

Coronation Visitors from Switzerland

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CORONATION VISITORS FROM SWITZERLAND.

From all parts of the world visitors came to London for the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth. The organisation of "World Friends" invited parties of young people, 50 each from several European Countries. They arranged for invitations to be extended to the continental visitors. The Swiss party were particularly lucky in being invited by the Mayor and Borough of Edmonton. The travel office "Popularis Tours" in Berne was responsible for the arrangements in Switzerland. In answer to their advertisement 11,000 young Swiss applied and 50 girls and boys were chosen by ballot to spend a fortnight in London. The Mayor and Council of Edmonton spared no effort in working out an interesting programme, which, incidentally, they had printed in both English and German.

In the afternoon of Saturday, 30th May, the Edmonton families expected their Swiss visitors at the local Town Hall. From the moment the first boy crossed the room to shake hands with his host and hostess all barriers of language, custom, apprehension and diffidence collapsed and a sense of happiness spread rapidly. The 25 girls and 25 boys came from 14 different Cantons, almost all from the German speaking part of Switzerland, and from many walks of life, and yet there were not many difficulties. This was partly due to the excellent leadership, but mostly because of the efficient arrangements made by the Borough authorities and the great kindness and understanding of the hosts.

The elaborate programme which Edmonton had worked out for their visitors included television facilities at the Town Hall to watch the Coronation and later a visit to a cinema to see a Coronation film, receptions, visits to factories, to the Houses of Parliament, the Tower, to Pool and Docks of London. It contained a coach tour of the Coronation decorations and flood lighting and a concert at Central Hall Westminster by "World Friends" for the youth parties from Western Europe.

To the great regret of the hosts and the genuine grief of the children seven of them and one of their leaders, Mr. Kastelberg, had to return after one week as the high school authorities at home would not grant a second week's leave from school. If it had not been for the effort the Swiss Legation made in this direction this number would have been even bigger.

On Thursday, 4th June, His Worship the Mayor

of Edmonton Alderman A. J. Hollywood, J.P. and the Mayoress gave a

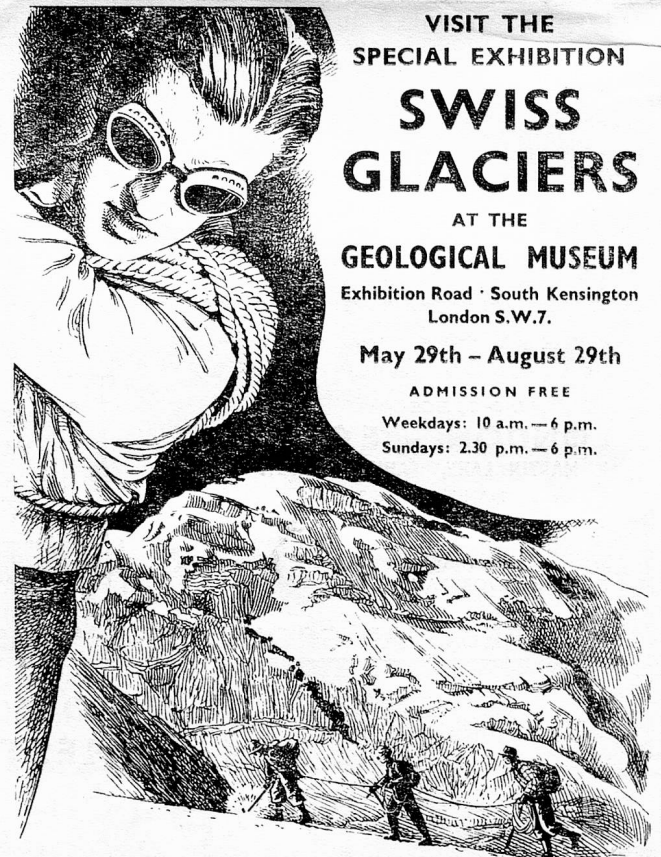
CIVIC RECEPTION AND DANCE

to the Swiss party and their hosts at the Town Hall. The Swiss Minister was represented by Consul Huber, accompanied by Mrs. Huber, and the guests included the President of the Swiss Mercantile Society and Mrs. W. Meier. The Mayor received the visitors in his colourful robes of office in the beautifully decorated hall. The Borough Supervisor of Parks was responsible for the flower arrangements which were particularly rich and lovely. The evening was a great success. There was no doubt about the happy and friendly relationship between hosts and visitors. They danced and played games and enjoyed most generous refreshments. The visitors sang some of the popular Swiss folk songs and amongst the several Swiss in national costume there was even a "Fahnenschwinger". Consul Huber brought the Minister's greetings. He welcomed the young com-patriots and thanked the people of Edmonton for their kind hospitality. In his address His Worship the Mayor expressed his and the Council's joy at the success of the visit.

On Wednesday, 10th June, the remaining 43 young Swiss were invited to a

TEA PARTY AT SWISS HOUSE

offered them by the Swiss Mercantile Society. In his opening address the President of the S.M.S., Mr. W. Meier, welcomed the Mayor and Mayoress of



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Edmonton and the Mayor's Secretary, Mr. H. Blackwell. He also welcomed Dr. Bircher, representing the Swiss Minister, and Mr. W. Gudgin from the London Office of "Popularis Tours". Mr. Boeschstein of the Ringier Publications, Zofingen, had brought a photographer along. Mr. and Mrs. G. Jenne, Mrs. W. Meier, Mr. L. W. Kruker were present as well as the Principal of the S.M.S. College and the Secretary. Mr. A. Staehelin spoke to the young people in "Schwyzerduetsch" telling them in a humorous way something about the Swiss Colony in general and the S.M.S. in particular. Dr. Bircher stressed the difference in character of English and Swiss people and reminded the young visitors that when returning home the most valuable memory to take with them would be that of their hosts' unselfish kindness, and they should not fall victim to the temptation of criticizing this or that which they had found strange or different. The Mayor finally related a few of the amusing incidents the hosts in Edmonton had had when receiving the youngsters. He repeated that this fortnight would always be amongst the happiest days of his life. And he requested Mr. Meier to tell the party in "Schwyzerduetsch" how happy the people of Edmonton were at having them as their guests.

At the College Canteen tea was then served to the visitors. With another song "aes Burebuebli mannyd" and a few well chosen words of thanks by Mr. Hutmacher who, with Miss Pluess, was in charge of the party, the reception came to an end.

Their stay in London has been an unforgettable experience for the young Swiss girls and boys. They

have taken back with them happy memories not only of a splendid Coronation and an interesting city, but above all of a kindly people. The Mayor had said in his official welcome at the Town Hall he hoped that many such friendly visits could be arranged because to learn how people in other countries lived was the best way to further peace. Many friendships had begun at Edmonton and would prove firm links in the strong chain of Anglo-Swiss relations.

Mariann.



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