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SWISS NATIONAL DAY REPORT

As in previous years, the Swiss colony of the Anglo-Continental School of English in Bournemouth, once again celebrated their National Day. When we Swiss are far away from home, the event is followed with more enthusiastic interest than it is in Switzerland. Inspired by this feeling of unity and loyalty to the fatherland, the young Swiss students offered their help in organising the festivities.

So, on the First of August, under the patronage of the School Directors, a pleasure steamer was chartered and willing hands decorated it with red and white bunting, lanterns, and Swiss flags. The many holiday makers, admiring the arrangements, asked innumerable questions, which were all answered proudly by the young people. By approximately 8 p.m. the decks of the boat were crowded with Swiss students, their fellow class-mates of all nationalities and English friends. The guests were all welcomed with true Swiss hospitality. Then, to the accompaniment of light music, the P.S. "Embassy" drew slowly away from the pier towards the open sea and her destination south-west of Bournemouth. Two towering white rocks marking the end of the headland signalled our direction in the calm waters near Swanage. There the wheels of our paddle steamer came to a halt and the happy activity was interrupted by a short ceremony commemorating Swiss National Day.

Mr. K. Locher, a student, gave a short welcome in English, German, French and Italian, and before the reading of the "Bundesbrief" everyone happily joined the A.C.S.E. School Choir in singing songs in the three languages of Switzerland, including the well-known "Sempacherlied". Mr. G. Scheller, Welfare Manager of the A.C.S.E., inspired us with moving words to recollect the meaning of our National Day, and then went on to thank England for welcoming us, reminding everyone present of their duties towards their homeland. The singing of the National Anthem concluded this unforgettable ceremony on the open sea.

Finally, there was dancing on all decks to a band and two accordionists. In the saloons of the ship, which were transformed for the evening into Swiss Wirtschaffen such as the "Matterhornbar", "Tellenstübli", etc., everyone drank the Swiss wines, and tasted the "Servelats" which had been specially made for us by a Swiss butcher in London.

Only too quickly the anchor had to be raised and the ship steamed towards its birth in Poole Harbour, which, after Sydney, is the second largest natural harbour in the world. On the return trip we admired the sparkling illuminations along the sea coast, which reminded us nostalgically of the flickering fires on the mountain tops in Switzerland. About midnight a happy satisfied crowd, all enriched by an unforgettable experience, slowly and reluctantly left the ship.

Who knows how many pangs of longing for our dearly-loved homeland had been awakened by the events of this evening?

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