

69th fête suisse

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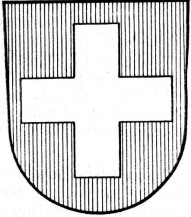
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69th

FÊTE SUISSSE



*Als ich fern dir war, o Helvetia,
Fasste manchmal mich ein tiefes Leid!
Doeh wie kehrte schnell es sich in Freud',
Wenn ich Einen deiner Söhne sah!
Helvetia, mein Heimatland,
Mein Vaterland!*

The "Fête Suisse" is rapidly approaching the allotted span of life of "three score and ten years," but there is every reason to believe that with a kindly providence many more years will be added to its longevity.

What a wonderful evening it was, and how happy we all were to spend a few hours together as children of the one and same country, which we love with all our heart and soul.

This annual patriotic gathering, which started from very humble beginnings, is gaining strength from year to year.

Only last year I was able to report a record attendance of 1,200 people, and every one thought that this figure could hardly be superseded. Last Thursday's attendance exceeded this figure by nearly 300, as exactly 1,499 people were present.

A brilliant result for which the committee of the Fête Suisse is to be heartily congratulated; it must be a matter of great satisfaction to these ladies and gentlemen, who have worked very hard, to see their labours so richly rewarded.

To adequately cope with a gathering of such dimensions, new arrangements will become necessary in future, and the committee will have to study the question of providing additional seating accommodation by adding on the gallery seats, although this will add to the running expenses. Furthermore, the catering question should be re-organised as the rush and crush during the interval is not only becoming most uncomfortable but even dangerous. I have not the slightest doubt that these items will receive due consideration by the committee, but if no additional room can be found there should be at least a few stewards appointed to regulate the "traffic."

Once more the Hall wore its festive garb, the National and cantonal flags intermingled with the Union Jack, and the beautiful floral decorations added immensely to the "Stimmung," and I pay homage to Messrs. Scheuermeier and Hungerbühler for the artistic taste they showed in arranging the decorations.

Long before the concert was due to commence a stream of people ascended the imposing staircase. The "Foyer" looked at its best, apart from the richly laid tables containing numbers of tempting delicacies, there were tables filled with flowers, flags, postcards and other souvenirs. Ladies, some in National costumes sold flags, programmes and flowers and their bewitching smiles and charming pleadings to buy could not be resisted.

As a special greeting from our homeland, there arrived on the same day baskets of Alpenrosen, Gentian and Heather per Swissair plane, these lovely flowers were gathered the day previous by school children of Meiringen as a patriotic greeting to their countrymen "beyond the sea." This fine gesture by these young people who thus thought of their brethren far away from the sunny slopes of our unforgettable mountains, will not be forgotten, and we thank them for their labour of love, they have brought, for a few hours at least the homeland still nearer to our hearts.

At 6.45 p.m. one could hear in the distance the sound of cow-bells, immediately one jumped to the conclusion that an "Alpauzug" was going to take place, and I rather wondered how our four legged friends managed to ascend the staircase.

My imaginings, however, proved to be wrong, three gentlemen furiously shook these bells (they did not carry them round their necks, which would have been less strenuous) to announce that the concert was going to start. And hardly had they desisted from their prodigious efforts when the mighty sounds of the organ announced that the programme had started.

Mr. E. A. Seymour, F.R.C.O., who for the last few years has been in charge of the organ proved again what a fine musician he is.

When the last sounds vanished the company sang upstanding the "Schweizerpsalm," seldom have I heard it sung with such enthusiasm and patriotic fervour, and I can still hear those words:

*"Wenn der Alpenfirn sich rötet,
Betet, freie Schweizer betet."*

Like a mighty prayer, the sounds went heavenwards, and many a heart beat quicker and many an eye shone brighter.

May God the Almighty hear this invocation, and protect the little land of peace which we call "our country."

Pastor C. Th. Hahn then said a prayer asking the Lord's blessing on the gathering and guidance for our Statesmen at home.

The official opening of the Fête Suisse then took place by the Swiss Minister, Monsieur C. R. Paravicini, who received a vociferous welcome on ascending the platform.

Unfortunately the accents being not too good at the Central Hall those who sat at the side of the Hall could not hear distinctly, and I should advise the authorities that in future a microphone should be provided.

Mr. Suter's speech, f.i., met with the same fate.

The Minister's oration was most inspiring, and made a deep impression on all those present, he said:

It has so far been the custom for the official representative of the Confederation, when opening this annual reunion of old and young members of our Colony, to use one of our four national languages.

Thus I have spoken to you from this platform in French and "Schwyzerdütsch;" I have even ventured on one or two occasions to get as near to Italian as I could, but I do not remember — any more than you do — ever having made an opening speech in Romansch, much as I should like to be gifted with sufficient linguistic skill to use that most melodious old tongue which, of all our languages, is perhaps the most purely Swiss and the true child of our mountains.

It has been decided that I shall use the language of the country whose guests we are, and I do so without any hesitation or scruple for, as I speak to you, my countrymen, as one of you, here under the Banner of the White Cross, I shall be speaking a Swiss language no matter what form my actual words may take.

I wish I could do this with as much warmth, as much eloquence, inspiration and power of conviction as the one who, time and again in this very place, spoke to you on these occasions and who, for three decades, put his heart and soul into the work for the welfare of our community.

Le Pasteur Hoffmann-de Visme has spoken to you year after year on this summer night in June, giving you words of greeting, of joy, of encouragement, moving words of love for your country and of happiness coming from the beautiful land which is our home.

He is no longer with us, but his memory lives on. And to-night for the first time we must assemble here without him, whose last greetings and good wishes reached us in this Hall a year ago, at a time when we were already distressed for our old friend's health. But we think of him and shall always think of him in gratitude and reverence.

Men like him are badly missed in our time. Were everyone to think like him and act like him, the world would be a happier place than it is. For if we look around us we find that all is not well with peace on earth and that the unity and confidence amongst people within and without their own frontiers are sadly lacking.

We Swiss cannot be thankful enough to be the free citizens of a united country which, although situated right in the centre of a Continent harassed by cross currents, remains as it has always been, a field for men living and

working quietly, men content with what Providence and Nature has allotted to them and peacefully making the best of their resources.

As one in the society of nations, our people has no other ambition than to abide in friendship with all the others, to do its duty as one of them both towards itself and them. Ever since the day of its birth the very life of our old Confederation has been the principle: Live and let live.

And to-day, as always, we keep this unchanging rule at heart, even though — in a fast progressing world — the will to stick to it and to preserve it in its full meaning appears to demand ever increasing efforts and tenacity of purpose.

It is a fact of which we may well be proud, that last month at Geneva we once again gave the world proof of our unshaken will to keep clear of other people's differences and to stand aside when matters which do not concern us are being settled or fought out.

We may indeed rejoice that this new proclamation of our neutrality has been received the world over with sympathy and comprehension. This is a fresh testimony of the fact that, in spite of all the changes overwhelming the modern world, Switzerland's real nature and mission are still fully understood and adequately valued.

But do not let us think that such understanding and esteem, in fact, that such good fortune, is our due, a gift to be taken for granted and an obvious right, without our doing anything to merit it. No one is free unless he deserves to be free.

The world recognises and sanctions our position amongst the peoples — a truly unique position in the world to-day — because the world believes, and considers itself right in believing, that the Swiss are not only determined but able to fulfil the mission, the price of which must be true freedom and independence from others.

We all know what it means to show ourselves worthy of confidence and trust. It means hard work, it means work in the spirit of righteousness and equity, it means sacrifice, materially and mentally, in our private lives and in our service to the State; it means restraint in our feelings towards other people's affairs which may seem strange to us or may not be to our taste. It means being heart and soul for our country and ready to do our utmost when that country needs us.

It means that every one of us has the unwavering will to do his bit, in order that his country may for ever remain what Switzerland must be to be true to herself: a free country and a free people, a people who carry out their duties conscientiously, who keep their homes intact and free from unsound and dark influences, who watch over their public and individual integrity and, as the President of the Confederation said the other day, who are ready "if, which God forbid, danger and strife should come to Europe, to defend their independence to the last."

And more than ever the call goes through our cantons for unity and concord. The men in whose hands the political and social administration lies know well that without unity amongst the people their task is well-nigh hopeless. A united people behind the Government alone provides the force which brings safety to a country both in peace time and in the hour of danger.

We Swiss have been entrusted by Destiny to prove to the world that variety of language, of ethnographical parentage, of religion and of political creed is by no means an element for dis-union. For generation after generation our ancestors have set the good example. To-day this example is of greater value than ever.

This does not mean that all Swiss must at all times be of one and the same opinion. Differences and criticisms, action and counter-action in public matters, are not only keeping

with human nature but are useful and healthy, so long as each, from its own point of view, is sound and honest. But at the bottom of each must be that feeling which every true Swiss carries deep in his heart: *the zeal of the country first of all.*

Let us always remember the words of the King of France, when he heard the strange news of the Milksoup of Kappel:

"The Swiss go to battle amongst themselves with sword and lance, but they never forget that they are friends."

On leaving the platform the Minister received a hearty and well deserved ovation, a sure proof that for the many years which he has occupied his responsible office in the capital of the mighty British Empire he has become one of the most popular Ministers Switzerland has ever sent to the Court of St. James.

Next in filed, a number of very young Ladies and Gentlemen dressed in Swiss National costume carrying accordions, they were greeted with acclamation and under the efficient leadership of their energetic conductor, Mr. A. L. Gandon, they played two pieces: "Turnermarsch" and "Maiglockchen" with much gusto. The thunderous applause which they received proved how much their performance was appreciated.

After silence was restored, a gentleman dressed in a marvellous costume and heavily bearded appeared with martial strides; one young Lady next to me informed me with great conviction that it was "William Tell," but I was rather dubious as I missed the bow and arrows, but soon it became apparent that the wearer of this splendid garb was Mr. A. F. Suter, the popular President of the "Swiss Fête," and from his own words it could be gathered that the array pictured a member of the Swiss Papal guard. He made a most impressive sight, but it looks as if accidents can happen even to members of this illustrious corps, because either, during the evening he went across the street to have a "quick shave," or owing to the sweltering heat his beard became unruly, because on his second appearance he arrived minus his lovely beard which led to many humorous comments, and my Lady friend had to admit that she was mistaken as "William Tell" would have never had "done such a thing," old Gessler would have laughed and laughed and would have got Scot free out of the "Hohle Gasse" to have tea at Küsnacht.

Mr. Suter said:

All you Swiss know this uniform of the Swiss Guard in Rome. I have donned it to-night because it is in the right place among us Swiss Abroad. It is in fact more than that, it is a true Symbol for us Swiss Abroad, today as much as in the 16th century, and with this dress there have always been connected two little words:— *Honneur et Fidélité.*

Now it is my pleasant duty to welcome you all once more to our Fête Suisse, in the name of the Committee in London and in the name of the S.S.E. in Berne, from whom we have received the following telegramme:—

A l'occasion Fête Suisse le Secrétariat des Suisses à l'Étranger adresse à la Colonie Suisse de Londres ses chaleureuses félicitations pour la haute qualité de son travail et pour son bel esprit patriotique, sujets de joie et de fierté pour le pays. Qu'elle vive!

The Secretariat has again sent us a gift of alpine flowers, Gentians of the most heavenly blue, gathered from the slopes above Meiringen. But a far greater gift still has come to us from the Secretariat in the persons of the two famous artists Mlle. Lavanchy and Mr. de Ribeauville who have come across purposely for this Fête and who will presently delight you with their famous "Airs montagnards." In these delightful melodies they will deliver to us the message of our immortal mountains, as well as a reminder that we Swiss Abroad still live in the hearts of our countrymen at home.

We are delighted to have with us to-night our Minister who has just opened the Fête and whose noble and encouraging words you have just applauded. He has spoken to us as the father of our colony, as the voice of Switzerland, and we are always eager to hear his views on our duties and privileges, our virtues and shortcomings as good Swiss Abroad. I take this early opportunity of assuring our Minister here, in the name of all of you, of three things:—Firstly that we Swiss Abroad, however many years we may have been living away from home, are still perfectly good Swiss, and shall always remain so; secondly that we Swiss Abroad, living as Foreigners in a Foreign country, are aware and proud of the fact that we are at the same time perfectly good citizens in this country of our adoption, this Great Empire; and thirdly that we Swiss Abroad, in this generation also, are making a steady and determined effort to live up to the motto of the old Swiss Regiments, of which this dress is a symbol:—

Honneur et Fidélité.

Looking at the programme I could see that the next number was billed for Duos and Solis by Mlle. Colette Wyss and Mme. Perret Wyss.

A charming young Lady appeared, it was Mlle. Colette Wyss, the sister of Mlle. Sophie Wyss, that fine and distinguished singer so well-known in the Colony.

With a really fine voice she sang a number of songs by our famous countryman Jaques Daleroze. Mlle. Colette Wyss is one of the most eminent operatic singers in our own country, but by her performance she proved that she is an equally fine "Lieder" singer, and the hearty applause which she received was truly deserved. Unfortunately Mme. Emilie Perret Wyss was unable to appear.

A couple of violinists now turned up with umbrella, violins and dressed in Swiss costumes, they were our countrymen hailing from the canton of Vaud, Mlle. Magda Lavanchy and Emile de Ribeauville and they gave us a delightful performance of "Airs Montagnards," what fine artistes they were, one could have listened for hours and hours to their "fiddling," they were not only great violinists but equally clever actors. And what an applause they received from all corners of this big Hall!!!

Thus the first half of the programme came to a close, and it was announced that the "Festwirtschaft" was opening its doors. You should have seen the onslaught, before one could count ten, hundreds of "starving" people rushed into the "Foyer," whether I liked it or not, I was simply carried along in a densely packed crowd, not an easy thing when I consider that I am not exactly a "light weight."

After a while, I landed in front of the kitchen, where very appetising "Wienerli's" and "Cervelats" were cooked, no plates, forks or knives were supplied, a piece of paper, adorned with a "splash" of mustard was handed out, and one was left to do one's best, it was not an easy undertaking to "feed," when hundreds pushed and squeezed, but hunger does not stand on ceremony and somehow or other these delightful sausages disappeared; I am not sure that some did not even swallow the paper as well, which may be an explanation why no plates, forks and knives were supplied!!! But that was not all, hundreds of delicious strawberry tartlets, pastries, ice creams, etc., etc., were displayed and when the interval was over it looked as if a swarm of locusts had descended on the tables, almost everything had disappeared, a sure sign that the eatables had met with appreciation.

Great credit should go to Mr. and Mrs. Alfred Schmid, of the Glendower Hotel, and their staff, who were in charge of the catering, they worked like Trojans, and mind you, kept on smiling too; it was no easy matter to feed 1,500 hungry mouths within the time of half an hour, and may it be said, that some of the youngsters fought for their food, as if they had had nothing to eat for days.

It should also be mentioned that the "Wienerli's" were supplied by Mr. Bartholdi, of Charlotte Street, who enjoys an international reputation and who is called sometimes the "Sausage King" although he is a good republican. The fine pastries came from Mr. F. Rohr, Buckingham Palace Road, who is equally famous, as he has a contract with the Whipsnade Zoo to supply the elephants with "Petit Fours." I have forgotten now how many tons he sends out to Whipsnade every week.

A special compliment I should like to pay to the really charming daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Schmid, she looked lovely in her Bernese costume, and instead of eating my plate of strawberries I gazed at her until I found that some of the cream had trickled down my waistcoat, which induced another charming Lady, hailing from the canton of Zurich to make some sarcastic remarks about Bernese in general.

Then, one heard again the furious ringing of the famous cow bells, this time even more insistent which is quite understandable, having been "fed" in the meantime they put new vigour into their work.

The Swiss Orchestral Society opened the second part of the Programme with a March called "Take your seats," quite an appropriate piece of music, but as there were not enough seats to go round, it was just a little unkind.

Before I mention the second number which they played in their usual fine style, I must report that the conductor, Mr. E. P. Dick, ascended the rostrum in Swiss Costume, I think it is the first time that he has conducted his orchestra in this "get up," and looking at his colleagues in the orchestra I noticed that they did not know whether to laugh or keep a straight face, it must have been agony to the brass players and the flutists, but after they had got over the first shock they "blew" like Angels calling the faithful to the last judgment.

The second number was a pot-pourri of Swiss Folk Songs, and the conductor invited the company to join in, and everybody very heartily sang

those lovely simple songs which we all had sung in days of long ago.

Thunderous applause greeted the performance of this fine orchestra and time after time my friend Dick had to take off his "Mälcherhüetli."

Then followed some yodelling by Mr. von Bergen, who was accompanied on the accordion by Mr. Gandon. As usual both these Gentlemen performed with great efficiency and nobody will grudge them the great applause they received.

Again, the orchestra, Mlle. Magda Lavanchy, Emile de Ribeauville and the Swiss Accordion Club appeared in turn and repeated their previous successes in further repertoire.

Shortly before half past ten the National Anthem was played and the 69th Annual Swiss Fête came to a close, amidst great enthusiasm.

It was a wonderful and inspiring evening, once again we have felt that we belong together, once again our thoughts have travelled across the sea and over the towering mountains to our homeland which we love and which in the hour of danger we shall be willing to defend with the last drop of our blood.

*Loin des rains bruits de la plaine,
L'âme en paix est plus sereine:
Au ciel montent plus joyeux,
Les accents d'un cœur pieux.*

ST.

MISCELLANEOUS ADVERTISEMENTS

WHY DON'T YOU BUY A HOUSE AT PURLEY. Prominent position. Undoubted quality bargain. Two rec., 4 bed rooms, matured garden. Room for garage. 2 min. from station and shops. Write: Swiss Observer, Box No. 66, 23, Leonard Street, E.C.2.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS.

Tuesday, June 28th, at 7.30 p.m. — City Swiss Club — Dinner and Dance, at Brent Bridge Hotel, Hendon. (See advert.).

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

Saturday, July 9th — Swiss Sports and Garden Party — Duke of York's Headquarters at Chelsea.

Divine Services.

EGLISE SUISSE (1762).

(Langue française).

79, Endell Street, Shaftesbury Avenue, W.C.2.

(Near New Oxford Street).

Dimanche, 26 juin 1938:

11h. — Service solennel et bilingue pour célébrer le 176^e anniversaire de l'Eglise Suisse et la réunion des deux communautés, présidé par MM. Les pasteurs M. Pradervand et C. Th. Hahn.

7h. — Culte, M. M. Pradervand.

Pas d'école du Dimanche.

Course de l'Ecole du Dimanche.

Samedi, 2 juillet 1938. (Les détails seront envoyés directement aux parents.)

SCHWEIZERKIRCHE

(Deutschsprachige Gemeinde).

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

(near General Post Office.)

Sonntag, den 26. Juni 1938.

11 Uhr morgens: Gemeinsamer Gottesdienst beider Kirchgemeinden in der Eglise Street.

Kein Morgengottesdienst in St. Anne & St. Agnes.

7 Uhr abends, Gottesdienst in St. Anne & St. Agnes, 9 Gresham Street.

8 Uhr, Chorprobe.

Die Collecten werden zugunsten der Schweizerischen Hilfsgesellschaft erhoben. "Arme habt ihr allezeit bei euch."

Anfragen wegen Religions-bezw. Confrmandenstunden und Amtshandlungen sind erbeten an den Pfarrer der Gemeinde: C. Th. Hahn, 43, Priory Road, Bedford Park, W. 4 (Telephon: Chiswick 4156). Präsenzstunden: Dienstag 12-2 Uhr in der Kirche.