

Swiss Club Birmingham

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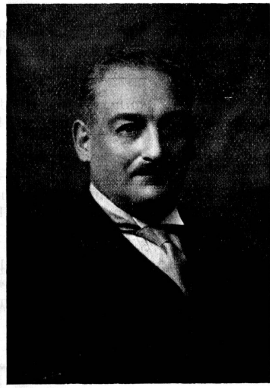
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"SWISS RALLY"

WITH
DINNER & DANCE
OF THE
SWISS CLUB BIRMINGHAM

on Saturday, March 26th, 1938, at the Midland Hotel, Birmingham.

P. BRUN, President of the Swiss Club, Birmingham.

What we call in London a Banquet, is called in Birmingham a "Rally;" our friends in the Midlands have no doubt a special reason why this distinction should be made and I am not going to argue the point. However, this "Rally" which took place on Saturday, March 26th, at the Midland Hotel, Birmingham, was a great success.

This annual event has for the last few years become quite a feature, and from far and near, our countrymen have flocked to Birmingham to honour the "Swiss Club" with their presence.

This year there was a special reason why an increased contingent travelled "up north;" because the popular President of the Swiss Club Birmingham, Mr. P. Brun, was celebrating his 10th anniversary as leader of this small, but faithful band of our countrymen in the second largest town of Great Britain.

Ten years is not a very long span in a man's life, considering "how time flies," but those who have had some experience in holding a leading position in a Swiss Society, will undoubtedly agree with me, that it is no mean achievement. There are few Presidents of Swiss Societies, who could stand the "strain," and if I am right Mr. Brun has almost created a record; I am emphasizing the word "almost," because the proud record for having been at the head of a Swiss Society for a longer period than anybody else, belongs to my good friend W. Notari, who has presided over the Unione Ticinese in London for 16 years.

Then again few Presidents of Swiss Societies in this realm have had the distinction to be honoured on their 10th anniversary of holding office, by the diplomatic representative of the Swiss Confederation, by the acting Lord Mayor, by a former Lord Mayor, and an *Aide de camp* to H. M. the King.

It is often said, and not without justification, that work in a Society is an unthankful undertaking, but I am glad to say, that at times it receives its rewards, and I feel sure, that this splendid testimony of gratitude and attachment, which we witnessed last Saturday and Sunday must have been a source of satisfaction to our friend.—

Now, I am not going to pretend that things are done differently, or even better in the Provinces than in London, a Banquet is a Banquet wherever it takes place, and therefore I have, alas, to report it in the same wording, which has been published under my *nom de plume* for many years; I have some definite ideas how things could be altered, and made more interesting, but my suggestions have so far met with no success, and therefore, wearily I go on repeating, what I have written in "hundreds" of previous reports.

My ticket said that the reception was to take place at 6h.30, but, as in London, nobody takes that seriously, and when I arrived at the time fixed, I had to make my bow to "space," now that I have started to criticize, I might just as well mention that my ticket informed me that "carriages" were waiting at midnight, bless my soul, I looked out eagerly enough to catch a glimpse of any of these ancient vehicles, but I could not see one single "carriage" lined up, so why waste printers ink?

I wish to point out that if the reception did not take place at the appointed time, it was not the fault of the "authorities," who were models of punctuality, but the guests were very slow in arriving.

The reception was held by the Swiss Minister, accompanied by Madame Paravicini and Mlle. J. Paravicini, the President, M. P. Brun, accompanied by Mme. Brun, and Alderman Sir John Burnam.

The company then adjourned to the Banqueting Hall, where the floral decorations met with universal admiration.

I will desist from giving every item on the Menu, because I think it is hardly fair to make the mouths water of those who, for one reason or another, could not be present; but the dinner was excellently cooked, and the praise which the well-known Chef of the Midland Hotel, M. Cadier, received later in the evening, was fully justified.

Not only was the dinner really good, but the service and arrangements were beyond reproach, and for this, praise should be given to the Banqueting Manager of the Midland Hotel, Mr. Oerli, a compatriot of ours.

The loyal toasts having been proposed by the Chairman, Monsieur C. R. Paravicini, and duly honoured, M. Brun, the popular President of the Swiss Club Birmingham, rose and on behalf of his Society warmly welcomed the Swiss Minister, Madame Paravicini and Mlle. Paravicini, "we greatly appreciate the honour bestowed on our Club, by your acceptance to take the Chair to-night, and we are particularly honoured to have in our midst Madame Paravicini and for the first time Mlle. Paravicini," he said amidst acclamation; he also expressed the wish that a kind providence would enable our diplomatic representative to look after the interests of our country for many more years to come. The great applause which followed these words, was a sure sign, how much the services of our Minister is appreciated by his countrymen.

M. Brun then mentioned that the Swiss Club Birmingham was founded in 1895 as a Relief Society, and at present numbers 40 members. He related that only two of the original founders were still alive, namely Mr. Reinhart, who was present, and Mr. Egger, who unfortunately had had to undergo a serious operation recently, at the age of 87, and was thus unable to attend.

The President extended a hearty welcome to Alderman Sir John Burnam, who, himself a late Lord Mayor of Birmingham, represented the acting Lord Mayor who was prevented from attending, he expressed to him the gratitude of the Swiss living in the city of Birmingham for the hospitality they have and are still enjoying; "we are very happy here," he continued amongst acclamation.

In concluding, M. Brun asked Sir John to convey to the Lord Mayor of Birmingham the greetings of the entire company.

Before resuming his seat, he acquainted the gathering that the following official guests were present:

Mr. E. Montag, Swiss Consul, Liverpool.
Dr. A. Schedler and Mrs. Schedler, Swiss Consul, Manchester.
Mr. and Mrs. H. Bingguely, City Swiss Club, London.
Mr. M. Schneider, Swiss Mercantile Society, London.
Mr. and Mrs. A. Stauffer, "Swiss Observer," and Nouvelle Société Helvétique, London.
Mr. L. Faivre, Swiss Club, Liverpool.
Messrs. Spargnapani and St. Luisoni, Swiss Club, Manchester.
Mr. Hofer, Swiss Club, Bradford.

Mr. Brun also welcomed the numerous unofficial visitors from London and other parts of the country, amongst them:

Major Athey and party; Mr. and Mrs. Alioth; Mr. and Mrs. Bartholdi, London; Mr. Berlemont, London; Miss Christen, London; Mr. and Mrs. Corbaz, London; Mr. and Mrs. Delaloye, London; Mr. and Mrs. Dowera, London; Mr. and Mrs. Hilpert, London; Miss Hands, Droitwich; Mr. and Mrs. Langlais; Mr. G. Marchand, London; Mr. and Mrs. Mermod and jun., London; Mrs. Marin, Droitwich; Mr. and Mrs. Lythall, Mr. and Mrs. Oggier, London; Miss Piquerez, Coventry; Miss Regazzoni, Four Oaks; Miss Weymann, Malvern; Miss Richteiner, Malvern; Mr. and Mrs. Rollie, Miss Swindella, Manchester; Mr.,

Mrs. and Miss Seewer, Rugby; Mr. and Mrs. Taylor, Mr. Warwick, London; Mr. and Mrs. Webb.—

The speech of the evening which was eagerly awaited, was the one of the Swiss Minister, and when the toast-master announced that Monsieur Paravicini was going to speak, tremendous applause greeted him on rising, after having expressed his thanks and pleasure for having been invited to preside over this memorable gathering, he said:

For a good many of you who are assembled here at this annual banquet of the Swiss Club of Birmingham, your Chairman of to-night is perhaps not altogether a stranger. Some of you may have a distinct feeling of having seen him somewhere before.

I can help them, if I may, to refresh their memories by reminding them that it is in this very place that they saw me before.

On two occasions. The first was in 1920, when I came to make friends with the Swiss of Birmingham on my first tour round the Swiss Colonies in the United Kingdom, soon after having presented my credentials to King George V, as the representative of the Swiss Confederation at his Court.

The second time was in 1931, when your President, M. Brun and the members of the Swiss Club again gave me a reception in this Hall. I still remember this as having been a particularly pleasant evening.

On the first occasion I was accompanied by Mme. Paravicini; on the second occasion I came by myself, and on this third occasion I am doing better than on either of the previous ones and am accompanied by my wife and my daughter, in order to give my family the benefit of knowing what it is like to be amongst our faithful and hospitable compatriots of Birmingham.

Indeed, nothing could give us, your guests, a more complete feeling of comfort and happiness than thus to be in direct contact with our friends of the Swiss Club for a few hours.

I myself have many personal links with your Society. For fully eighteen years now I have been so fortunate as to count your President, M. Brun, amongst my most helpful and most resourceful Swiss friends in England. I meet him constantly at our reunions in London, where his bright and encouraging company invariably contributes to the success of the function. I am happy to offer him to-night, in your name as well as my own, our thankful congratulations on his tenth anniversary as President of this Club. We can all of us envy him for being able to say to himself, as he looks round this hall to-night: "I am inclined to think that I have done well." We would like to assure him that he has done as well or better than any one of us could have done.

Then, amongst my old friends of Birmingham I can also count M. Reinhart, one of the founders and staunch pillars of the Club, M. Egger, the venerable Doyen of the Colony, M. Kunzli, the philanthropist (the last two unfortunately prevented from attending the banquet), M. Reimann, your old and cherished member, and of course, the hard working and untiring Officers of the Committee, M. Brunner, the Vice-President, M. Duvoisin, the Honorary Secretary and M. Kloetzli, the Honorary Treasurer.

They all make me feel anything but a stranger in Birmingham. But there is another reason for that feeling and that is seeing this great city of the Midlands, the second largest city of the old kingdom of England, extend its hospitality to a community of my countrymen and look upon that community, for generations past, as a useful, respectable and loyal element of its hard working population, an element

well worth keeping flourishing within its city walls.

Our President has just greeted the citizens of Birmingham who are our guests to-night with words full of cordiality. Like him, I see in their presence a fresh token of the old-established friendship between Swiss and British.

Although I feel as he does I will not repeat what he has expressed so well and so eloquently. But I must be permitted to second him most emphatically in his appreciation of the presence of Sir John Burnam, a presence which can be taken by all of us, English and Swiss alike, as nothing less than the very symbol or, shall I say, confirmation in official form, of the traditional cordiality of relations existing between our two countries. The merits, position and personality of Sir John would in themselves be ample reason for us to congratulate ourselves on this striking evidence of goodwill and friendship, but the fact that he is also here as the Representative of the City Council and as the special Ambassador of the Lord Mayor makes him doubly welcome at this function.

I beg of him to convey to the eminent Head of this City and to the Members of the Council the expression of our gratitude for the honour and kind feelings thus shown to us. Mr. Canning, himself a friend of and frequent visitor to Switzerland, has had occasion, I hope, to see from his own experience that in the valleys and mountains of the Swiss Alps no more welcome visitor than the British visitor will ever appear.

Let me say one word more about that friendship. At no time has such true friendship between nations been of greater value than it is in the sorely disturbed times through which Europe is at present passing.

I am in the happy and probably unique position of being able to speak as the citizen of a country which has since the Middle Ages been uninterruptedly on terms of friendship with England.

If the people of the earth had followed that example for the last six centuries, the world would have been something like a paradise all that time.

But what is it in reality? Is it not something like an arena of unrest, strife and opposing ideas, mistrust and ill feelings, which might again, at any moment, bring disaster to humanity?

Where it not for the fact that there are happily still a few countries in the world where peace and international order count as the highest and most precious goods of all, disaster might well have overtaken us again.

In the Society of Nations Switzerland is only a small member, one of the very smallest. Nevertheless, she has her duties to fulfil in that community and, situated as she has been for centuries in the very centre of European currents and storms, the fulfilment of these duties would have been a fatal task, had her people not been animated from the beginning by the spirit of liberty, courage, justice and equity, not only amongst their own compatriots and within their narrow frontiers, but also with regard to the peoples beyond these frontiers, far and near.

Only a few days ago the President of the Confederation made a solemn Declaration in the name of the Government and people, saying that whatever other nations might think was the best way to conduct their affairs, the Swiss meant to manage theirs on the old and well-founded principles of true democracy, in friendship and co-operation with all and, if need be, in defending those sacred principles and their country to the last man.

And let me add that the same hour an equally solemn promise was given, in response, in the Federal Assembly by the representatives of all parts of Switzerland, without any distinction as to party, race or religion, confirming this will to remain as they were and what they were.

By no people will this spirit be better understood or more fully approved than in this mighty Kingdom and its Empire, where peace and justice, order and freedom for all have likewise been the fundamental principles of the nation's life.

Sir, to-day the world looks to Great Britain as to the one Power which, in the danger of conflict, can save the reign of peace. On Thursday last that world listened breathlessly to the words of your Prime Minister, as he spoke at Westminster. And with feelings of universal relief it heard that, whatever might happen, Old England would stand to the end for justice and democracy with the full might of her moral and material forces.

What Mr. Chamberlain said on Thursday last gives us hope that by the might and power of a peace-loving nation like Great Britain,

the mightiest and most peace-loving of all, and by the contribution of the small nations, like Switzerland, the cause of peace may yet be saved.

And let us not forget, Sir, that the man who spoke at Westminster those all important words and who was listened to by the whole world, he is the son of Birmingham.

This very excellent and weighty oration of the Minister was greatly cheered.

The next speaker was Alderman, Sir John Burnam, a former Lord Mayor of the town of Birmingham, to him too, a hearty reception was accorded.

Sir John, mentioned that he was deputised by the Lord Mayor, who was unable to attend, to convey his personal greetings and those of the Corporation of the city of Birmingham to the Minister and the Swiss Club. He was glad to hear that the Swiss living in Birmingham felt happy in this busy Midland town, and expressed the wish that the Club would be able to enrol again some younger members.

After having pointed out the advantages of being citizens of a free and neutral country, he expressed the hope that the world would be spared from another calamity such as the events which took place in 1914. "I am sure," Sir John said, "that nobody wants war, and I am equally convinced that we shall not see another big war in our life time."

This rather optimistic forecast was heartily cheered. He ended his oration with a few personal reminiscences of the present Prime Minister, Mr. Chamberlain, with whom he was in personal contact for the last 30 years.

The address of Sir John was greatly cheered by all the people present.

Mr. Montag, Swiss Consul in Liverpool, who is called the Father of the Birmingham Colony, gave a short address in which he assured the Colony of his continued support.

Mr. Reinhart, one of the founders of the Club was entrusted with the toast for "Charity," he said that the Club was in the enviable position of being able to devote this year's collection to a non-Swiss institution, and mentioned that the Club had decided to make a donation to the occupational centres of the City of Birmingham. The result of the collection amounted to £15. 15. 0.

I would like to mention that a very efficient orchestra supplied the "Tafel Music," during the dinner, and a pot-pourri of familiar Swiss airs was much appreciated, such popular tunes as the "Zapfenstreich," and many others, brought back to not a few, treasured memories of happy moments spent in the service of our beloved homeland. I wish, however, to point out that the "Bärnermarsch" is played much slower in the part where I come from, we are not in such a hurry "down-under."

Dancing started soon after 10 o'clock, and forgotten were the troubles, tribulations and worries which are such a common occurrence in these anxious days.

It was only right that "Yodling" should find a place in the programme, Mr. Beer and some of his friends supplied the necessary want. Much enjoyed was the dancing of Mlle. Aebischer, the daughter of a member of the Club.

On Sunday morning about 11 o'clock a char-à-banc, followed by a small fleet of private cars, set off from the Midland Hotel on the way to Stratford-on-Avon. Amongst the company was the Lord Mayor of Birmingham, Mr. C. R. Canning.

Back once more at the Midland Hotel the entire company sat down to a special luncheon; on this occasion speeches were made by the Lord Mayor of Birmingham, Mr. C. R. Canning, who eulogized our country being a frequent visitor there. "I wish," he said, "many more of my countrymen would have an opportunity to see this lovely country, which is doing so much for the betterment of humanity."

Other speakers were, the Swiss Minister, Mr. Stauffer, Editor "Swiss Observer," and Mr. Binggely, City Swiss Club, London. Amongst the guests was Colonel Danielson, D.S.O., Aide-de-Camp to the King.

The Swiss Minister, Madame and Mlle. Paravicini, the Lord Mayor of Birmingham and about 30 members of the party adjourned later on to the private residence of the President by special invitation, and a very jolly afternoon it was. Mme. Brun, presided over the gathering, proving that she was equally efficient as her husband in "taking the Chair." Many were the bottles emptied to the health of the generous host and hostess, and to the future prosperity of the Swiss Club Birmingham; all too soon the hour of departure approached, and we had to take leave from our smiling host and hostess.

In conclusion, I would like to congratulate the Swiss Club Birmingham, and especially its President, M. P. Brun, for this splendid Rally, it was a very enjoyable function, and the message which again has come from our countrymen in the Midlands will not be forgotten.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS.

Monday, April 4th — Unione Ticinese — Annual Banquet and Ball, at Paganini's Restaurant, Great Portland Street, W.

Wednesday, April 6th, at 7.30 p.m. — Société de Secours Mutuels — Monthly Meeting, at 74, Charlotte Street, W.1.

Tuesday, April 12th — (Dinner 7.15 sharp) — City Swiss Club — Annual General Meeting — at Paganini's, Great Portland Street, W.1. (See Advert.).

Wednesday, April 13th — Swiss Mercantile Society Ltd. — Monthly Meeting — followed by a lecture with slides and films on "The Blue Danube," by Bernard Newman, Esq.

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Dimanche 3 avril :

11h. — Culte : Mr. Blocher, cand. théol.

11h. — Ecole du Dimanche.

6h.30. — Culte : Mr. Blocher, cand. théol.

7h.30 — Chœur.

SCHWEIZERKIRCHE

(Deutschsprachige Gemeinde).

St. Anne's Church, 9, Gresham Street, E.C.2.

(near General Post Office.)

Sonntag, den 3. April 1938.

11 Uhr morgens, Gottesdienst und Sonntagsschule.

7 Uhr abends, Gottesdienst.

8 Uhr, Chorprobe.

Dienstag, den 5. April 1938.

Nachm. 3 Uhr, Nähverein im "Foyer Suisse."

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