

Farewell party given by the Swiss colony of Manchester

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FAREWELL PARTY

GIVEN BY THE
 SWISS COLONY OF MANCHESTER
 TO
 MR. & MRS. HIRS.



Friendship is a precious Treasure. No amount of festive decor can remove the sting of sadness from a farewell party given to dear friends. We felt this very keenly at the Swiss Club Manchester on Saturday, August 28th, when the Colony gathered in great strength at the Midland Hotel to take leave from Mr. and Mrs. Hirs on the eve of their departure from among us. Glad as we are, for their sakes, of Mr. Hirs' well-earned promotion to a higher post, we begrudge New York's gain at our cost. Mr. Hirs had become an institution at the head of our Consulate and some of us were hoping that the Crown of his career would be bestowed on him in our midst and that we might keep him, clothed with all the dignity of the titular shepherd of our scattered flock.

Mr. Hirs came from the East in the morning of his life, spent the heat of his days in our cool moist atmosphere and as evening approaches he resumes his course, carrying the wealth of his experience to enlighten the mysteries of the West. May the sun ever shine on his career and reflect the benign light of friendship on all his new associations.

Mr. Hirs came from Bombay fourteen years ago as Secretary to the Consulate then in charge of our lamented Consul Dr. Schedler. Very soon he won his Chief's complete confidence and was left in charge of all but the formal side of a Consul's office. His promotion to the rank of Vice-Consul was thus the sanction of the position he had made for himself and no urgency was felt at Dr. Schedler's death to fill the vacancy by appointing another Honorary Consul. When, at the outbreak of war, Switzerland was charged with the affairs of nearly all the belligerent world, a heavy additional burden was placed on his shoulders and his services were coveted by the Special Division as much as by the Minister himself. Onerous as were his duties and much as he was absent from Manchester, he missed no opportunity to come to the Club and to the Colony's gatherings. Their Bernese humour and forthrightness endeared Mr. and Mrs. Hirs to all the Swiss and to many British friends. No wonder then, that the Colony came from near and far to shake hands with them and bid them Godspeed. Characteristically the Swiss are not effusive in praise of their dignitaries whilst in office, but Mr. and Mrs. Hirs are left in no doubt of the high esteem in which they are held and that they will not soon be forgotten in Manchester. We said not only "Adieu" but also "Au revoir" and we sincerely wish both. Some of our compatriots have special reasons of gratitude for the helping hand extended to them on more than compatriotic claims, notably in the distressed days of the Manchester "blitzes," when Mrs. Hirs turned her home into a

hostelry, at the cost of her own health and proved the worth of true friendship. May they be rewarded by good fortune through great happiness in their new environment.

We had the great pleasure of receiving Mr. Consul Montag and representatives from the Swiss Clubs of Liverpool and Bradford. Our distant compatriots in Scotland, who also belong to this Consular District, sent messages by telegrams and letters through Mr. Hofstetter, Consular Agent, and the Swiss Clubs and Communities of Balloch, Dumfermline and Glasgow.

Speeches were of course on the order of the day; the Swiss Club's veteran President, Mr. E. Kuebler, Mr. Consul Montag from Liverpool as Consular Colleague, Mr. Steiner in the name of the Relief Society, Mr. Cattin on behalf of the Consulate's staff, and Mr. Hofer as President of our neighbourly Swiss Club, Bradford, all had their turn and finally Mr. Pernet, our new Vice-Consul wondered how ever he would manage to fill the gap left by his predecessor's removal. Be he of good cheer for he has made a good first impression and though the sun is often hidden in the low Manchester sky, the warmth of the welcome given to him and Mrs. Pernet will be sustained through the new friendships they will make in Manchester. No stenographer was engaged to take down all these speeches, but you will no doubt like to read the fine one delivered by Mr. Hirs in reply. Here it is and his masterly delivery has set some fears at rest that our shy friend might find it hard to rise to the oratorical heights expected by the numerous New York Swiss Societies from the Consul General's "Public Relations Officer":

Mr. President, Madame Schedler, Consul Montag, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is with deep emotion that I rise to thank Mr. Kuebler, Consul Montag, Mr. Hofer and Mr. Cattin on behalf of my family and myself, for the very kind words spoken in the name of the Swiss Colony, particularly the members of the Swiss Club Manchester and the staff of the Consulate. I am deeply touched by this expression of friendship and appreciation of services which I have been able to render to some of you. I never realised before how much you all meant to me and I will keep in remembrance the many letters I received from my compatriots in the Manchester Consular District when they knew I had to leave you. I am greatly honoured by the presence of two dear old friends, Consul Montag and Monsieur Faivre of the Swiss Consulate in Liverpool and I would like to take this opportunity of thanking both for the close collaboration during the many years we have been together.

During my career in the Consular Service I had a few surprises. It was, for instance, a big surprise when, many years ago, I was informed of my transfer to Liverpool and eventually found myself in — Bombay! In the course of time one gets used to this sort of thing but you may believe me that all the former surprises were nothing compared with the one I experienced a few weeks ago, when I was suddenly called to London and informed by our Minister, Monsieur Thurnheer, of my transfer to the Swiss Consulate General in New York. This came as a shock, more so as I never asked for a transfer and quite naturally my first reaction was "No." I shall never forget that lovely June Sunday in London and the anguish I felt at the thought of leaving Manchester and all our dear friends. During the long journey back, I had plenty of time to think. We Swiss are born grumblers and this country and its weather are favourite subjects of criticism. But believe me on that Monday the country looked so fresh, green and beautiful as never before and the lovely scenery gliding along the window of the carriage struck me like a personal appeal not to leave all this. However, if our authorities in Berne think that I can render better services in the New World it is not for me to refuse.

Looking back on the fourteen happy years spent in Manchester, we — and I think particularly I — have reason to be thankful for many things. Coming from the East it was not so simple to adapt oneself to the new conditions. Very fortunately this was made quite easy by the fact that I had the good luck of meeting here, in the person of the late Consul Schedler, a very broadminded and understanding chief. After a short time he left me a free hand in the affairs of the Consulate. Needless to say our relations were of the happiest and his death, just over two years ago, came as a great personal loss. I shall always remember Dr. Schedler as an outstanding chief and a very dear friend.

During all the years I have been here I have been most fortunate in having with me colleagues whose efficient work has been a very great help. Without their willing collaboration it would have been impossible to carry on, particularly since the outbreak of the war and the much increased responsibilities. I shall miss my colleagues and I take this opportunity of thanking Mr. Cattin, Mr. Spargnapani and Miss Rietmann for the faithful and cheerful services rendered under difficult conditions. I am very grateful that I was allowed to stay amongst you for such a long time. This gave our son the chance of growing up in a free and democratic country, with liberal institutions so like Switzerland. This was a great blessing and I feel sure that in years to come he will be glad he has had this chance. Last but not least we are thankful for the friendship, tolerance and the understanding which we found amongst the members of the Colony, not only in Manchester, but also in the outlying parts of the consular district. This was a great help and made things much easier, I would like to thank our President, Mr. Kuebler, our Secretary, Mr. Tenger, and the other members of the Committee for their help and co-operation. I can say that we worked hand in hand as good friends should do and I am very pleased to think that it will be the result of this happy collaboration if our members

shortly have the opportunity of seeing two of the latest Swiss Films. All I have said of the Swiss Club applies in like measure of the Swiss Relief Society. I shall miss the friendly calls at the Consulate of Mr. Steiner and Mr. Bebié. I shall often remember the jolly gatherings of the Swiss Club and we shall certainly think of the very happy hours spent in the Swiss Tennis Club — the hard fought "battles" on the court and the not less hotly contested — and noisier — "fights" around a table with or against such stalwarts as "Amigo" Muller, "Noldi" Guggisberg, "Papa" Steiner, Dr. Brunner and others.

For all this I thank you with all my heart.

I know that I can safely leave the Consulate and the Colony in the care of my successor, Monsieur Pernet, whom I congratulate on his promotion to the rank of Vice-Consul. Monsieur Pernet has a long experience in the foreign service of our dear homeland and whatever I did for you, he can do just as well. I feel sure that he and Madame Pernet can count on your goodwill and support and that you will make their task as easy and as pleasant as you made ours.

It is with a sad heart that I say "Farewell." In doing so I wish you all Good Luck, Good Health, Happiness and Prosperity.

It would be an unpardonable omission not to mention the excellent arrangements made for the party by the Midland Hotel under the solicitous care of the Manager, our compatriot and newly acquired fellow-member, Mr. E. R. Cottet.

At an Extraordinary General Meeting of the Swiss Club which preceded the Colony's gathering, we had the signal pleasure of adopting eight new members and the honour of electing Mr. Hirs an Honorary Member with unanimous applause.

r. r.

SWISS FILM SHOW AT MANCHESTER.

11th September.

Because we have sometimes grumbled when a special Swiss treat was withheld from us because we are in the Provinces and perhaps of small account beside the powerful metropolitan Colony, we owe it to ourselves now to express our appreciation of the privilege which we have just enjoyed, of seeing two of the latest Swiss films. So we want in the first place to say "Thank you very much" to the Swiss Legation, especially to Minister Dr. Thurnheer himself, for the personal care he took to remember us and to send us these two splendid pictures, one of them even before it was seen in London. Next we want to congratulate those in the homeland who had the happy thought to conceive these films for the express purpose of the Swiss living abroad. They could surely not have been better inspired than to present the real everyday life of the people who are the true heirs and preservers of the spirit which created our nation and sustained it through its long and varied history, withstanding even the sophistication of this modern age. Both "*Terre des Hommes Libres*" and "*Ceux d'en Haut*" are impregnated by that spirit and they show us our country and people in the light which makes them so dear to us and us so proud of coming from their stock.