

Old folks christmas luncheon at the Foyer suisse

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get an entirely wrong idea of most of the important events which, after all, are the very events which affect our daily life and are likely to affect our future.

At this Season of Goodwill, it is up to us, I think, to make an effort to think straight, to banish all thoughts of hatred, of prejudice, of ill-feeling for past wrongs and to look forward to a time when we shall all be brethren of one great human family.

As in the past, when the Continent was subdivided into a very great number of little states, little so-called free towns and republics and when each of them had its own little army, its own customs barriers, its own ambassadors even, and when, as a result of this subdivision ad absurdum they fought each other like tigers until they were all ruined, so to-day, when distances have been shortened tremendously and it takes less time to get from Sidney Australia to London than it took in the Middle Ages to travel from Zurich to Hamburg, we find that the World is cut up in a tremendous number of small nations, Kingdoms, Republics, Free States, etc., all with their own army, etc. see above!

We are very near the same end which befell those little States in the Middle Ages. We are very nearly on the point of falling into the bottomless pit out of which no Gold-Standard and no League of Nations would save us.

Is it hoping too much that the Nations of the Earth shall see the danger, ere it's too late and that they shall act in harmony, ere their disunion cripple them beyond repair, beyond hope?

Is it not time that the harrower form of Nationalism, such as exists in England, France, Germany, Switzerland, Italy, etc., shall be modified? Are we not *Europeans* and *Human Beings*? Why should we Swiss, for instance, think that we are better than any others? If, in some respect we are better, is it not because we had better opportunities than others, or, perhaps, because we underwent our schooling centuries earlier than others? Should we not, therefore, *Help* others, rather than sit on the laurels won for us by our Ancestors. Should it not be Switzerland's foremost task to *Lead*, morally? And yet, what do they prate about at our Federal Festivals? The song of the Fathers, of William Tell, Winkelried and others, but not the Song of Future, when the Sons of the present-day Fathers shall be proud to be not only Swiss, but Europeans. Switzerland's Neutrality and Sovereignty must be modified sooner or later if the world is to progress. Why not le beau geste now? Why not risk it?

When I was at school, we were told that old Latin tag according to which it is glorious to die for one's country.

It is, of course, much sweeter, to Live for it, but if there is anything at all in the idea that when a country is attacked it behoves its men to defend it, surely then it would be much better to risk a *Death* by trying to show the world a lofty leadership in progress, Disarmament, for instance, than to wait until the chaotic conditions into which we are drifting make it necessary for us or our children to perish by the sword and by the fire!

I believe Switzerland could light a beacon of hope in declaring for Disarmament on a vast scale, on a scale that would be unequivocal to all, and acting on such a declaration, whether others would follow at once or not.

The present-day jealousy of the armed Nations surrounding Switzerland would anyhow prevent any of them seizing us at once.

And what, if they did, what if our Country became the battle-ground for foreign armies, as it was before?

If the World is really morally bankrupt, then, to my mind, it would be much better to bring matters to an issue at once.

There is no hope in procrastination, in shirking vital issues, in shutting one's eye to the so obvious and inevitable dangers that await us, unless *We Disarm*.

If there is any sound reasoning in my thoughts, as given above, then it follows that Gymnastics and Sports must take the place of military training of Switzerland's youth. Discipline must be taught, because a young man not having learnt discipline is like a rudderless ship in a storm. But the army is not necessary to achieve this. The army is an obsolete weapon, the weapon of the frightened, the weapon of defence and attack, and, unless it is used for police duties only and limited in size and equipment for that duty, it is an anachronism and a real danger to Peace. We must get rid of the idea that we feel pride in our army. I know we do. I do, but, we must steel ourselves to change our feelings and our views, otherwise, we shall never be good citizens of the greater unit, whatever that may be. Let's be proud, as the Londoner is proud, of our *Police*, but let's abolish the *Army*, i.e., change it to a *Police* force pure and simple.

Let no one think that I am not proud of our Army. But then, I am proud of some pranks I played at school!

Goodwill Among Men of all Nations is being preached all over the world during these few days

of Christmas and New-Year, but, at heart we pay lip-service only to the noble sentiment first spoken by the Christian Saviour.

I remember the day when War was declared by England. In 1914. An English friend of mine and I were walking down Victoria Street that evening when we were accosted by a young German who was hurrying to the Station to see whether he could still get away. He told us, with tears in his eyes, that he had lived here for years, that he had no wish at all to do any harm to England or the English, but that he was hurrying home to Germany, because war had been declared and because, therefore, *He Had to Join Up*.

No doubt, later on, under the influence of sufficient doses of war-lies he developed sufficient war-psychology to be able to shoot, bayonet or otherwise kill, burn or poison-gas a few or as many as he could, of his former pals. *That Is War*. But, that man, if he killed a great number of his former pals, was not a criminal murderer, oh no, he was a hero. *That Is Insanity*.

If all men of all nations, in that fateful August 1914 had refused to go to war, *That would have been Goodwill towards Mankind*.

They would have been put into prison and branded as criminal or idiotic lunatics, or as cowards.

My dear Readers, you may be surprised at my article at this time of the year. But, let me tell you this, as a parting shot:

Be Honest with Yourself, Think it out, Don't Repeat Simply What Others Say or What You Read, But THINK for Yourself.

The process is very inconvenient, it leads you to very unorthodox thoughts, you may go wrong and err, but believe me, it is much better to think for yourself and err in the process than not to think at all. And it will only be by people thinking really hard and pondering over the result of present-day Nationalism, etc., that we shall get a *Universal Free Opinion Breathing Goodwill Among Men*.

PENNY-WISE AND £ FOOLISH!

This is the conclusion at which every good Swiss, having the international welfare in mind, must have arrived when becoming aware of the fact that the Swiss National Council by 74 votes to 45 decided to cut down the credit for the Swiss Delegation to the Disarmament Conference next year, whilst on the other hand preparations on a lavish scale have been undertaken at Geneva for this conference, as announced by the Swiss Observer of December 11th.

Such a decision is incomprehensible if one considers that millions of Francs will come to Switzerland directly and indirectly through the Disarmament and International Conferences, and that the grant in question is destined for the most noble cause, that of promoting and securing international peace and welfare.

It is obvious that the Swiss credit reduction for the disarmament is not giving a good example to the other countries. Should not just Switzerland that was spared from the war and its disastrous consequences show other nations her gratitude and her great interest in the Disarmament Problem by supporting same magnanimously?

Such an act on the part of Switzerland would mean a blessing and a divine service not only to herself but to the whole civilisation.

It is therefore most regrettable that our National Councils with the right spirit in the Disarmament question are in minority.

Christian Kunzle,
Birmingham, England.

NEWS FROM THE COLONY.

L'ESCALADE DE LA COLONIE GENEVOISE DE LONDRES.

Notre petite colonie s'est réunie le 11 décembre au Restaurant tessinois Paganini, sous la présidence de Monsieur Raoul de Cintra. Etaient présents 23 membres, parmi lesquels l'on remarquait, outre le président, le pasteur de l'Eglise suisse M. R. Hoffmann de Visme, M. C. Campart, H. Charmaux, E. Cottier, le Dr. Ferrière, Fred Gampier, L. Haussauer, P. Oltramare, P. Savoie, Messieurs L. and A. V. Flaegel père et fils, le doyen et benjamin respectifs de la réunion, et d'autres figures bien connues.

Ce fut une soirée très réussie, qui fit revivre au cœur de chacun l'un des épisodes les plus glorieux et les plus romantiques de l'Histoire de Genève, si riche en événements qui ont en leur répercussion bien au delà de ses murs.

Une surprise agréable attendait les convives, sous la forme d'une Chronique arrangée par Monsieur Campart, des éthers d'Escalade des Genevois de Londres et de leurs amis, depuis leur institution en 1914; c'est un manuscrit des plus intéressants, accompagné de documents dont la valeur rétrospective ne manquera pas d'augmenter

avec les années, chaque participant signant la page spéciale dédiée à cette gentille réunion annuelle.

Le toast habituel à la santé de Genève fut proposé par Monsieur de Cintra et cordialement offert par l'assistance. La solennité de l'occasion fut marquée par la lecture, de Monsieur Hoffmann de Visme, du Rôle Officiel des victimes de l'Escalade, puis, en un mouvement d'une énergie appropriée et en s'exclamant: "Ainsi périt un ennemi de la Patrie!" Monsieur de Cintra défonça d'un couteau (probablement faute de poignard) la magnifique Marmite d'Escalade qui décorait la table.

Monsieur Hoffmann de Visme eut également l'obligeance de lire un extrait d'un choix heureux du livre de Blaise, cette oeuvre toujours si fraîche, qui ne manque jamais de ramener les souvenirs de tout Genevois à ses bancs d'école. D'autres communications, d'un intérêt historique, furent faites par Monsieur H. Charmaux, qui s'intéresse tout particulièrement à ce qui, dans les débris du passé de Londres, pourrait avoir trait à l'Histoire de Genève.

Comme de coutume, le fameux "carnet noir" circula; ce Noël prochain il fera de nouveau des heureux, à témoin les 350 et quelques enfants de la grande colonie suisse qui l'an dernier, bénéficièrent de ses largesses.

Avant de se séparer, le président adressa des remerciements à Messieurs Meschini et son bras droit W. Notari, qui avaient si bien préparé table et menu, et contribué au contentement des "escaladeurs;" n'oublions point notre jeune major de table M. George Dimier qui lui aussi, y mit entrain et gaieté, et occasionna quelques délicieux bourdonnements de M. Piaget.

Puisse cette belle tradition de la réunion d'Escalade, être maintenue longtemps encore parmi les quelques Genevois exilés par les circonstances dans la grande capitale britannique et ses environs; même les brouillards les plus épais, ne sauraient refroidir dans leurs coeurs la place chaude qu'ils y gardent pour leur chère ville natale ou celle de leurs années de jeunesse.

H.A.

OLD FOLKS CHRISTMAS LUNCHEON AT THE FOYER SUISSE.

Not very long ago I had the pleasure to spend an evening amongst the younger and coming generation of the Colony; I speak of the Students dinner of the Swiss Mercantile Society College. There I was surrounded by youth, by an unbounding spirit of optimism; God's wide world lay before them, the future belonged to them, life with its bitter experiences had not yet succeeded in putting a damper on their youthful aspirations, many of them still looked at the world through rose coloured glasses. Hardly did I expect then, that soon after, I should be a guest at a function quite different from the one just mentioned.

The House Committee of the Foyer Suisse once again gave their customary Luncheon to the old Folks of the Colony at 15, Upper Bedford Place, W.C. on Monday, December 21st. Here was a gathering of some 50 venerable Ladies and Gentlemen, most of them at the eventide of their worldly pilgrimage. They have all experienced life in its fullness and gladness, as well as in its harshness and disappointments. Many of those who sat round those nicely decorated tables could relate tales of bitter experiences, of incessant, hard and untiring work, of hardship, but also of success and happiness; some have made careers some have climbed to the top of the ladder, some have not reached those exalted heights, but have rested half way, but all of them, I am sure have struggled to overcome the many adversities of which life is so full, and to all of them I hope a kind providence will sweeten their remaining days amongst us.

To be quite candid, I must admit that I felt rather uncomfortable at first, I somehow had an idea as if I was trespassing, I imagined that all those old Ladies and Gentlemen asked themselves what on earth this "baby" has come here for; and the first time in my life I was proud of the few white hairs which I possess and which I so often try to hide; still my embarrassment soon wore off, when I looked in their kind faces and saw their happy smiles, after all what do years matter, do we not all hail from the same country and are we not members of the same great family?

The Luncheon started shortly before 2 o'clock, and about fifty people sat down to a most delicious meal, which Mr. Meyer put before them; not only was the food exquisite but the service too was most efficient, and the staff of the Foyer Suisse could compete anywhere successfully, where politeness and attention are still considered to be a virtue.

The Hall was artistically decorated, even a picture depicting the snow clad mountain tops was put up for the occasion, and I feel sure this pretending painting has brought back to many present, glorious times of happy days spent in that land; which although far away, is ever present in their memories.

Shortly before the coffee was served, Mr. Bertschinger, one of the chief organisers of this happy gathering, welcomed the company, saying that he greatly regretted the absence of the Swiss Minister, Monsieur C. R. Paravicini, who, on so many previous occasions presided over this unique function, his not being present was all the more deplored as his absence was due to cause of illness. We are, however, delighted, he said, to greet amongst us to-day, his worthy representative, Monsieur de Jenner, Councillor of Legation, who will be able to make contact with the Foyer Suisse on this occasion. In his very able exposé he referred to the very critical times we are all experiencing, yet, he continued, in spite of all, the present function would be one of the last, the Foyer Suisse would give up. He mentioned that over 120 invitations have been sent out, but unfortunately a great number had to decline, owing to various causes, such as ill health or for reasons of economy. Since the opening of the Foyer Suisse some 8 years ago, the speaker continued, they had extended hospitality to many nations in the domiciliary department of the Trust and at Christmas time one may be permitted to hope that one more brick has been added to the great edifice foretold by Tennyson's Locksley Hall.

When the war-drum throbb'd no longer and the battle-flags were furled

In the Parliament of man, the Federation of the world.

However, as to the Social side of the Foyer Suisse, this gathering of our "Old Folks" forms the happiest of a series of Christmas functions among our own Swiss people and the numbers of compatriots visiting No. 15, Upper Bedford Place during these last 10 days is now over 1,000. This speech was enthusiastically received.

Monsieur de Jenner, then addressed the Luncheon party saying:

First and foremost, I must apologize to you all for the absence of M. Paravicini who, you will be sorry to hear, is confined to his bed with a severe chill. I must admit, however, that I am really very glad to have this opportunity of paying a visit to the Foyer Suisse, and of making the acquaintance of my venerable compatriots.

Whenever my generation addresses your generation we have the feeling that we should apologise to you for being unable to make your old age as comfortable and beautiful as you made the time of our youth for us.

Of course, you will all remember the glorious days, when a pound was a pound; when, in Switzerland, you could get a wonderful "Weggli" for 5 centimes, and a dozen new-laid eggs for 60 centimes, and when a few hundred francs bought one a comfortable home. These times are past now, partly, I am afraid, through our own mishandling.

There is an old Swiss proverb which says: "Wenn's am Esel z'wohl isch, geit er uf ds Tsch." (When a donkey feels too comfortable, he goes skating!) And that is perhaps what we have done. Nevertheless, we are doing our best to make people realise where we are going, and then the outlook will be brighter than it is at present.

I think there is nothing left for me to say except that I wish you all the very best of health in the coming year, and that I hope, this time next year, to see you all re-united here, jolly and well. Christmas is the time of hope; let us hope, then, that the coming year will lead us to happier times.

This short and very appropriate address was heartily cheered by the whole company.

Mr. G. Hafner, too, extended a warm welcome to all the guests, it was one of those rare speeches which will be treasured by many who had the privilege to listen to it. It brought a ray of sunshine into many lonely hearts and in many it kindled the flame of hope, who have seen but darkness ahead. It is our duty to be cheerful, he exclaimed, why is there all this unrest, this uncertainty, this anxiety for the future; centuries ago mankind has gone through crisis as great or even greater than the one we are now witnessing. The answer is that the world is seeking its salvation in material things instead of relying on spiritual ones.

These words inspired by a deep religious conviction did not fail to leave their mark on the listeners, and on termination his address the speaker received a hearty and well deserved ovation.

Mr. Ritter then thanked the Committee of the Foyer Suisse on behalf of the guests, and when he concluded his speech with that question, which many will remember, was in vogue during the war, namely: Are we downhearted? a mighty NO, which made me nearly jump, answered him.

Pastor Hoffmann-de Visme also gave an address which was much appreciated. During the Luncheon I had a rather animated conversation with my neighbour, a Gentleman who has reached the respectable age of 86, as to who would be the oldest Lady or Gentleman present, and I felt inclined to attribute this honour to him, when the Chairman announced that the customary medal was now going to be presented to the oldest participant present. The honour was bestowed on

Mlle. Bourquin, who was born on the 28th of January 1844, and will thus reach this month the age of 88 years.

Monsieur de Jenner in presenting this medal, which depicts on one side an eagle perched on a rock, with the following biblical quotation: "They shall mount up on wings like eagles," and bears on the other side the following inscription: F. R. Bourquin née 28 Janvier 1844 surrounded by two Swiss Crosses and Alpenrosen, said that the only embarrassment he felt was that he had to make the age of a Lady public, an act which a diplomat should not be guilty of. In shaking hand with the lucky recipient he wished her, in touching language many years yet of life and health. This incident made a deep impression on all present and not least on Mlle. Bourquin, who could hardly find words to express her thanks for the unexpected honour bestowed on her.

One can hardly imagine a function like this without any music, and in providing for same, the organisers have proved that they left no stone unturned in order to make the party a success, and sincere thanks are due to our prominent compatriot Mr. Franz Walter, who in company with an accompanist, rendered various cello solis with his usual skill. I have always admired the way in which eminent artists have given their services for functions such as this, and I am glad to see that Mr. Walter follows the practice which not only greatly honours the profession from which he hails, but also reflects great credit on him. I need hardly emphasize the fact that everyone present, enjoyed his playing immensely.

The company then adjourned to the drawing room, where old friendships were renewed, and everybody left with the wish to be present at the next Luncheon party.

I feel I cannot conclude my report without telling the organisers of this function how very much I admire their kindness in arranging such a party, they have thus given to many, untold pleasure. How often I have been told by some of our aged compatriots that they have been forgotten, and that nobody anymore cares for them. Well I can now refer them to this event, and point out to them, that there are still Swiss here who remember them and are willing to pay a humble tribute to their venerable age. Perhaps one day, if God wills, I may wend my way to 15, Upper Bedford Place to partake of this love feast. Gentlemen of the Foyer Suisse, you have done well in honouring our aged ones and in their hearts they will give you thanks.

STP.

SWISS MERCANTILE SOCIETY LTD.

We wish to direct the attention of our readers to the Fancy Dress Ball which will take place on Saturday, January 2nd, at the Midland Grand Hotel, to which friends are cordially invited. We understand that every endeavour has been made to make this event a success, and we hope that many will be able to attend.

SWISS FOREIGN ECONOMIC POLICY.

In a recent speech, Federal Councillor Schritthess, after reviewing the various factors which have contributed to the depression in Swiss trade and the measures which it is proposed to take in order to safeguard the interests of Swiss industries, gave an outline of the future trend of Swiss international trade relations to the following effect:

A decade ago, that is to say immediately after the War, Switzerland was forced to introduce special measures to fight unemployment and to improve her financial position by means of higher tariffs and import restrictions. These were emergency measures, which were abolished as soon as the country found itself once more in a period of comparative prosperity.

At the present moment Switzerland's relations with other States are regulated by means of a network of commercial treaties, conventions, and agreements, most of which are based on the "most favoured nation treatment" clause and are practically identical with those which existed in the pre-War period. These agreements smooth away all difficulties regarding import and export restrictions and guarantee minimum tariff rates.

Unfortunately, this unhampered system, which helped to develop international trade relations, has now been shattered to its very foundation. Swiss exports are coming to a standstill, while the home market is swamped with foreign goods. Moreover, Great Britain—Switzerland's best customer—has abandoned her free trade principles for a protectionist tariff policy. This decision will have a tremendous repercussion on Swiss trade; many an important industry will be paralysed, if not ruined, and the consequences are at present incalculable. In such circumstances Switzerland also is forced to adopt a new policy, as she firmly intends to safeguard the interests of her trade, industry, and agriculture, to whom an appeal is made for unity and co-operation.

"1932."

.....Pure si sente un'alito di vita nova, dolce, infinito, e i bronzi squillano in lieto scampanio l'eterna gloria nell'alto.....a Dio.

L'anno 1931 scende nella fossa; si sperde nel numero dei secoli.....o nuovo anno che stai per nascere, o buon fratellino 1932, sii buono, sii dolce, caritatevole e pieno di generosa simpatia per tutti e sarai da tutti benedetto, avrai l'ammirazione di chi ti circonda.

Buon anno a tutti! pace, gioia e sorrisi nei palazzi dei signori come nei piu oscuri abituri.

Rifioriscano come pallidi fiori invernali, dolci e fragranti, le nostre credenze; ricordiamo la Fede degli Avi nostri, attingiamo in questa coraggio, perseveranza, riposiamo in essa il nostro spirito agitato.

Non lasciamo che le condizioni economiche disastrose dei tempi presenti, le questioni sociali difficili, rendano difficile la virtù, spengano nel nostro spirito tutto ciò che un giorno fu la poesia della nostra infanzia e pascolo della fanciullezza.

Eleviamo in alto il pensiero e confidiamo.

Soltanto la Fede porterà nel cuore di tutti la pace, la felicità, la calma confortevole nelle avversità.

Le campane suonano a festa...è nato l'anno nuovo! Buon anno a tutti!

T.L.R.

PROSIT NEUJAHR!

Scho längst hei Bäum und Strücher
Verloren ihre Schmuck,
D'Luft ist bedütend rücher—
Mir näh e guete Schluck.

Der Sturm stöhnt wild im Chömi;
Me glaubt bald a Spuck.
Dass emu z' Gnade chöm i
Nimm wieder i e Schluck.

S'Gmüet düre Wy wird g'hobe,
Het gseit scho Habakuk.
Hüt wieder mir's erprobe,
Und "gmüetlig" näh e Schluck.

Es isch Sylvesterobe.
Uf's Jahr mir luege zruck.
Es wird's wohl Niemer lobe.
Glychwohl! En Abschiedsschluck!

Los, d'Glocke fö a lüte!
Es neus Blatt in "Life's Book!"
Viel Glück Euch liebe Lüte!
Prosit! E Neujahrsschluck!

Mutz.

THE EDITOR'S POST-BAG.

The Editor is not responsible for the opinions expressed by Correspondents and cannot publish anonymous articles, unless accompanied by the writer's name and address, as evidence of good faith.

To the Editor of the Swiss Observer.

Sir,

I was much interested in the article in the Swiss Observer of 19th December, 1931, on Slogans, and it has occurred to me that the subject might easily be made use of to provide a pleasant pastime instead of cross-word puzzles or that even the Swiss Observer might like to open a competition for the best Slogan for different countries. As examples we have, of course, British Best, and I would also suggest, French First, German Greatest, Swiss Supreme and even Cuban Cutest, but Japan and China beat me. Can any other constant Reader offer any bright suggestions? I am, Sir,

Yours faithfully,

Constant Reader.

SWISS MERCANTILE SOCIETY LTD.

The members and friends of the Society are reminded that our

Fancy Dress Ball

will take place on

SATURDAY, JANUARY 2nd, 1932,

at the

Midland Grand Hotel, St. Pancras Str., N.W.

from 7.0 to 1.0 a.m.

TICKETS at 8s. 6d. (incl. Supper during the interval) may be obtained at Swiss House, 34-36, Fitzroy Square, W.1 (Tel. Museum 688) and from Employment Department, 24, Queen Victoria St., E.C.4 (Tel. Chy 7719). THE GENERAL PURPOSE COMMITTEE.

Drink delicious "Ovaltine" at every meal—for Health!