

# 66th fête suisse

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# 66th FÊTE SUISSE.

*One flag, one land, one hand  
One Nation evermore.*—

Those amongst the readers of the *Swiss Observer* who read my last report about the Swiss Sports at Herne Hill, must have come to the conclusion that I have become a confirmed pessimist. The lack of enthusiasm which was so prevalent then cast a gloom over my "heavy" countenance, and thus affected my style of writing rather more than was perhaps necessary. —

But all is forgotten now, I am again as happy as a sand boy, after having attended the 66th "Fête Suisse" which took place on Thursday, 27th of June at the Central Hall, Westminster.

First of all there was a record attendance, well over a thousand people being present, according to the sale of tickets; thus proving that the "Fête Suisse" is still as popular as ever, and that the spirit of patriotic unity still prevails.

The glorious sunshine which gladdened our hearts on that auspicious day, reflected itself on the faces of those who entered the spacious vestibule at the Central Hall.

The ticket control was in the hands of a few very good-looking gentlemen who were ornamented with large "rosettes" in the National colours, which reminded me of some of the Festivals in Switzerland where "rosettes" and armlets, are very much in prominence. In fact, a Swiss Festival without such embellishments is quite unthinkable, and I was glad to see that these gentlemen nobly carry on the age-long tradition; in fact it made me feel that I was indeed attending a "Fest." — After having my ticket torn into bits, — undoubtedly because it was a complimentary one, — by one of my friends of the "Fäsch Kommittee," I ascended the imposing stair-case which leads to the "Foyer," where already numbers were present engaged in animated conversation.

Young and pretty maidens, some in the becoming national dresses sold little silk flags, or programmes and postcards, which were artistically designed by our countryman Pierre Savoie. No one could resist the charming pleadings of these sweet ladies, who so unselfishly had put themselves at the disposal of the committee, I should have liked to have purchased all the 26 escutcheons of Switzerland, regardless of the cost, for the sake of the smiles, and the "merci beaucoup" and the "danke schön," but I am afraid I would have looked too much of a "walking advertisement," and what would have some of my friends with the "rosettes" thought of me?

A pleasant surprise was indeed the sight of a large basket of "Alpenrosen" which, I understand, were gathered by little school children from the heights round about Meiringen and arrived by aeroplane the very same morning. I gathered that this splendid idea originated from the "Secrétariat des Suisses à l'Étranger" in Berne, and the fact that almost everybody wore that little well-known flower, was a striking proof how much this touching thought was appreciated. Those of our little compatriots far across the sea deserve our heartiest thanks for their labour of love; they have conveyed to us their greetings with flowers and have thus given us once again proof, that, though far away from home, we are not yet forgotten. — The letters from the master and the pupils were read out by Mr. A. F. Suter, they were delightful. (I just hear that a faithful friend in Diablerets has sent some too).

The Concert Hall was again beautifully decorated, the flowers were simply lovely and most artistically arranged. Mr. Scheuermeier has almost surpassed himself, and he is to be congratulated on his display. To complete the picture, a great number of Swiss flags intermingled with the various cantonal flags and the Union Jack were suspended from the surrounding galleries. Messrs. Godfrey (E. Hungerbühler) too must be warmly thanked, these two gentlemen added greatly in creating the happy "Stimmung" which prevailed throughout the evening.

And now to the programme a tinkle with one, or was it two, cow bells, invited everybody to take their seats.

Mr. E. A. Seymour played Hollins "Concert" Overture with much vivacity, and the mighty sounds of the organ filled this vast hall to an almost awe-inspiring degree.

This opening number was followed by the singing of the audience of "O mein Heimatland," which was sung with great feeling; followed by a short prayer by the Pasteur of the "Eglise Suisse."

M. Hoffmann-de Visme, carrying, the by now proverbial cow bell, acted as announcer, and in this capacity he invited Monsieur C. R. Paravicini, Swiss Minister to officially open the

66th Fête Suisse. The Minister received a hearty ovation when he appeared on the platform; he expressed his great pleasure at being once more able to be present at this patriotic gathering, and his remark, that he has not missed one "Fête Suisse" since 1920 was greeted with much applause. The Minister dwelt shortly with the truly Swiss atmosphere which was such a feature of this gathering, he referred to the difficult times through which our country is passing just now, saying that true patriotism was needed now more than ever. "It is not enough," he continued, to sing "Ich bin ein Schweizerknabe," (I am a Swiss boy), but it is essential that we act as such, and that patriotism was not only a pleasurable pastime, but invoked often heavy sacrifices. This short address of the head of our Colony made a great impression on the listeners.

M. le Pasteur Hoffmann-de Visme, in a few words outlined the object of the "Fête Suisse," which came into being long before *Swissair* aeroplanes took us to our homeland in less than 3 hours, or before we could tune in to Beromünster or Sottens; it is and has always been a spontaneous demonstration of national solidarity. He said that Switzerland has for ever been a bulwark for World Peace, and urged the company to work unceasingly for that peace without which humanity cannot prosper. The applause which greeted this oration had hardly died down, when a great number of ladies and gentlemen, who were billed on the programme as "Chœur mixte" appeared, and under the conductorship of Pfarrer Hahn sang two songs, "Au bord du Léman" and "Auf den Bergen voller Lust," the tremendous applause which followed was proof enough how much their singing was appreciated.

It was then announced that M. Wladimir Czernikow from Geneva, who had already been previously introduced by the Minister, would give a piano solo, and this great artiste played in a masterful way "Selections" from Chopin. His fine nuancing and lovely rendering of one of the greatest composer's works earned him an almost vociferous acknowledgement, and he consented graciously to an *encore*, which was greatly appreciated and went to prove that M. Czernikow is indeed a fine artiste.

A Swiss concert without some yodelling is simply unthinkable, and Mr. v. Bergen, who is the champion yodeller of the Colony gladdened everybody's heart by the rendering of such well-known songs as the "Le Ranz de Vache," "Hän am Ort es Bluemli gsch," "Tanzliedli" and "Egethalerlied."

Mr. v. Bergen is not only a good yodeller but also a fine singer, and he richly deserved the applause with which he was greeted after each number.

The patriotic note which was struck by these homely tunes was intensified by the masterful playing of M. A. L. Gandon on his fine accordion. Neverending cheering caused him again and again to play from his inexhaustible repertoire. His accompaniment later on to some of Mr. von Bergen's songs was splendid.

The first part of the programme was concluded with that lovely song "Noch ruhn im weichen Morgengraue" by Attenhofer, rendered by the Swiss Choral Society, (conducted by M. E. A. Seymour, F.R.C.O.). This choir is not a large one, but what they lack in numbers, they make up in the quality of their singing; the rendering in the second half of the programme, of "Wer hat dich du schöner Wald" created a deep impression on the hearers and deserved the acknowledgement is received. —

Now the cow-bell sounded again, and it was announced that an interval of 1 hour would take place, so as to enable everybody to look after their more material wants. One charming English Lady was rather perturbed about the fact that Swiss cows wear bells, seeing that their English sisters are not thus adorned; she innocently enquired whether these "gadgets" were meant as a signal to start or to stop feeding, I suppose on the "dinner goy" principal. It has never struck me that way, unless Swiss cows are to be credited with a greater intelligence than others. On my next visit to my country, I shall certainly interview the cow fraternity, and if the Lady will supply me with her address, I will enlighten her as to the result of my enquiries. —

The "Foyer" contained a large number of tables on which such delicacies as strawberries and cream, pastries, ices, sandwiches, etc., could be found, there was also a coffee bar and a lemonade counter.

One of the chief attractions, however, proved to be the improvised kitchen, where delicious Wienerli's were served, which our compatriot Mr. Bartholdi, whom in future I am going to call the "Wienerli King," had supplied. No knives nor forks were given, perhaps my good friend Mr.

A. Schmid, from the Glendower Hotel, who was in charge of the catering arrangements does not trust his brethren from his home canton, but the small piece of paper did the trick just as well, and nobody was thus tempted to keep it as a souvenir. Mr. Schmid was ably seconded by his charming wife, and a large number of helpers who smilingly attended to everybody's wants without getting ruffled. It was no mean achievement to cater for over a thousand hungry mouths in the short span of an hour, and Mr. and Mrs. Schmid deserve the thanks of everyone for their efficient handling of not too easy a problem.

Towards the end of the interval the "Swiss Institute Orchestral Society" appeared on the platform, and for nearly half an hour they played a large number of Swiss Folk songs, and as the Americans would say they did it "right well." At the invitation of the conductor, Mr. E. Dick, the audience joined up in singing, and it was a real pleasure to watch young and old singing with great gusto those familiar tunes, which many of us, — alas many years ago — used to hear in that little land which we call home. On this occasion I used the English translation of some of the songs which my friend "Gallus" so cleverly executed, and I found them very adequate indeed.

It is surprising how these simple little tunes impress one, I could hardly control myself from turning a somersault (some achievement!) when they played the "Bärner Marsch" and from my corner I could see the happy smile on the conductor's face, who, like myself, hails from the "Mutzenstadt," we many a time sang it in our younger days together at the "Aare Strand."

After the conclusion of this community number, I thought the roof of the Hall would fall down, so great was the applause, and the conductor had to bow so many times, that I should not be surprised to hear, that he is laid up with an attack of lumbago.

But that this fine orchestra, does not only excell in light music was proved by the "Egmont" Overture by L. v. Beethoven, not an easy work to be tackled by an amateur orchestra. I have heard them play this piece before, but they have never played it better than on Thursday evening, and the progress the orchestra has made is remarkable. They proved it again in Leuchner's "Cristaux de Glace." The Colony has every reason to be proud at possessing such an orchestra and Mr. Dick, its hard-working conductor, deserves the gratitude of all those who have had on so many occasions the pleasure to listen to them. If any institution in the Colony deserves support, surely the "Swiss Institute Orchestral Society" does!!

As good things never come singly, the next number on the programme brought another pleasant surprise.

Miss Eva Cattaneo, our gifted compatriote from the sunny South, sang the aria "Un bel di vedremo" from Puccini's "Madame Butterfly," this composer's music admirably suits Miss Cattaneo's voice, and she literally "brought the house down," the second item "La Danza" from Rossini was equally well sung, and proved her perfect voice control. I always have had a sneaking regard for this singer with a truly golden voice, and when she gave, as an *encore* a popular song from the film, "One night of love," I felt like leaping on the platform to thank her with an accolade. (No number of the S.O. need to be sent to my private address, as my wife has read the MSS). She was, however, presented with a lovely bouquet of flowers which, I am sure she appreciated much more than she would have done my enthusiasm. Here again we are very lucky to call her one of us.

The programme finished with an organ recital "Ein feste Burg" played by Mr. Seymour, F.R.C.O. in his masterful way, and the singing of our National Anthem.

And thus the 66th "Fête Suisse" came to an end amidst great enthusiasm; it was, I am sure everybody will agree with me, a most enjoyable evening, and the thanks of all those who were privileged to be present should go to the splendid artistes, who have provided us with an unforgettable evening. But equally are we all indebted to the Committee who has made such strenuous efforts to make this *Fête* such a fine success, they fully deserved to wear their handsome "rosettes."

This patriotic gathering has vividly taught us again that our object should be "Our country, our whole country, and nothing but our country." And, by the blessing of God, may that country itself become a vast and splendid monument, not of oppression and terror, but of wisdom, of peace, and of liberty, upon which the world may gaze with admiration for ever!