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SWISS NATIONAL DAY CELEBRATION.

On August 1st, 1942, at Kingsway Hall,
Kingsway, W.C.2.

Wherever Swiss dwell outside the borders of our homeland, the 1st of August, our National Day, is celebrated.

It is the one day in the year when, in a common fellowship, our thoughts wander back to that land of ours, where we have been born, and where most of us spent the golden days of our youth, free from worries and surrounded by nature's beauty with which our country, by a kind providence, has been so richly blessed.

In these eventful days, so full of evil forebodings and rapid changes in the fortunes of mankind, one finds but little leisure to dwell on memories of happier and more peaceful times, and it is therefore only right and proper that we Swiss should put one day aside to pay homage to our country, and to render humble thanks to God Almighty, who in His infinite goodness has so far protected us from the terrible consequences of war.

Last year, we celebrated the 650th Anniversary of the Confederation at the Central Hall, Westminster, it was a mighty and unforgettable demonstration of loyalty and patriotism, never before in the history of the Swiss Colony in London have so many of our compatriots assembled to testify their love and deep attachment to the mother country.

This year, a less ambitious programme was contemplated, and rightly so, the times we are passing through do not lend themselves for celebrations and commemorations on a great scale. —

For the last fifteen years, with one exception, I have reported in this paper our National Day celebration, I endeavoured in these reports to review each item on the programme and comment upon it, it has been a labour of love and I dare to hope that my fellow compatriots enjoyed reading it as much as I enjoyed writing it.

Unfortunately, with all the good will and enthusiasm in the world, I cannot follow precedents and I must tender my apologies to the organisers, if this time a considerably curtailed report will be published.

An evil star seemed to lower over this year's 1st of August celebration, some of the singing was well meant, but we have been used to better performances. I wish to pay tribute to the various young Ladies who courageously stepped into the breach, but I am afraid courage, although commendable, was not enough.

The film "Landammann Stauffacher" was a disappointment, it was, of course, unfortunate that somebody sat upon or kicked and thus broke the wire which should have produced the sound effects causing a delay in the performance for almost an hour; the screen was also too small, and the lamp of the projector not powerful enough for a hall of this size. My opinion is, that if this film could have been shown in a proper cinema with adequate apparatus, the photographic technique which was excellent, would have asserted itself to better advantage, and would have probably been enjoyable, the performance as it was, was almost a nightmare.

There were, however, bright spots in the programme, the addresses and prayers of the three clergymen of the Colony were excellent, especially the patri-

otic oratory of Pasteur Pradervand made a deep impression on all those present. He tried to show that Switzerland's history was all along a living example of St. Paul's affirmation. "There are several members, but one body," and that to-day the unity in the diversity of little Switzerland was the example of what could be achieved in the world and the ray of hope for to-morrow.

I am glad that Mr. Tall recited in Romantsch, it was a splendid testimony how "minorities" are treated in our country, it must have been a pleasure for those who could understand it, but how many did?

Mr. von Bergen, the champion yodler of the Colony earned the applause with which his songs and liberal *encores* were acknowledged. Mr. R. Chappuis was an excellent accompanist and Mr. E. P. Dick gave a creditable performance at the organ.

Mr. A. F. Suter, the President of the London Group of the Nouvelle Société Helvétique, read out a passage from a letter which he had received from the Secrétariat des Suisses à l'Etranger which reads as follows:

"Je n'ai pas besoin de vous dire que nos pensées s'en vont sans cesse à Londres, chargées d'admiration et de sympathie. J'ai reçu aujourd'hui les premières anémones de nos Alpes. Que je me réjouis du jour où vous pouvez venir dans nos montagnes retremper vos forces. Elles vous attendent dans toutes leur fraîcheur et toute leur splendeur apaisante."

Before giving a *resumé* of the film Mr. Suter said:

"Who among us can doubt that there is in all the world another place, a spot like our own mountains, where we may recover our peace of mind, our equanimity, our very sanity, when it is all over? Forcibly kept away from our mountains, as we are by circumstances, are we not longing for them as we have never longed for anything in our lives?"

The "Edelweiss" with which the Ladies were presented, was the personal gift of our Minister, who attended the celebration with Madame Thurnheer. This thoughtful token of his personal contact with those present was much appreciated. —

Coming to the summing up, I do not agree with those who declared that this year's patriotic rally was an entire fiasco, this is an exaggeration; it is true that not everything went according to plan, we have been spoilt in the past, and it is, the least said, ungrateful to blame the organisers for a few mishaps which, I am sure, will be remedied on future occasions.

The main thing is the spirit in which we met, the spirit of harmony and fraternity.

Over the storm swept sea and over the silvery mountain peaks our thoughts have travelled back home to our country and to our dear ones, where on this memorable day the church bells were ringing and the fires were shedding their light over a country still free, still determined to fight to the last man for the preservation of that freedom for which our forefathers have given their lives in many a hard fought battle.

The day will come when the "cease fire" will be sounded, when the sword will be put back in the scabbard, until then we must endeavour to live up to our sacred traditions, to help to alleviate the sufferings of millions of our fellowmen, this should be our mission, a mission worthy of our people and in accordance with the charter of Humanity.

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