

Xmas thoughts and wishes

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XMAS THOUGHTS AND WISHES.

Once again Xmas is close at hand, and with it many old recollections are awakened. Gaiety and merriment were always associated with this time, and many a heart was quickened and gladdened by its coming. It used to be the season of hospitality, merriment and openheartedness.

Xmas was not only a festival for the children, but also for the grown ups; it was a time, when we glanced back and took stock of the last twelve months, some with gladness, some with regrets, but all with the hope that the New Year would give us fresh opportunities. With renewed energy and determination we were prepared to face the coming year, trusting that a kind Providence would guard us from disappointments and disasters, and that unfulfilled hopes and ambitions would be realised.—

With a heavy heart we are celebrating this Xmas, although war has ceased, and some of the Peace treaties have actually been signed, there is very little Peace in this world. We experience to-day a war of words, a war without fighting, a war of diplomacy, accompanied with the same bitterness and hate, as the one which we witnessed during the last few years.

In one of my Xmas messages during the war, I wrote:—

“Surely even if we have to empty the cup to the bitter end, and shoulder the cares and sorrows of the world, witnessing the wildest savageries and cruelties, the day will come, when the sword is put back into the scabbard, and when the “cease fire” will be sounded over the desolate battlefields.

Then out of the ruins will emerge a new era, this new world, which has been promised to us so often, purified and sanctified through sufferings and innumerable sacrifices. Its fulfilment lies in our hands. Each of us will have to bear his share, we must all work together in harmony so that future generations can live in peace and enjoy the short span of life which is allotted to us. Then, indeed, the lives which have been lost have not been sacrificed in vain. They shed their blood so that we may live in peace. With a deep sense of gratitude, we will treasure their memory; the simple wooden crosses scattered over the four corners of the globe will become sacred symbols of the freedom and liberty which will ever be treasured and never forgotten.”

The hope expressed then, has unfortunately not been realised, and still we wait for the time when peoples all over the world will work together to find a

way out of this chaos; an attempt has, and is being made, with what result we all know, and so we wait and wait for the day when human beings come to their senses, when brotherly love and understanding of each others difficulties will herald in that world which we so ardently hoped for, but time presses on and anxiously we await its fulfilment.—

On the eve of a New Year, let us, dear compatriots, cast a glance back on things which are concerning us more closely, and here at least there is some reason for rejoicing.

The life of the Swiss Colony in Great Britain, which, during the war years, through force of circumstances, became almost dormant, has received a new lease of life and a new impetus. Slowly but surely things have livened up.

Several Societies in the Colony have worked out more or less ambitious programmes to infuse a new spirit and new blood into their deliberations. Questions of great interest not only to the members of the respective Societies, but to the whole Colony are fearlessly, and let me say, so far successfully tackled. Although, these institutions are pursuing different aims and purposes, they meet on common ground in their endeavours to call on the younger generation for active collaboration, a collaboration which is essential for the maintenance of our Colony. Experience, paired with youthful enthusiasm, should, if applied with tolerance, bear fruit and become beneficial to all members of the Swiss community.

A further reason for satisfaction is the fact, that during the last few years a close link has been established between the Colony and the Legation, both the Minister and his collaborators are taking an active part, not only in the social sphere, but also in the intellectual life of the Colony.

There are also other signs apparent that a new spirit and a new enthusiasm is going through the Colony, which are happy auguries for the future.

The official organ of the Colony, the “*Swiss Observer*” has reflected this spirit in its columns, and is to-day more than ever willing to collaborate, and to foster a closer relationship between the members of the Colony.

To be useful, it must become strong, and to become strong it must get the support which I consider in all humbleness, it is entitled to get. There is, I admit, room for improvement, and in order to allow us to achieve this, we need the help of everyone.

Owing to the generosity of some of our readers, who have given us donations over and above the amount of their subscriptions, and the support of our regular advertisers, we have been able to enlarge the paper from sixteen to twenty pages, without increasing the subscription rates. In spite of augmentive costs of production and paper, the charge is still the same as when it was founded some 28 years ago.

The Editor takes this opportunity to express to his collaborators, and to all those, who have helped him to carry on, during difficult times, also on behalf of the Publishers, his sincere thanks. Their help is, and has been an inducement to carry on a work, which he considers to be a patriotic duty, and in the interests of the Swiss Colony in Great Britain.

And now let us turn our eyes, on the eve of a new year, towards our Homeland.

Many of us have been privileged to pay, during the last few months a visit to that country of ours,

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which has so often been called a Paradise; admitting that it is not solely inhabited by angels, it has appeared to us, after having spent so many years under austerity conditions, a haven of rest.

I can do no better than to repeat some of the words with which I closed my last year's survey, here they are:—

“ We know from experience that Neutrals after any war have a bad Press, and there are surprisingly many people who still hold the conviction that a neutral country is one which is afraid to fight and fattens itself whilst the going is good.

Self praise and advertising of good deeds are foreign to us Swiss, what services we have rendered to all the belligerents during the last war, and they were manifold, we have willingly and unflinchingly given, from a purely humanitarian point of view, and from a high sense of duty towards those who fought for the rights of mankind. Switzerland has always been a haven of rest for all those who have been persecuted, or who were in dire need of help, the finest example is the splendid work done by the International Red Cross Committee in Geneva, which has brought relief and succour to millions of our fellow men in the four quarters of the globe. There are many more instances I could quote, where our country has been of paramount help to the nations at war, but we are not asking for thanks nor for cheap glory, but one thing we object to, and that is, to be accused of selfishness or enrichment whilst other peoples had to fight for their existence.

Contrary to statements made at one time or another that Switzerland has benefited financially through this war, it must be stated emphatically that Switzerland is not, and has never been a rich country, and is emerging from this war considerably poorer, but thank God, so much richer in esteem for its great humanitarian work.

Let us hope that our endeavours and our achievements will be recognised, in a true and unbiased spirit, and that it will not be forgotten that in the tragic hour of need, destruction and misery our country has fulfilled a mission of mercy, a mission which will go down in history as one, if not the only redeeming feature of this world war.

Once again, we Swiss abroad, testify anew our deep attachment to our beloved country, expressing our solemn gratitude to the Federal Government for their incessant and untiring labours for the welfare of our own people and for having guided the ship of State wisely and courageously past the dangerous rocks of a surging sea.

We equally owe this country, which has always extended to us a generous hospitality, and which has given to many of us a second home, deep gratitude.”

“ PEACE ON EARTH,” let this be our motto for the year 1948, and let us look into the future with renewed hope, that out of the chaos of the past, there will emerge a better and happier world, a world in which the great human family can live secure from dangers of war, in PEACE and HAPPINESS.

ST.

