an account of an incident which occurred on the platform of the Los Angeles Democratic Convention between the Governor of a State and one of the prospective candidates for the American Presidency. It is reported that the Governor greeted his colleague with the homely phrase "How are you, old potato?", whereupon the prospective candidate responded heartily with a handshake and a cheerful smile, saying, "Stuart, my boy, this is from the heart", whilst the Convention Hall was shaken by roars of approval.

Now that is what I call real hundred 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 politicians of our great — and by the way much younger — sister republic, are exchanging 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, and rightly so, that their country has at least an equal claim to that name, but nevertheless every true Swiss thinks (God bless him!) that he is a fine specimen of a real democrat.

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

A few weeks ago the Federal Singing Competition was held at Geneva, and I have read with great interest the numerous speeches, but oh! most of them sounded so formal, so stereotyped. On this occasion all the cantonal delegations in their turn were formally received by the organising committee, and some of the privileged ones by the President of the Swiss Confederation.

Now if, for instance, the sturdy sons of the "Ur Kantone" had alighted from the train and shaken hands with our country's chief magistrate, exclaiming "How are you, old Fondue, we are right glad to see you!", this would have, undoubtedly, pleased our President immensely, as he would have taken the allusion to "Fondue" as a compliment to his native canton (Neuchâtel).

Then, again, there was recently opened the Swiss National Costume Festival at Sion, where high officials of the Confederation met, in order — apart from other matters — to have a good feed, and to tell each other in mutual admiration what clever fellows they were. Here, again, most formal speeches were delivered. Now if they had addressed each other on that auspicious occasion *à la Américaine*, as "Old Bärner Mutz" and "Old tomato", it would have greatly added to the "Gemütlichkeit".

There are innumerable festivities of one kind or another in our country, and when weekly perusing the Swiss papers, I often wonder whether they ever do anything but make speeches and have banquets. I noticed, for instance, that on the occasion of the 44th Basle Fair, fourteen speakers said the same thing fourteen times, and not one of these orators ever addressed the gathering as "Dear Basler Beppi", "Old onion", etc. Surely this would have also

shaken the "Kongresshalle" with roars of approval.

Some time ago I had the privilege of attending a complimentary dinner given to a very near relation of mine in Switzerland. There was a great array of "Herr Doktors", "Herr Direktors", 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 one of the various speakers referred to my relation as "Herr Direktor" in a most solemn manner, and all addressed each other as "Herr Doktor" or "Herr Direktor" as the case may be. I had the honour to be seated between two "Herr Doktors", and, 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 neighbours for help and assistance, but, lo and behold, my appeal met with no success; I was politely informed that one was a Doctor of Laws, and the other a Doctor of Philosophy! Two other doctors of one kind or another gave me the sound advice to retire and put my head "under the pump", which I did, and, returning to the banqueting table, all the better for the "spray", I philosophically reflected on the high intellectual attainments of my country which can produce at a comparatively small gathering such an array of "Herr Doktors" and "Her Direktors", but when later in the evening one of the guests addressed me as "Herr Redaktor" I nearly fainted again, and it took me some time to recover from the shock. Now if only he had addressed me as "Dear old bean" or even as "hundred per cent Horace", I should have shed tears of joy!

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 really simple and homely democracy, similar to the one initiated by our American friends.

ST.

GRABSCHRIFTEN

Hier liegt Martin Krug,
Der Kinder, Weib und Orgel schlug.
(Auf dem Grabe eines Schullehrers
und Organisten).

O hl. Wendelin, du grosser
Viehpatron, bitte bei Gott für uns.

Hier liegt begraben die ehrsame Jungfrau N.N.
Gestorben ist sie im siebzehnten Jahr
Just als sie zu brauchen war.

(Oberinntal)

Hier ruht der ehrsame Johann Missegger auf der
Hirschjagd durch einen unvorsichtigen Schuss
erschossen aus Aufrichtiger Freundschaft
von seinem Schwager Anton Steger.

(Auf einem Grabkreuz im Lavanttal.
Jede Interpunktion fehlt).

Aufi gstiegen,
Kerschen brockt (Kirschen geffückt)
Abi gefallen
Hin gwesen.

(Vor Amras)

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