

# Swiss of the north on the move...

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## SWISS OF THE NORTH ON THE MOVE. . .

As so often happens it was thanks to the initiative of the few and the drive and sheer hard work done by some of the members of the Committee of the Yorkshire Swiss Club, that a most interesting and entertaining outing was arranged to Liverpool, which took place on Saturday, 27th September. Although, due to its special character and scope, the number of participants had to be limited, we were able to accept a sizable contingent from Manchester and also several members of the Liverpool Swiss Club, led by their President, Monsieur Erb. This Inter-club effort, so much advocated by the writer, points to a desirable development to be taken seriously into account for similar events in the future.

Liverpool was indeed a lucky choice, and if only as tourists and visitors we were able to study some aspects of one of the great cities of these islands. The city today has well over 700,000 inhabitants, and is of great importance to the economical and cultural life of the country, and it has worldwide connections. As far back as the eighth century, then a settlement of Norsemen, it became a fief of Roger de Poietou, one of the followers of the Conqueror. It knew the many vicissitudes of the Middle Ages. Trade started to develop in a slow way and only after the year 1700 did shipping begin to reach ever increasing proportions, even specialising in the slave

trade at one time and in 1800 carrying many as 50,000 slaves a year. With the great industrial development taking place and the great political expansion of Great Britain, and the Empire, the port grew in size and scope. Today, in spite of many setbacks, war and post-war difficulties, it has become the second largest seaport in the Royaume. Fortunately for the fast growing population its industry has become greatly diversified, trade and commerce keeping in line, and Banking, Insurance and other financial establishments also increasing in importance. Religious and cultural life had not been neglected, and Liverpool with its two Cathedrals, its University, and many specialised places of education, and its concert halls, has acquired a most honourable place amongst its sister-cities.

It was towards mid-day that the members and their friends, who had travelled by car, bus or train, from the three Northern Swiss Clubs started to arrive in front of the Royal Liver Building and were most relieved to meet Monsieur Erb, who proved to be a willing and able guide, and who led us through the meander of traffic, also keeping a watch on the time—very important for this type of outing, and to whom go our thanks for a perfect day.

By ferry we crossed the Mersey River to reach Birkenhead, and for many of us it was our first opportunity to admire the unique view of Liverpool's waterfront, with the towering buildings of the Royal Liver Building, the Cunard

centre, the Dock Board offices, and not far away the imposing sight of the two Cathedrals — Anglican and Roman Catholic. I have been told that a Catholic architect made the plans of the Anglican Cathedral, and a Protestant architect worked on the Catholic Cathedral. What a tribute to human understanding and tolerance.

Our first visit should have been to the *Empress of England* or the *Empress of Canada*, both from the Canadian Pacific Line. The first vessel was in full sight near the pierhead, amongst several other liners, but unfortunately this company had decided to discontinue port visits to their ships. We therefore switched our attention to the Merchant Fleet, and we were most kindly helped by the Ocean Fleets Limited, whose cargo vessels take the produce of England to all corners of the world and are one of the true artificers of the city's prosperity. We were invited to visit the *Helenus*, a 10,000 ton merchantman serving the Far East, via Panama, Japan, South Korea and Hongkong, a journey of over three weeks. This ship was already full laden and due to start within 48 hours on its outward voyage. Ladies and gentlemen, old and young—ages varying between eight years and 80, climbed briskly and bravely a steep and somewhat dangling stair on the towering side of the ship, and after this exhibition of skill we were kindly received by a young officer, who reminded us in many ways of some likeable character from the

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Moby-Dick story. We were allowed to visit the bridge and the navigation room with its complex equipment—electronic apparatus, functional computers, records, charts, shipping documents, flags, etc., etc. We had a look at the spacious and comfortable accommodation accorded to officers and crew. At one time the ship carried 20 first-class passengers, but this ceased a few years ago. We were particularly impressed and overawed by the immense size and complexity of the machine and propulsion section, comparable to a multi-storey house. For the profane it seemed an indescribable labyrinth of pulsating machinery, conducts, ladders, lights, in a very warm atmosphere where you could detect the odour of diesel oil, and steam, leaving us with the lively impression of great and limitless power.

For one of the participants who has had an almost life long connection with this type of machinery and who worked for the important Swiss manufacturers of ship engines—"Sulzer", this visit must have been a sheer delight, and a surprise to the ship's officer to speak to a Swiss so familiar with all the intricacies of such a plant. After having a short look at the mixed cargo—varying from poisonous liquid chemicals to cars, all well secured, the time had arrived to take leave of the friendly members of the crew. Some felt regret, but most of our ladies felt quite relieved, quite understandably.

Off again, across the Mersey River, blessed by a warm autumn sun and caressing winds. It did not take us long to reach the Roman Catholic Cathedral, and we were immediately struck by the lovely surroundings, a fitting framework for this most impressive building of concrete, stone and glass, and by its very modern conception, though perhaps not to everybody's liking. The inside was enhanced by the unforgettable sight of its luminous glasses, going from the deepest blues and reds at the sides, to the blaze of gold above us. The arrangement of the seats around a central altar was another interesting

feature, sober in line, but rich and tastefully finished. It was all so very different from what we had seen in earlier years. For many of us it was a pleasant surprise to find out that in the basement there was a first-class tearoom and cafeteria, providing soft drinks, cakes and snacks, and for the people coming by car there was ample parking space and garage. We gained a fair idea of how things might look long after we have gone.

Not far away is the imposing building of the Anglican Cathedral, which is very different in style and execution, not yet fully completed but open to worship. The building is of local hand-cut stone, very classical and sober, of a pure—I may almost say perfect—new Gothic. The inside, gracefully finished, subdued in tone, with lovely high windows of old design, reminded us of the works of old such as the Notre-Dame in Paris, or Chartres Cathedral, inviting us to rest, prayer or meditation.

Our time was now running short, and we had to make our way back to the city centre. We were warmly welcomed by the staff of the excellent Restaurant of Reece's, which we could sincerely recommend to any future visitor to this great and busy city. We all enjoyed our dinner very much. It was then time for us to take leave of each other and start our journey home. Even travelling through the outskirts of the city we were struck by the many new residential developments, multi-storey flats, and parks—a testimonial to the growth of the population, good living standard and faith in the future of their city.

In concluding, may I say that there was no doubt at all in our minds that such combined outings and the idea behind it, and the organisation and execution of it appealed to us all, and it should be a stimulus and pleasure for any active and club-minded Committee to repeat such efforts in the future. With that may I say: "Au revoir cher compatriotes."

E. Berner

## ENGLISH APPRECIATIONS ON THE SWISS

*Pedestrian excursions are by no means uncommon in Switzerland, and it is most extraordinary that they appear sometimes to be undertaken by persons to whom economy need not be an object.*

MURRAY FORBES

*My hat shall ever be ready to be thrown up, and my glove ever ready to be thrown down for Switzerland.*

CHARLES DICKENS

*Switzerland is a curst selfish, swinish country of brutes, placed in the most romantic region of the world. I never could bear the inhabitants.*

LORD BYRON

*He who would travel pleasantly and profitably in Switzerland must leave at home all prejudice of rank and station, all pride, and demands of vanity, and take with him only the man.*

J. G. EBEL

*The Lord loves Switzerland, and will save many who might not be suitable for the congregation.*

JAMES HUTTON

*Do you ask my opinion of Switzerland? . . . . In the investigation of the assertion that the Swiss mountains are beautiful: with a certain amount of clouds, a sunset, a cheerful companion, a contented stomach, I think it perfectly true; but with too many clouds, or none at all, with a glaring noonday sun, alone, or tearing up a hill after dinner, I think it perfectly false.*

DEAN STANLEY

*Very much of the charm of Switzerland belongs to simple things—to greetings from the herdsmen, the Guten Morgen, and Guten Abend, that are invariably given and taken upon mountain paths; to the tame creatures with their large dark eyes, who raise their heads one moment from the pasture while you pass; and to the plants that grow beneath your feet.*

JOHN ADDINGTON SYMONDS

*Helvetia! Land of romance!  
Forget thee? never—Fare-thee-well!*

JOHN MURRAY

*You poor Yankees are to be pitied for many things, but for nothing so much as your distance from Switzerland.*

LESLIE STEPHEN

*Everybody is seldom in the right; but everybody is in the right in saying, the Swiss are good people. . . . You are not mistaken, Sir, in your opinion about the beauties of Switzerland.*

MARTIN SHERLOCK

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