

A Swiss evening at the Myllet

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"This, the First of August 1939, is the six hundred and forty-eighth return of the day which figures in history as the birthday of the Swiss Confederation.

The original parchment of the "Bundesbrief" says that it was "at the beginning of the month of August 1291" that the three communities round the Lake of the Waldstätten signed and sealed the Pact of eternal alliance. Historical research, however, bears out the belief that it is the first day of the month that must be attributed to that event, the precise date being given as seventeen days after the death of the Emperor Rudolf, Head of the House of Habsburg. And so it comes about that each year the First of August is a day of celebration, not only in Switzerland but all over the world. For I think that there is hardly a country on the globe where the memory of Switzerland's birth is not recalled by a rally of her sons, some hundreds or thousands of miles away from our mountains, where the First of August fires are burning to-night.

And here in London we Swiss do likewise.

During the past ten years, circumstances quite unrelated to our own feelings and inclinations obliged the London Celebration, as a gathering of our Colony, to be abandoned, and we had to leave it to the initiative of the various Swiss Societies and Clubs to arrange for some national festival amongst their own circles.

But this year, when — owing to the anxieties and perils of our time — everyone of us longs to show his readiness to do his duty towards his country, it would indeed have been unpardonable to allow this day to pass without a common reunion and a common manifestation — here in London of all places, where we pride ourselves on being one of the largest and most important Swiss communities outside our own frontiers.

We are not here to-night simply because we feel it our duty, towards ourselves and our country, to show our loyalty as Swiss citizens; we are here because, in disquieting times like these, we feel the need to spend a few hours "at home" in the comforting and encouraging company of our own people.

So let me put in a word of thanks here, in your name as well as in my own, to the Chairman, the Secretary and the Members of the Celebrations Committee, who have for weeks spared neither time nor trouble to revive the official First of August Celebrations in our Colony and who have so admirably succeeded in ensuring us all a really happy evening.

A happy evening? Perhaps there are some of you who feel inclined to retort: "You say yourself that we live in anxious times, full of menace and danger. How can we enjoy ourselves and be merry when anxiety and the threat of peril surrounds us?"

And yet I repeat: "A happy evening." For happiness is not made up of merry-making and idle pleasure. Happiness can be found in good and bad times alike. There was a philosopher who said to the Athenians: "Happy is he who does his duty, and knows that he has done it well."

No matter what anxieties, dangers and worry these times may hold, we shall be happy to-night and to-morrow and in the days to come if we do our duty towards our Country. The First of August is the day when every Swiss is expected to remember his duty, and if any of them should ask me to tell him what I consider it to be, I would say: "To do the best you can, according to your ability and conscience, to be worthy of those men who, six and a half centuries ago, laid down the foundations for the Country to which you have the good fortune to belong."

And I would ask him if he had ever read, from beginning to end, that first "Bundesbrief," which I spoke, about a few minutes ago.

To do this, he would not need to be a Latin scholar. There are translations into all four of our national languages.

There on one single page, he can find — in the clearest and simplest terms, set down in the form of a Pact, the fundamental laws and rules to be respected and obeyed not only by the confederate communities but by everyone of their citizens individually.

It says therein, that the folk who live round the Lake are a People who mean to live in liberty, governed by their own authority and not by foreign masters; that they will help each other, with their lives and property, to defend anyone of them who may be attacked by a foreign foe.

And it says that differences and disputes amongst themselves should be settled peacefully according to the terms of their Pact, and that anyone breaking the Pact should make reparation and, if need be, be brought to justice and obliged to keep the peace and work loyally with his compatriots, as had been solemnly sworn.

The men who put their seals to that parchment knew that liberty could only be founded on

justice and that those who wished to be free must live upright lives and abide by the law.

And so, after swearing fidelity to each other, after promising to help to maintain their freedom, they proceeded to set down the rules and laws for the Swiss people to follow.

If you, the Swiss citizen of to-day, six hundred and fifty years after these words were written, do as those first confederates swore to do, then you may be certain that you are not failing in your duty towards your country.

And the men of the three Waldstätten swore their alliance for all eternity.

Six or seven centuries are only an infinitely small part of eternity, it is true. Yet that alliance, founded on freedom, justice, honesty and faith, has lasted longer than any alliance ever concluded between men in the history of the world.

Our Confederation exists to-day after having grown in the course of time to its present natural and unalterable frontiers. Switzerland has withstood the fury of all the storms which have ravaged Europe again and again. She has not only existed, she has lived, she has played a great and valuable part in the community of nations ever since she struggled for and won her freedom.

We have been entrusted by our forebears with the care of the most precious heritage that man could wish for. And we shall hand this heritage on to our descendants as we received it, inviolate, united and strong, come what may."

The Minister's words made a deep impression.

The singing of the National Anthem accompanied by the Orchestra concluded the official part of the Programme.

Despite the enormous crowd, dancing started fairly punctually to the alternative tunes of the "Saracenes Dance Band" and the "Ländlerkapelle" of the Swiss Accordion Club.

Some fifty prizes for a raffle had been presented by a number of generous donors. Their distribution took place during an interval, Mme. C. Chapuis, "en costume de Montreux," picking the lucky numbers and M. Binggely, Hon. Sec. of the Committee, making the announcements.

The catering arrangements were in the experienced hands of Mr. and Mrs. Alfr. Schmid to whom we say "thank you" for providing satisfaction to the "Inner man" of young and old alike.

A number of Swiss girls in National Costume sold programmes and the official First of August Badges, whilst at a stall near the entrance, in charge of Mrs. W. Meier "s'Baselbieterli," who was aided by two other charming ladies, unique woodcarvings from Meiringen, beautiful picture postcards and souvenirs specially produced for the National Exhibition in Zurich, and like all other articles specially brought to London for the occasion, could be purchased at reasonable prices.

We were also delighted to admire the many charming ladies who attended in their lovely Swiss Costumes and who were not afraid of the crush, or of the rain.

The overwhelming interest and the attendance have proved well enough that there is room in London for the celebration of our National Day, and be it said in this place how thankful we are that the organisers undertook the venture, and succeeded so admirably. Let us, therefore, give them our full encouragement for future arrangements.

M.S.

A SWISS EVENING AT THE MYLLET.

Mr. Widmer, the proprietor of The Myllet Roadhouse, celebrated the first of August by giving a special gala dinner and dance last Thursday evening. The evening was a great success.

The roadhouse is situated in Western Avenue, Hanger Hill, Harrow. It is beautifully designed and tastefully decorated with large spacious bars and a comfortable restaurant.

During the course of an excellent dinner (the minestrone was the best I have tasted) the regular dance band was replaced by The Swiss Accordion Orchestra who gave us a number of real Swiss waltzes to the great delight of all present. Three graces in costume sang some charming Swiss songs and the English dance band gave us the Lambeth Walk as danced by six different nationalities.

Later, there were novelty competitions, and the evening ended with a delicious Swiss onion soup at midnight.

Mr. Widmer's cook comes from Thurgau and his kitchen certainly lives up to the Swiss tradition.

The company present enjoyed themselves immensely and the evening was a thorough success.

The Myllet is well worth a visit.

S.E.

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INFORMATION Swiss Railways and State Travel Bureau, 11-B Lower Regent Street, London, S.W.1. (Whitshall 9251), Railway Continental Enquiry Offices, and Travel Agents.



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Dimanche 13 août 1939.

11h. M. le Pasteur Emery.

MARIAGE.

Le 5 août 1939 : Georgette Henriette Valtriny de Paris, et F. H. Rohr de Lenzburg (Argovie).

BAPTEME.

Le 5 août 1939 : Graham, Richard Hewitt, fils de Harold et de Annette née Rohr.

Les cultes du soir sont supprimés pendant le mois d'août.

Pour tout ce qui concerne le ministère pastoral, prière de s'adresser jusqu'à nouvel avis à M. le pasteur U. Emery, Foyer Suisse, 15 Bedford Way, W.C.1 (Phone MUSeum 3100).

SCHWEIZERKIRCHE

(Deutschsprachige Gemeinde).

St. Anne's Church, 9, Gresham Street, E.C.2.
(Near General Post Office, St. Paul's and Aldersgate Street Tube Stations (Central London and Metropolitan).

Sonntag, den 13. August:

11 Uhr vormittags: Gottesdienst, Predigt von Pfr. E. Bommeli über 12, 13-17: Der Mensch und der Staat. Lieder: 162, 307 und 84.

Musikalische Einlage während des Gottesdienstes: Violine und Orgel, Allegro und Largo v. Vivaldi, vorgetragen von Herrn Müller und Hirschi.

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