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SWISS BENEVOLENT SOCIETY.

CHRISTMAS 1933.

Christmas is approaching! And with it the memories of our youth, when we wrote down on a slip of paper all the good things we wished for ourselves for Christmas: — the crayons, the paintbox, the little shop, the doll's kitchen, the model railway and what not! Few things were left out.

But what of the grown-ups and the very old? Have they their Christmas wishes still? Indeed, but how changed these are. Youth may wish for playthings, but he who has grown old in the constant battle for daily bread or cannot even find the work to earn it by, his wish is for necessities, and the barest of these are a gift to him.

Our kindly compatriots are always assisting the Swiss Benevolent Society with money and gifts of clothes and boots to be distributed among the needy. This Christmas again we are appealing to all those that can spare a gift to ask themselves what our own wish might be. The answer is simple:— First we want your sympathy and goodwill and then the good deeds which are engendered by them. During the past year we have had the privilege to care for 132 families, 132 single, and 65 pensioners, who are dependent upon our efforts. It is for them that the good deeds of our countrymen are required.

You know that on Monday evenings the Poor come to us at Swiss House. They tell us of their struggles, their privations, their hopeless future, timidly and with shame in their tired eyes. They would not ask for help but for the fact that they are at the end of their tether, too old to find work, with all their savings gone, no use to anyone any longer. Can we fully appreciate their heroism? Can we look on with cold indifference and remain unmoved when we hear a story such as this?: — "Father has been seriously ill for a long time. There is no money coming in since the two elder boys have lost their jobs and we are almost without food. They took father to the hospital but the doctor said they could do nothing for him and there was no bed free. So they brought him back and he is now so bad that he cannot eat anything at all. It is a growth in the stomach, they say. We have no hope left and it will be a mercy when he is released from the terrible pains he suffers." — It was not till just before the end that the case was brought to us and we did what we could. Little enough it was, but the old man died with a blessing on his lips in the knowledge that his compatriots were going to look after his family.

Then there are the old and infirm, workless after a lifetime's struggle, with exhausted savings; there are those who, although still young, have been out of work for too many months and have lost courage, in terror of the future, crushed by the misery in and around them. What is to become of their families? There is the case of the young woman who finally confessed that her only food for the day had been a piece of cheese. She had lost her child and, with it, all interest in life. Her nerves were worn to rags and she was quite unfit for work.

We could go on, giving you details of case after case, each one with its own particular appeal to our pity, but all alike in their hopelessness and utter misery. These sufferers come to us after everything has failed and failed again; their self-respect will not let them come sooner. Truly, the fortitude and dignity of the Poor are amazing!

Have you considered, dear Reader, how little we know of this aspect of life? We who are kindhearted enough in an ordinary way, we to whom good behaviour and good citizenship are as second nature, are we also good enough Christians to allow this lesson to enter our soul? If we are, then surely shall we also be ready to do more for the Poor than we have done in the past. Where and how to give is the purpose and science of the Swiss Benevolent Society. It is undoubtedly wiser to give our contributions to the Society so that they may be passed on to the Poor, not as occasional alms but as organised assistance.

Therefore, let this contribution of yours be just as large as you can possibly afford, let it be a thanks offering for a good passage at sea or on land, for the recovery of a dear one from illness or accident, for the knowledge that you yourself have passed unscathed through these years of depression or for any commendable reason, but let it be large and generous and now. This is Christmas time, when all of us, great and small, expect gifts, peace and goodwill.

Our thanks will never cease to be yours because, by your gift, you will have put us in the position to do more good than otherwise we could have done.

Sei zum geben stets bereit,
Miss nicht kärglich deine Gaben,
Denk' in deinem letzten Kleid,
Wirst du keine Taschen haben.

SERVIR!

Servir! un petit mot-capable de soulever un monde. Aujourd'hui plus que jamais, alors que de toute part souffle un vent de désordre, d'égoïsme et de violence, le besoin de soumission fraternelle à un idéal librement accepté, le souci de faire passer avant le sien propre, l'intérêt général se fait sentir. Les meilleurs rejettent tout un ensemble d'affirmations orgueilleuses, nées d'un individualisme exaspéré et s'efforcent de revenir aux principes qui malgré tout, demeurent les pierres angulaires de notre civilisation. Le Mouvement d'Oxford témoigne des préoccupations renaissantes. En Suisse également un idéalisme nouveau, se marque de plus en plus. L'autre jour, parlant à Zurich à un auditoire composé d'étudiants, M. le Conseiller fédéral Pilez-Golaz a magnifiquement exprimé les nécessités de l'heure présente.

"L'ordre nouveau a-t-il déclaré, que vous recherchez a pour condition inéluctable le rétablissement d'une morale, individuelle et collective, d'une foi désintéressée. Traquez les profiteurs et les démagogues. Ne vous battez pas pour des textes ou des mots mais recherchez avant tout les caractères. Faites confiance à vos chefs, en montrant un peu plus d'indulgence à ceux qui vous ont précédés dans la carrière. Ce qu'il faut au pays, c'est une véritable élite, et non une caste, une élite capable de commander et de travailler pour les autres dans un esprit désintéressé. Servir, voilà le salut de l'homme, et vous le constaterez un jour, son plus grand bonheur."

Cette affirmation se rapproche de celle faite tout récemment par un groupe de "jeunes" au cours d'une déclaration reproduite par la "Gazette de Lausanne."

On réclame de toutes parts une réforme de l'Etat. Mais ce qu'il faut changer au préalable, c'est l'esprit qui anime la société moderne.

La réforme que l'on vise doit être d'abord, doit être surtout, spirituelle et morale.

C'est ce qu'exprime avec concision et netteté l'admirable programme suivant, qu'ont élaboré récemment d'importants groupements d'anciens combattants. Il constitue, sous une forme aussi éloquent que condensée, une chartre, un bréviaire politique et social d'une magnifique inspiration. La voici:

Servir au lieu de se servir.

Remplir ses "devoirs" avant de réclamer ses droits.

Placer les valeurs morales au-dessus des valeurs matérielles.

Régagir contre l'improbité, la démoralisation et l'égoïsme.

Combattre le sectarisme sous toutes ses formes et d'où qu'il vienne.

Retrouver le sens du foyer familial.

Restaurer la dignité humaine.

Restaurer l'autorité, la libérer de l'intolérable tyrannie des partis et des groupements, des appétits et des forces d'argent.

Il n'y a, dans ce programme, rien à quoi nous ne puissions souscrire. On objectera peut-être qu'il y manque un mot: la liberté. C'est vrai. Mais la chose importe plus que le mot.

Et qui ne voit que, pour être une réalité vivante, un bienfait dont tous les citoyens puissent jouir et sentir le prix, la liberté doit pouvoir s'épanouir et régner dans un terrain débarrassé de tous les obstacles qui l'empêchent de se distribuer d'égale façon pour tous et d'être pleinement elle-même?

Sachons, les uns et les autres, rapprendre à "servir." Tout ce que l'humanité recèle de beau, de fécond, de généreux, de désintéressé est dans ce mot; à nous d'en faire une réalité vivante dans l'intérêt commun.

Bulletin Suisse d'Egypte.

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