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SWISS CLUB MANCHESTER

Annual Banquet & Ball

at the

MIDLAND HOTEL - MANCHESTER

on

SATURDAY, 5th NOVEMBER, 1955

In the Chair : H. MONNEY



H. MONNEY,
President, Swiss Club, Manchester.

When the leaves begin to fall, and nature starts to prepare itself for the long winter sleep, the Swiss Colony wakes up. This awakening manifests itself by a glut of Banquets, Dances, Concerts, Lectures, Film Shows, etc., organised by the all too numerous Swiss Societies with which we are blessed — if we can call it a blessing.

In all these arrangements the London colony owing to its size takes the lead, but in order not to be left behind, our compatriots in the Provinces wish at times to testify that they too are still in existence and very much alive.

Of all the various Swiss Societies outside the Metropolis, the most active is, without a doubt the Swiss Club, Manchester, which five years ago, with much pomp and circumstance celebrated its centenary.

On that auspicious occasion quite an impressive galaxy of "personalities" from London, headed by the then Swiss Minister, Monsieur Henry de Torrenté, travelled north to present their birthday wishes.

When I received the invitation to attend the 105th Banquet and Ball of this Society, couched in very pleading terms I had some misgivings at the idea of travelling all that distance, especially as the London colony during this time of the year, keeps me fully occupied. Having in the past already three times attended some of their functions, I thought of giving it a miss this time, however the fact that this year a man was going to be in the chair, who has done more than anybody before in keeping this club alive, made me change my mind. Furthermore during past visits I was lucky enough to make the acquaintance of many of the leading members of the Manchester colony, and as it is always a pleasure to meet good and old friends, I simply did not have the heart to decline the invitation, and I am not sorry I went, as this annual feast is, and has always been a spontaneous demonstration of friendship and patriotism; young and old, well to do, and not so well to do gather together to spend a few hours in happy companionship.

* * *

A banquet in Manchester varies little from one in London, one redeeming feature however of the Manchester one is, that the speeches are shorter and less

numerous, thus giving especially the younger generation an opportunity of indulging in dancing and merry making.

Between 6 and 7 o'clock a reception was held by the Swiss Minister, Monsieur Armin Daeniker, assisted by Mr. and Mrs. H. Monney, President of the Club, and Mr. and Mrs. M. Büchi, Swiss Consul in Manchester, and during which cocktails were served.

At the conclusion of the reception the red coated toast master announced that "dinner would be served", and everyone moved to their allotted seat, to await the entry in the Banqueting hall of the official guests. After Grace had been said, the company sat down to an excellent dinner.

The hall was attractively decorated with the banner of the club and the Union Jack, and the tables were adorned with flowers and small Swiss and British flags. The flower arrangements were perhaps not so extravagant as f.i. at the Dorchester (London), but the radiant faces of the Manchester Ladies in their finery presented an entrancing picture.

Whilst coffee was served, Mr. H. Monney, President, proposed the Toast to H. M. the Queen, followed by the Toast to Switzerland given by Mr. L. Themans, then came the speeches announced by the toastmaster, which were, as I said before, of endurable length.

Here I wish to pay a compliment to the toastmaster, whilst his opposite number in London invariably bangs the table in sledge hammer style which nearly makes the ladies jump out of their skins, this one gently tapped the wall behind him, in asking for silence.

The first speaker of the evening was Mr. Monney, the popular President of the Club, in his opening address he extended a hearty welcome to the Swiss Minister, Monsieur Armin Daeniker, voicing his regret that Madame Daeniker was unfortunately unable to be present. He also greeted the following official guests: Mr. Max Büchi, Swiss Consul in Manchester, and Mrs. Büchi, Mr. Etienne Cottet (London), a former President of the Swiss Club, Manchester, and Mrs. Cottet, and Mr. A. Stauffer, Editor of the

"Swiss Observer" (London), and Mrs. Stauffer, and not forgetting the Ladies present.

Mr. Monney then gave a short *resumé* of the various activities of the Club, such as meetings, social gatherings, "Jass" evenings, film shows, children's parties, and lectures. He specially mentioned the farewell dinner offered to Mr. O. Schneider, former Swiss Consul in Manchester (now at Chicago), which he said proved to be an outstanding success. He referred also to the various outdoor events, such as the "Landsgemeinde" at Hardcastle Crags, and the several Sunday rambles.

The President also referred to the activities of their rifle section, congratulating Mr. John P. Locher, who has again won the Challenge Cup with 90 points out of a possible 100. At a competition with the Manchester Rifle Club, the section, he said was beaten by only a very small margin.

"You will see from my remarks", Mr. Monney continued, "that the Club has led a very busy life, which consequently involved a great deal of work, and I want to express my appreciation to the committee, and especially to Mr. Robert Beaujon, and Mr. W. Allenspach, Hon. Secretary and Hon. Treasurer respectively".

In concluding his Presidential address, Mr. Monney paid a warm tribute to his colleague, Mr. Alfred Bebié, Hon. Treasurer of the Swiss Relief Society for the last thirty years, thanking him for his untiring collaboration. "He is also the Doyen of our Club", he said, "not in age, but in years of membership, having completed 52 years, runner up is Mr. F. Meyer, who has just completed 50 years of being a member of the Club". (Applause)

The oration of the President was suitably acknowledged, and when calm was restored, the toast-master announced that the Swiss Minister would address the gathering. The latter received a hearty ovation on rising from his seat. He said:

Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am glad to be again in the midst of the Swiss Colony at Manchester and wish to thank you for having so kindly asked me to come to your Annual Dinner and Ball; I am feeling also much obliged for the kind words which you have just addressed to me. My wife who returned only lately from Switzerland is indeed very sorry that she was unable to accompany

me this time, but asked me to convey to you her cordial greetings. We both remember with pleasure our last visit to the North of England and the very friendly reception we met here from our compatriots. We were greatly impressed when we attended the last "Landsgemeinde" in Hebden Bridge in June, a very unique reunion indeed. The lovely grove of Hardcastle Crag reminded us at least symbolically of what we all keep so dearly in our heart: the classical sight of the Grütli, where the men from the Waldstätten assembled to lay the foundation of our Confederation. Only a few weeks later we were able to attend that unique Festival of our Alpine population at Unspunnen, where thousands of inhabitants of our high valleys all clad in their ancient and often precious costumes gathered to compete in sports, singing, yodelling and dancing, a Festival of common and genuine gaiety which is repeated only once in ten years. I cannot say which of these meetings impressed me more: the Landsgemeinde in Hebden Bridge in its simplicity and intimacy or the very colourful glorious Aelplerfest at Unspunnen. We are indeed very thankful to Professor Inebnit and to you, Mr. Chairman, that you so happily took the initiative to launch this annual gathering of our compatriots of the cities of Northern England, which I hope will become a lasting tradition. I appreciated also the words of Professor Inebnit, when he said that I should return from Hebden Bridge a better Minister; to see the Swiss from neighbouring places coming together just to meet for a few hours in a friendly way under

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the common banner and to seek comfort from each other is a joyful and heartening experience in our times and an outstanding demonstration of patriotic solidarity. Moreover the attendance of so many young people gave me almost the impression that the rejuvenation in your ranks is not such an urgent problem for your Colony.

I have been informed, Mr. Chairman, that the Swiss Club in Manchester has been founded more than one hundred years ago and was the first Swiss Club in this country, besides the Société de Secours Mutuels which, as you know, was founded more than 250 years ago. The members of your Club have every reason to be proud of its long history, it is again a manifestation of the feelings of solidarity which prevails with our compatriots in the North of England. The fact that the great majority of the Swiss in Manchester are members of your Club and your attendance to-night prove that your attachment to the homeland has not weakened and that you nourish a lively appreciation for the inherent values of our common patrimony. Our country needs more than ever the pioneer activities of the Swiss abroad particularly since the accessible world has shrunk to a portion of what it was and barriers of all sorts seem to have become a permanent institution. But even to-day there is still a scope for good quality work and the spirit of enterprise.

May I remind you in this connection of another centenary which has not been celebrated in a solemn way but none the less is worth to be commemorated. I mean the Treaty of Friendship, Commerce and

Establishment between Great Britain and Switzerland which was signed in London, on September 6th, 1855. It was a very liberal treaty that took its inspiration from the liberal tendencies of those times which compare so favourably with the concepts of international intercourse prevailing at the present time. This treaty is still valid without major amendment. It has enabled generations of our compatriots to settle in this country; to trade and exercise their profession; to enjoy the hospitality of this great nation in full freedom and under the protection of its laws; to effect a peaceful penetration which, owing to their ability and integrity has increased our national prestige and has gained us esteem and consideration,

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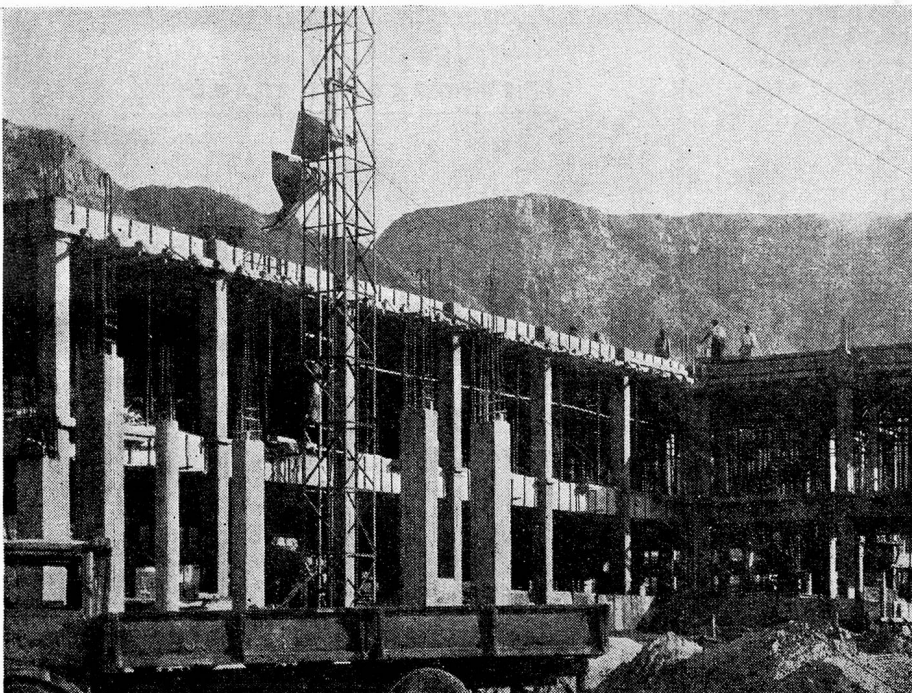
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and finally it has renewed the ties of common friendship which so happily exist between the peoples of our two countries.

This is hardly the place to speak about Swiss politics. You know that over the last weekend the elections to our Parliament have taken place but they have again evidenced the extraordinary stability of our political life, only 2% of the seats in the National Council have changed party colour and they have all been won by the Socialist party. Would it be different if women had the franchise? I doubt it but certainly Swiss women are now on the move. In a recent ballot in the town of Zurich, 80% of the women have voted for the franchise; is there any reasonable argument to oppose them? It is said that our men have not to fear lest the women being a majority will dispossess them of their position of strength, and therefore they will defend it be it only for the sake of a tradition.

I consider it a fortunate coincidence that your new Consul, M. Büchi, and I are both attending your annual dinner for the first time. Thus it gives me a special pleasure to introduce to-day Consul and Mme. Büchi to your Colony. He has — as I did — served in several places overseas, in Africa and in Asia and I think it is significant and almost a logical sequence to our career that we have both been transferred to Great Britain. I am sure he will take the best advantage of the privilege of serving as Swiss Consul in this great metropolis of Northern England. We wish to Consul Büchi and his charming wife a very successful activity and I am sure you will lend them the same valuable support which you have so generously given to his worthy predecessors as well as to our Legation.

Loud and long applause greeted the words of our Minister.

Before closing the official part of the evening, Mr. P. Locher, a member of the rifle shooting section, was to have been presented with the Challenge Cup by a pretty young maiden, who apparently did not seem to have the slightest idea "what it was all about", as Mr. Locher, who already had won the cup the previous year, had left the cup at home, bringing only the base of it, which was a pity, because on a former occasion the recipient was awarded a kiss by the presenting lady, but a wooden pedestal hardly warranted such an attention.

* * *

After a short interval dancing began, unfortunately there were not enough men present "to go round", and many of the ladies had to content themselves with watching their more successful sisters. The Swiss Minister most gallantly stepped into the breach, and so did some of the "elderly gentlemen", who "hopped and turned" with amazing acceleration.

In order to give the untiring dancers a little rest, two young and attractive ladies, hailing from the Italian speaking part of our country executed a *pas à deux* accompanied by singing, whilst in one of the ante rooms a number of equally charming ladies, hailing this time from the German speaking part, sang songs in "Schwizerdütsch".

At midnight this happy and successful party came to a close with the singing of Auld Lang Syne, and everyone left the Midland Hotel with the feeling of having spent a really fine evening in congenial company.

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