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H. MONNEY,
President, Swiss Club, Manchester.

SWISS CLUB MANCHESTER

Annual Banquet & Ball

at the

MIDLAND HOTEL - MANCHESTER

on

SATURDAY, 9th NOVEMBER, 1957

In the Chair : H. MONNEY

Two visits, amongst the five paid in the past to our compatriots up North, will always be remembered with especial pleasure by the writer.

The first was in 1950, when the Swiss Club Manchester celebrated its Centenary, with Mr. G. Senn — alas, since passed away — in the Chair, and the then Swiss Minister, Monsieur Henry de Torrenté (now Swiss Ambassador in Washington), as the principal guest; and the other was on Sunday, June 20th 1954, when I attended the "Landsgemeinde" at Hardcastle Crag, Yorkshire, by the Swiss Clubs Bradford, Leeds and Manchester, under the excellent direction of Professor Jean P. Inebnit, President of the Swiss Club Leeds.

Both these events were striking proof that our friends in these parts of the country are equally as keen and eager to cultivate and preserve the spirit of comradeship and patriotism as are their brethren in the Metropolis.

The Swiss in Manchester are obviously less numerous than those in London, and one Society, therefore, answers their purpose. What they lack in numbers, however, they make up in patriotism, and to attend one of their gatherings is always a great pleasure and inspiration, because amongst them reigns a high spirit of congeniality and friendship which it does one good to behold. These meetings are perhaps less demonstrative than some in the capital, but in their simplicity lies their success. We who live in other parts of this hospitable land are proud indeed to know that in some little corner of this great realm there exists a niche where Swiss traditions and Swiss culture are upheld with such dignity.

The success which crowns every social event is principally due to the President of the Club, Mr. H. Monney, who, as will be seen, accomplishes this year 25 years as a member of the committee, and has during this period rendered innumerable and devoted services to the Club, first as Hon. Treasurer, and since 1955 as its President. With great perseverance he has kept this small community together in good and bad times.

Banquets in Manchester (or anywhere else for that matter) vary little — there is the reception, the speeches and the dancing — and my report, therefore, will take its usual course.

Between six and seven o'clock a reception was held by the Swiss Ambassador, accompanied by Madame Daeniker, assisted by Mr. Monney, President of the Club, and Mrs. Monney, during which cocktails were served. At the conclusion of the reception, and after it was announced "dinner will be served", everyone moved to his or her allotted seat to await the entry into the Banqueting Hall of the official guests. After Grace had been said the company sat down to an excellent and sumptuous dinner.

The hall was attractively decorated with the banner of the Club flanked by the Union Jack, and the tables were adorned with flowers and small Swiss and British flags.

Whilst coffee was served, the President, Mr. H. Monney, proposed the Toast to H.M. the Queen, which was followed by the Toast to Switzerland given by Mr. Laurence Themans.

The first speaker of the evening was Mr. Monney, who received a cordial reception on rising from his fauteuil présidentiel. He began by saying that the evening would be recorded in the annals of the Club as a special and unique event, due to the fact that for the first time in its history an Ambassador was attending this annual festival. Mr. Monney extended a hearty welcome to Monsieur and Madame Daeniker, thanking the Ambassador for the interest he had shown in the Club ever since his arrival on British soil.

He then warmly greeted the following official guests: Mr. Max Buechi (Swiss Consul in Manchester) and Mrs. Buechi, thanking him for the work he is doing on behalf of our compatriots, Mr. E. R. Cottet (a former President of the Club) and Mrs. Cottet of London, Mr. A. Stauffer (Editor of the "Swiss Observer" London) and Mrs. Stauffer, paying him a compliment for keeping the Swiss Colony so efficiently *au courant* with the happenings both here and at home, and Professor Jean P. Inebnit (President of the Swiss Club Leeds), of whom he said "we consider him as one of us".

Mr. Monney also extended a cordial welcome to the many English guests present, and to a visitor from Belgium, M. Léon Dupriez, Director of the Institute for Economic and Social Research at the University of Louvain, not forgetting the ladies, of whom he said

that they also are members of the Club and by their charm add colour to the meetings.

After a short historical *exposé* the President referred to some of the activities of the Club, such as meetings, outings, Christmas party, "Landsgemeind", Film Shows, Lectures, etc. Special mention was made of their Rifle Section. He congratulated Dr. Bolliger, Vice-President of the Club, on winning the Challenge Cup by an aggregate of 178 points out of a possible 200.

He paid tribute to the late Mr. G. Senn, a former President, whose service he said "will always be gratefully remembered". He also mentioned the passing away of Mr. Bebié, one of the oldest members of the Club, and Mrs. Kuebler, the wife of a former President.

In conclusion the speaker thanked his colleagues on the committee for the services they had rendered, mentioning in passing that he had just completed 25 years of uninterrupted membership of the committee (applause), and saying that he had served under many eminent Presidents, notably Mr. E. Kuebler, Dr. J. Schedler, and Messrs. G. Senn, E. R. Cottet and E. Berner, thanking those still with us for their collaboration in the past.

The speech of the President was suitably acknowledged, and it was then announced that the Swiss Ambassador would address the gathering. His Excellency was loudly cheered on rising from his seat. He said:

"Dear friends and compatriots,

"I wish to thank you, Mr. Chairman, for your invitation to this party and your very kind words of welcome. I assure you that my wife and I feel very happy to be able to spend this evening with our compatriots in Manchester. Ever since we came to this country, the Swiss colony in this town have endeared themselves to our hearts. A short time after our arrival we attended the Landsgemeinde at Hebden Bridge and we still keep the best of memories of that day. I think your Landsgemeinde is a unique and splendid example of what a patriotic initiative and goodwill can achieve in order to bring our compatriots closer together and give them the feeling and vivid impression of belonging all to one and the same family.

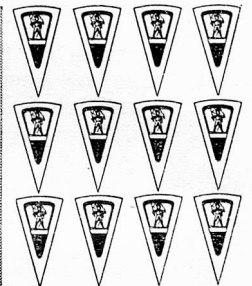
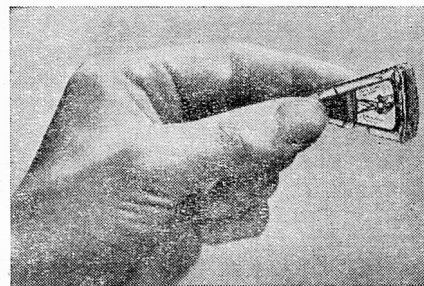
"When, some months ago, your Chairman mentioned that you would like to welcome the first Swiss Ambassador to the Court of St. James to your Annual Banquet, it was to me an irrefutable argument which I was glad to accept. Now that I am here you will find that I am very much the same person as before. This adjustment in the rank of our mission, though we considered it overdue, has changed very little and even many English friends held that a Swiss Minister had become such a respectable and traditional institution in this country that we should have left it at that. Nothing indeed has changed in our way of life except that the name of the head of the Swiss mission, which so far had been relegated to the bottom of the diplomatic list is now bouncing up the ladder of diplomatic precedence.

"As I said on a previous occasion, I do agree wholeheartedly with the American President when he said some time ago that any citizen who is travelling abroad should be considered as an ambassador of goodwill of his country. He should show respect for foreign laws and customs, show courtesy and regard

for other ways of life and act in speech and manner in a way fitting to mould the reputation of his country. I know that in this sense you all are and have been good ambassadors of our country. I am fully aware that here as elsewhere, under the able leadership of Consul Buechi, the Swiss colony commands the highest respect and receives every consideration from the local population.

"It may be that you in the Midlands and the North do not share equally in the privilege of our countrymen in the South who are able to renew constantly their contacts with the home country by meeting many prominent Swiss who come to London for conferences, business meetings, etc., and are often asked to lecture to one of our many societies. In a few days for instance we shall have the visit of M. Jaccard, the head of the section for the Swiss abroad at the Political Department, who will talk to us on questions which are of interest to our colonies. We are however all privileged to have the "Swiss Observer" which is modestly styled the official organ of the Swiss colony in Great Britain, but as a matter of fact offers the most varied and substantial information to its readers. May I therefore support the appeal made by the Editor — who is here present — to all those who so far still dispense with the "Swiss Observer" and ask them to help him to maintain this highly patriotic publication in its present shape. I am sure you will find, that a subscription brings a high reward.

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" Perhaps you expect that the Ambassador should bring you news about conditions and present trends in the home country. Indeed, I had the privilege to be in Switzerland some little while ago and to have fruitful contacts with our authorities. There is a wholesome change to be noted in the general attitude at home towards our compatriots abroad, their problems and their needs. The Bill for giving compensation for losses sustained during the war and allotting a credit of some 130 million francs to that end has luckily passed the perils of the Referendum. In accordance with a recent Act of Parliament our Missions are compiling data for the payment of old age pensions to old compatriots in need of assistance. This should also give some relief to our Benevolent Societies. A new Bill in preparation will provide for the extension of the pensions scheme to invalids at home and abroad. Finally, there still remains the military tax to be settled. Repeatedly we have asked you for suggestions on the best way to have it reformed. The replies which came from all over the world could hardly have been more contradictory. However, the last draft-bill submitted to the Auslandschweizertag has now found a favourable reception. At least it does away with some of the archaic features of the present law and would exempt the bulk of Dual Nationals.

" Many of you may wonder why most proposals should suffer these considerable delays. I think our time is hardly suited to give constructive solutions to such long outstanding issues. Take for instance the reform of our federal finances, which should give a solid basis for the revenues of our Confederation which have been collected during the last twenty or thirty years. There is little chance that the new proposals

drafted by our energetic President and which are at present dragged from one Chamber to the other, will eventually be approved by the voters. It looks moreover as though also the bold proposal of our Federal Council for granting full equality of citizen rights to Swiss women will not meet with a better fate; it would be no more than a just recognition of the many contributions made by our womenfolk to the public cause.

" A short while ago, a Federal councillor declared that our Swiss citizens have taken the habit of looking almost every month for a major scandal in the administration; that they want to have at least every week a quarrel with some authority and every day give unrestrained expression to their criticisms and grouses. Such a state of mind is also shown by the vagaries at the polls during these last few years and it is certainly not without danger for the working of our democracy.

" Periods of great prosperity, such as our people have enjoyed now ever since the war, are hardly propitious to bold and comprehensive innovations. Intrinsicly, the Swiss is a pessimist. He would hate to be told that he never had a better life than at present, because he fears that the tide may turn and hence he has to take his precautions.

" Such a frame of mind is largely responsible for the famous malaise; it will hardly improve since now also at home inflation is creeping along and showing its shabby face and since, after a long period of abundance, the sudden dearth of capital threatens to bring about a progressive rise of interest charges.

" A word, finally, on the proposed free-trade area which here, in the capital of free-trade, has no doubt aroused great interest. Obviously Switzerland cannot remain indifferent, if on the establishment of a common market in Europe she would be faced with new discriminatory treatment of her products. True, the major part of our exports is directed to other markets and should therefore not be prejudiced unduly by any arrangement in Europe. Considering the low charges of our present customs tariff, we certainly need not fear the fresh and even sharp winds of increased competition. I am glad to say that we are in constant and close contact and also in full agreement with the British authorities except for some minor points. But

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it is still by no means sure whether an agreement on the free-trade area will easily be reached with the six States of the common market.

"Looking back from afar towards our dear home country, it looks to us like a jewel, limpid and with crystal clear lines. Such contrasts and dark spots as there may be found and of which we often hear when we are at home, look to us like so many expressions and shadings of its richly varied aspects. Our people live within narrow boundaries, they know each other and are able to talk to each other. Let us hope that the spirit of the Gruetli, that same spirit which is a constant source of inspiration when you gather each year for your Landsgemeinde at Hardcastle Crags may always be conscious in the minds of our people at home and thus we shall face an unknown future with confidence and without fear."

Loud and long applause greeted the address of the Ambassador.

The next speaker was Mr. Max Buechi, Swiss Consul in Manchester, who paid a sincere tribute to the President on the occasion of his having accomplished 25 years as a member of the committee. He said, "Time and time again I have had an opportunity of working in close association with Mr. Monney, and I have gained a fair idea of the amount of work and time he has put into making the various functions a success, and that he has succeeded in making them just that, no one will contest." (Applause).

The speaker in conclusion referred to the Ladies' Club, which after ten years has now become a section of the Club, saying that by including the ladies the Club has become more vital and jollier.

Mr. Buechi expressed his own and the members' gratitude to Miss Alice Rietmann, who for the last ten years had acted as Hon. Secretary of the Ladies' Club, for the long and unselfish service she had rendered.

The Consul's address was much cheered. During a lull in the proceedings, Madame Daeniker presented the Challenge Cup to the winner, Dr. H. R. Bolliger, Vice-President of the Club and a member of the Rifle section. The recipient thanked the members for having honoured him thus, making a strong appeal to the company for more active support of this branch of the Society.

* * *

After a short interval dancing began. The men unfortunately being in the minority many of the attractive ladies had to content themselves by watching their more fortunate sisters, but very gallantly the Ambassador stepped into the breach, as did also a number of "elderly gentlemen".

At midnight this happy party came to a close, and before closing this narrative, I would like to assure my readers residing in the Metropolis that our countrymen in Manchester know how to entertain, know how to make everyone feel at home; their feelings towards their homeland are as warm as ours, and the hospitality which they extended to all who came from outside Manchester proves that they have their hearts in the right place. We can be proud of the Swiss Colony in Manchester.

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On Sunday, following the banquet, the Swiss Ambassador and Madame Daeniker were the guests of Consul and Mrs. Buechi at their home, which has been acquired by the Swiss Confederation.

A NEW TARGET FOR 1958.

A meeting of the Swiss Benevolent Society took place at Swiss House on Monday, 11th November. The President, Mr. F. G. Sommer, was in the chair. Most of the items on the agenda were connected with routine business. One thing transpired very clearly from the meeting, namely that the Society are still very much in need of financial support. The funds which were so handsomely increased by the generous Sandoz Legacy have, of necessity, dwindled again owing to the purchase of the Hostel for Girls. The reduction in capital due to this commendable investment means, of course, that interest and therefore capital have been severely decreased. On the other hand the 70-odd pensions which the Society pay out regularly are at the moment below the Government proposals for State pensions and must of necessity be raised in the near future. The subscribers to the S.B.S. have for the most part been loyal and generous and it would not be fair to ask them for more money. But one thing they can all do is to find *one new subscriber* each in the next year. This will cost them nothing, but it would more than make good the regrettable steady loss of faithful supporters through death which the Society have had to bear, and it would bring in the much needed funds to increase the pensions adequately.

It is a small thing to ask and requires little effort. The success, however, of such a subscription drive will ease the burden of the Society considerably. So let us all aim at this target and try to reach it. The pleasure will be ours.

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