

Centenary Celebration of the Swiss Club Manchester

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CENTENARY CELEBRATION of the SWISS CLUB MANCHESTER

at the MIDLAND HOTEL, MANCHESTER
on SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 11th, 1950

In the Chair : G. SENN, President.

Centenaries in the Swiss Colony of Great Britain are of a rare occurrence, and the Swiss Club, Manchester hold the proud record, of being the second Society which has attained this distinction; the first place in this race for posterity has to be conceded to the "Société de Secours Mutuels des Suisses à Londres", which has two centenaries to its credit having been founded in 1703; third place will be allotted, in six years time, to the City Swiss Club, London, which Society saw the light of day *Anno Domini* 1856.

Whenever a man or woman reaches the age of a hundred in our homeland, they make quite a "big do" of it, the bells are rung, and in some cantons the happy birthday child is presented with an easy chair by the respective governments; innumerable speeches are made, and quite a lot of wine is consumed, principally by those who have many years yet before they attain such distinction.

True enough, no bells were ringing in Manchester on the 11th day of this month, nor was the traditional easy chair presented, because our brethren up North are not going to rest on their laurels, nor are they

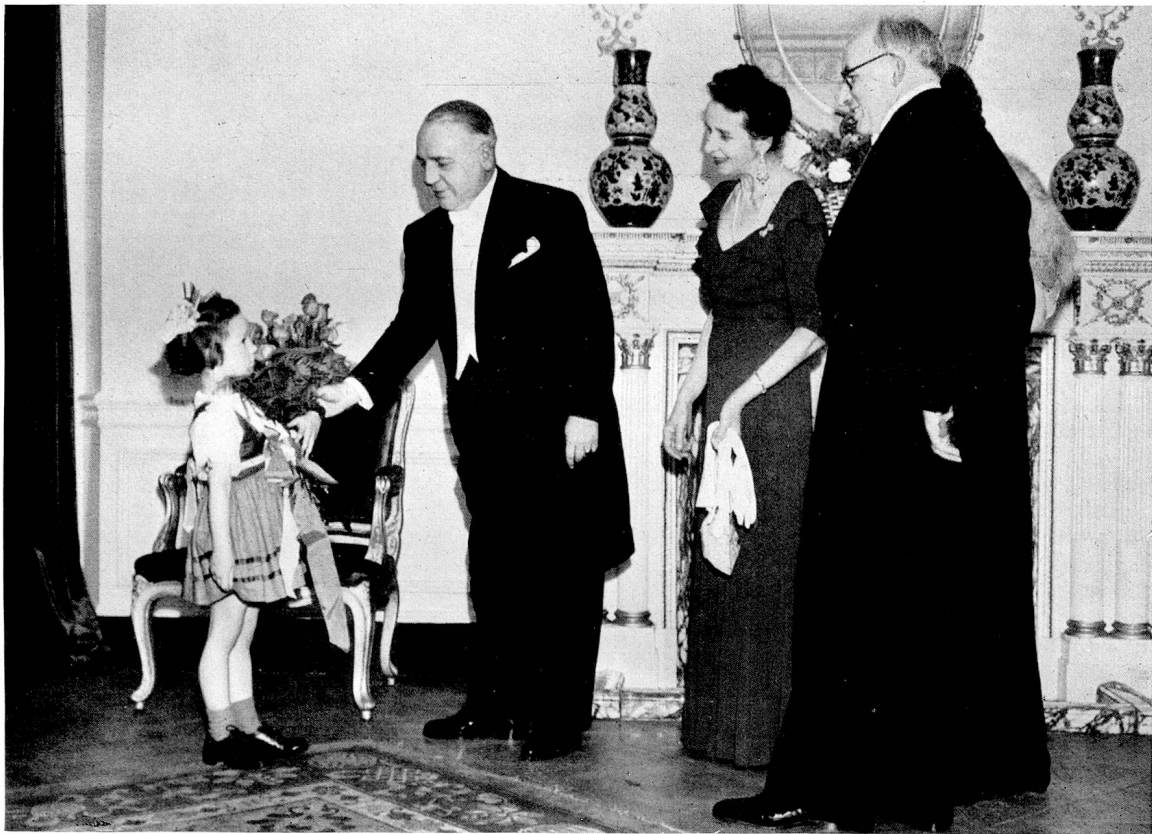
going to relax; with renewed vigour, determination and "joie de vivre" they are looking forward to yet another centenary celebration.

Bells or no bells, the atmosphere was nevertheless a festive and happy one at the Midland Hotel, and even the sun shone brightly, — which I understand, is also of a rare occurrence — on that auspicious autumn day, when the London delegation arrived in this big industrial city; indeed a good omen of what was to come.

On returning from Manchester, I was asked by some of my London friends: what sort of a crowd are they up there, and how did they manage this show? Well, I was very happy to reply that "the sort of a crowd" was indeed a fine one, and every bit as good, if not better, than the "London crowd" and with regard to managing their "show" we could not have done it better in the metropolis. One cheeky little demoiselle wanted to know what the Ladies looked like and what they wore, I satisfied her curiosity by telling her that the Manchester Swiss Ladies were every bit as good looking as their sisters in London, and that they were just as little as our beauties in London.



Left to right, standing: Dr. Egli, Mme. Stauffer, Dr. Bircher, Mme. Senn, The Swiss Minister, M. Senn (President), Mme. Bircher, M. Dupraz, Mme. Schedler, M. Stauffer, Mme. Inebnit, M. Huber, Mme. Wüest, M. Wüest.



Presentation of a Bouquet to the Swiss Minister.

Having said all this, I will now endeavour to give a description of the happy 100th birthday party.

The proceedings started, as is customary, with a reception in a spacious ante-room, where the President of the Club, Mr. G. Senn, accompanied by his charming wife and supported by the Swiss Minister, Monsieur Henry de Torrenté (Madame de Torrenté being still in Switzerland was unfortunately unable to be present) and Dr. & Mrs. E. M. Bircher, of the Swiss Legation, shook hands with the members and guests present.

The Swiss Minister, was presented with a beautiful bouquet of red roses by a pretty little girl, who accompanied the presentation with a low curtsy, after which the company adjourned to the Banqueting Hall, where the tables were decorated with red and white carnations. Behind the Presidential Chair hung the banner of the Club, and in front of the Minister was placed an enormous birthday cake decorated with all the cantonal escutcheons; this impressive piece of work, I understand, was made and presented to the Club by one of its members, Mr. Allenspach, who must be complimented on a very fine work of art.

After a short prayer, the gathering sat down to an excellent dinner which comprised: Consommé Tortue Clair, Filet de Sole au Chablis, Faisan aux Marrons, Pommes Cocottes, Céleris au Gratin, Macédoine de Fruits Frais, Biscuit Glacé Vanille, Friandises, Café. The Management of the Midland Hotel is to be congratulated on their culinary efforts, but is it to be wondered at, when one knows, that another member of the Club, Mr. E. R. Cottet, is the General Manager of the group of Hotels which includes the Midland Hotel,

Manchester?, no doubt, the famous Chef of this establishment had received "special instructions".

My very charming table companion, was most impressed with the pheasant which was excellent, but I am sorry to confess, that I was less so, as within the span of a week, I had been served no less than four times with this noble bird at various functions, for which, of course, the Midland Hotel is hardly to be blamed. It might interest my readers to hear, that since then, I have made twice the acquaintance with turkey, and I shudder to anticipate what is going to be produced to-night at the Annual Banquet of the City Swiss Club, at the Dorchester Hotel in London. One bird a week is enough for me.

Towards the conclusion of the dinner, the President gave the Toasts to H.M. the King and Switzerland, which were duly honoured, after which the company, in an expectant mood, prepared to listen to the various speakers who were mentioned on the programme.

Mr. G. Senn, the popular and genial President of the Club, on rising from his chair to address the assembly, was loudly cheered, he expressed his, and the members pleasure that the Swiss Minister, in spite of his heavy engagements had found it possible to be present on this festive day, but added that the unavoidable absence of Madame de Torrenté was greatly regretted; he also extended warm greetings to the following guests who had come from far and near to witness this important event: Dr. E. M. & Mme. Bircher of the Swiss Legation; Mr. & Mrs. J. J. Huber, Swiss Consul in Manchester; Mr. & Mrs. A. Stauffer, Editor of the "Swiss Observer" Mr. R. Dupraz, President

of the City Swiss Club, London; Mr. & Mrs. W. Meier, President of the Swiss Mercantile Society, London; Dr. H. W. Egli, President of the Nouvelle Société Helvétique, London; Mlle. A. Gretener, Hon. Secretary of the N.S.H., London; Mr. & Mrs. O. W. Wuest, Swiss Club Birmingham; Mr. & Mrs. J. Inebnit, President of the Swiss Club, Leeds; Mr. & Mrs. R. Hagenbach, Swiss Club Leeds; Mr. & Mrs. K. F. Illi, President Swiss Club Bradford; and Mr. & Mrs. P. Weber, Swiss Club Liverpool.

Referring to the history of the Club the President related that the official records for the first twenty years were unfortunately missing, but in accordance to references made in the minutes of the year 1880, it was established, without a doubt, that the Swiss Club, Manchester was founded on the 6th of November, 1850.

It was amusing to hear that in the early years of the Club's existence, although the membership of the committee was restricted to the number of four, two offices were reserved for a "Kellermeister" and "Vice-Kellermeister" (Butler and Assistant Butler) which goes to prove, that the "Swiss of old" were just as fond of a "little drop" as the present generation. I heartily recommend to the various Swiss Societies in Great Britain to include these offices in their respective committees of to-day. What a blessing it would be, when tempers at meetings, as they often do, get somewhat heated, one could call upon the "Kellermeister" to hand round the "loving-cup."

Mr. Senn said that it is also reported in the minutes, that meetings as a rule started at 9 p.m. and finished at midnight, but that more often than not, the assemblies were prolonged until the early hours of the morning, keeping the "Kellermeister" and his

assistant exceedingly busy, which surely shows, that these offices were fully justified, and of no small importance.

According to ancient minutes — the President said — one of the most important annual functions was the "Grütlifeier", which often lasted until 5 a.m., and was followed by a subsequent celebration during the afternoon of the next day, which shows that things were thoroughly done in those days, here again, I presume the butlers had their work cut out.

It is also reported in the annals of the Society, that some of the gatherings were far from "tame", in fact the feelings of patriotism and enthusiasm on these occasions seemed to have run wild, so much so, that, at least once the Swiss Pastor, then residing at Manchester, started the celebration on the following day, with a stiff lecture, exhorting his flock to abstinence and moderation. For this homily, the Pastor was apparently prompted by reports which reached him from the wives of some of the members, complaining that the "home coming" of their respective spouses was far from "pleasant".

The speaker mentioned a rather amusing entry in the records of the year 1873, when a parcel coming from Switzerland was presented to the members, containing: "Winterthurer" sausages, "Landjäger", "Glarner Schabzieger", "Schübli" and "Leckerli", it is reported therein, that some of the "Schübli" had to be done away with, owing to the vile odour that emanated from them. (Einige Schübli mussten wegen ungünstigem Gestank unschädlich gemacht werden).

It also seemed that in the eighties, there existed two Swiss Societies in Manchester, the Swiss Club and the "Alpenrösli" Club, which apparently, faithful to



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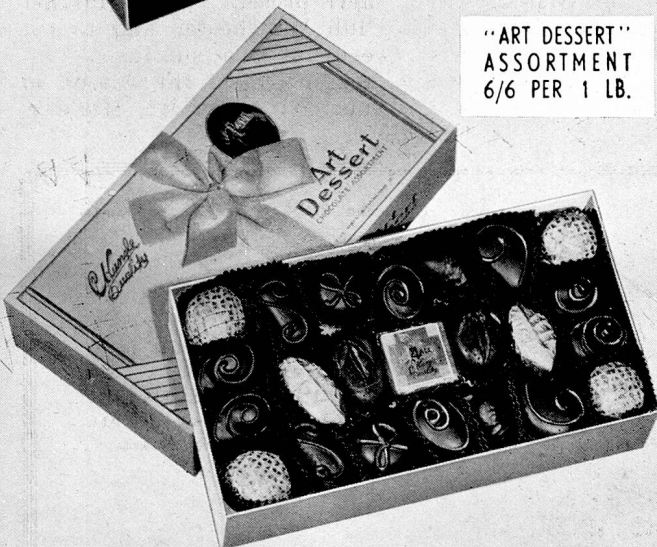


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our national motto "Un pour tous, tous pour un" fought each other like cat and dog, it appears that the Swiss Club represented the "capitalists", whilst the "Alpenrösli" was supported by the "workers" class.

What happened to the "Alpenrösli" is not recorded, and only the so-called "capitalists" survived; I think at present it would be the other way round, as capitalists nowadays are only allowed to "vegetate".

Amidst applause, the President said "I am glad that to-day we have only one Club, open to all Swiss, regardless of class, trade or profession, such as it should be, where the Colony is only a small one."

Dealing with the more recent history of the Swiss Club, the President mentioned a Banquet given in 1904, in honour of the then Swiss Minister, Dr. Carlin, which was attended by 150 members and friends, he also related that the following compatriots addressed the members of the Club on various occasions: Mr. Monney, Secretary of the Club, Professor Inebnit, Alfred Huggenberg (Swiss author), Pfarrer Hahn (Schweizerkirche London) Mr. Kübler, a former President, Mlle Alice Briod and Dr. A. Lätt from the N.S.H.; he also mentioned the visit of Minister Paul Ruegger and Counsellor of Legation Escher in 1945.

Mr. Senn declared that the most notable events during the last two years were the Banquet and Ball attended by the Swiss Minister and Madame de Torrenté and two rambles to Hebden Bridge in conjunction with the Swiss Clubs of Bradford and Leeds. He paid a sincere tribute to three of his immediate predecessors, the late Dr. Schedler, Messrs. Kübler and Heinrich who had occupied the Presidential chair; the President also warmly thanked the Hon. Secretary of the Club, Mr. H. Monney, for the excellent services he had rendered to the Society.

Mr. Senn concluded his interesting *exposé* by saying, that he hoped that at least the younger generation might have an opportunity to attend the 150th anniversary of the Club.

The applause which greeted the address of the President had hardly died down, when it was announced that the Swiss Minister would address the company, a hearty ovation was accorded to him, and he said:

"Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great occasion, this gathering of ours to-night, in order to celebrate the centenary of the

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Swiss Club, Manchester. To be able to look back upon a hundred years of uninterrupted activity, is something to be proud of.

You all know how at home we often stress our differences and emphasize the fact that we come from Basle or Berne, the Pays de Vaud or even the Valais. These local prejudices mostly show themselves to-day in banter. You know many of the stories which are current in Switzerland like the one of the Zurichois, the Bernois and the Vaudois who decided to hunt for snails in the vineyards above Neuchâtel. The Zurichois came back with the whole basket full which he wanted to keep for himself, the Bernois caught one and the Vaudois none at all — because it ran away from him.

These differences of outlook and temperament do, of course, exist also amongst the Swiss abroad. But here, even more than at home, they serve to enrich the life of our colonies and our clubs. We are still proud to be a Zurichois, a Bernois or a Vaudois, but we are prouder still of being Swiss. And whilst our compatriots at home take many things for granted, we Swiss abroad are doubly conscious of our patrimony, and doubly thrilled to meet a fellow Swiss. The Swiss Club Manchester has given ample proof of that. Even a hundred years of rain, a hundred years of grey skies, have not been able to dampen the patriotism of those men and women who were and are the Swiss Club Manchester.

This centenary means, however, more than only a record of a hundred years of Club activity. It means also a hundred years good friendship with this great City. The sturdiness of the Lancastrian and the sturdiness of the Swiss go well together. The friendship between the Swiss and the British, of course, goes back for many centuries. The first contacts were not always friendly and complimentary.

One of the earliest British visitors to Switzerland, Fynes Moryson, at the end of the 16th century, reported that you find a lot of drunkenness in Switzerland. He qualified his remark, however, with the statement that the Swiss, when drunk, are not particularly quarrelsome. And John Evelyn, in 1646, exclaimed of the ugliness of the Swiss "who have monstrous gullets and even the women show something full throats."

The relationship improved as years went on and the first Swiss reporting on his journeys to Great Britain (de Muralt), in the year 1693, admired the courage of the average Englishman who is not afraid of death. He, too, makes a qualification and says that this courage is coupled with laziness and that in con-

sequence the British fear much more a sentence of hard labour than a sentence of death. He made another observation which many of our countrymen are prepared to endorse even now, in fact many have demonstrated their adherence to this view by pledging themselves for life. I refer to de Muralt's surprise at the Englishman's custom to remain at table over wine and tobacco, whilst the ladies retire. In his view the women in England are so much better than the wine.

This friendship, if not to say kinship, between the Swiss and the English, has proved itself over and over again. Most of you, assembled here to-night, have been here for many years. No need, therefore, to dwell on that instinctive understanding that exists between us and our hosts. You have experienced it, and you also know, how great a respect and admiration our people at home have for anyone or anything that's British. This country's efforts and struggle during the war have endeared this people to our hearts, the hardships of the post-war years and the determination to master the penalties of victory have awakened our sympathy and our admiration.

There is no doubt that the economic relationship between Switzerland and Great Britain has improved. The fact that Switzerland has joined the EPU will be another step in the right direction. We most sincerely hope, that our friendship will lead to even greater freedom in the contact between our peoples and that in time not only the passage of goods and money are eased, but that also human beings will be granted that freedom of movement, which we of the older generation knew so well, when without the troublesome system of permits and restrictions you could settle down to work wherever you wished. That is the way in which we really get to know each other, and those of you who are established here can contribute a great deal by an increased employment of young Swiss. Then through working side by side can we establish a lasting mutual trust. And when that day comes, the dwindling colonies of British in Switzerland or Swiss in Great Britain will take a new lease of life and so help to take one more step towards this most desirable of all goals: Peace on earth and Goodwill amongst Men.

I raise my glass and ask you to join me, together with our British friends here present, to the further prosperity of the Swiss Club Manchester and to the continued friendship between our two countries."

The applause which acknowledged the speech of the Minister had hardly subsided, when Mr. Monney,

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the vivacious Secretary of the Club announced, that a great surprise item was in store for the gathering, and the atmosphere of expectation was strained almost to the point.

The tension, however, was soon relieved, when the President announced, that we would hear a programme presented that evening over the "Landes-sender" Schwarzenburg, dedicated specially to the Swiss Club Manchester, on its centenary celebration, and relayed to this city by courtesy of the B.B.C.

The transmission started with an orchestral piece followed by a patriotic address, greetings and congratulations to the Club and all Swiss living abroad, by Monsieur Max Petitpierre, President of the Swiss Confederation.

The next two speakers in this programme were Mlle. Alice Briod and Dr. Ernst Mörgele of the Secrétariat des Suisses à l'Étranger, who both warmly greeted their compatriots across the sea; these orations were followed by songs from two choirs in Switzerland, and a band playing "Roulez Tambour"; the relay, which lasted about half an hour, came to its conclusion with the Swiss Hymn "Trittst im Morgenrot daher", in which the entire company joined upstanding.

Thunderous applause greeted this "surprise item" which was certainly a novelty for the Swiss Colony in Great Britain, and a touching compliment not only to the Swiss Club in Manchester, but to all Swiss far from the homeland.

Separated from our beloved country by snow-capped mountains and the ocean waves, we were thus privileged to be for a few fleeting moments in close contact with our kinsmen, and many a tear started to the eye of some of the Ladies who were present and in many an older heart a deep feeling of nostalgia was awakened. It was indeed a "beau geste" on the part of our countrymen back home, which was highly appreciated. Whoever was responsible for this original idea, is heartily to be congratulated.

Whilst everyone was still almost "red hot" with patriotism, Mr. Senn, read out numerous telegrams, amongst them one from General Henry Guisan, which was conspicuous by its warmth, from Mr. E. Montag, a former Swiss Consul in Liverpool, from various Swiss Societies in the Provinces and from London; from the Secrétariat of the N.S.H. in Berne, and from a number of members who were prevented from attending.

Mr. R. Dupraz, President of the City Swiss Club, London, then rose to say "Thank you" for the invita-

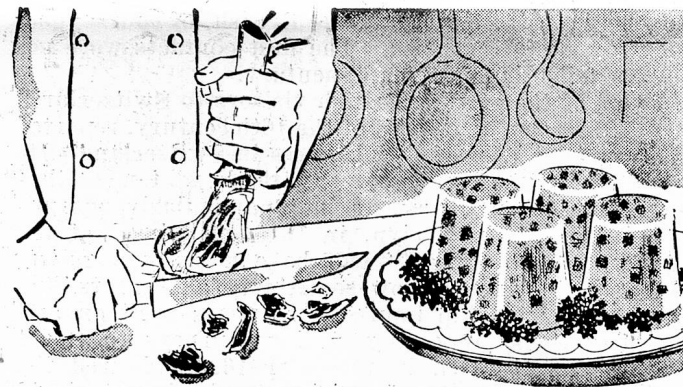
tion, on behalf of the official guests, he did this very briefly and "sweetly", and Dr. H. W. Egli, President of the Nouvelle Société Helvétique, in a short address, presented to the President, on behalf of the members of the Society, a beautifully bound visitors book in which afterwards the signatures of all those present were recorded.

The official part of the evening came thus to its conclusion, and the Banqueting Hall was cleared for dancing which lasted until midnight, when this memorable evening ended with the singing of our National Anthem.

Before ending this report, to which I have devoted more space than usual, due to the importance of this celebration, I would like to single out one man, who has done more than anybody else to make this festival a success, namely, Mr. H. Monney, the Hon. Secretary of the Club, everything went according to plan and without a single hitch, for which he deserves the thanks of all those who were present.

This centenary festival of the Swiss Club Manchester was an inspiring event; an important milestone in the history of this Society has been passed, and a new era has seen its dawn, an era which, let us hope, will be as successful as the one just concluded. We, who live in other parts of this hospitable land, are proud to know, that in some little part of this great realm there exists a corner where Swiss traditions and Swiss culture are upheld with such dignity, and our heartiest good wishes accompany them in their second centenary year.

ST.



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