

A.F. Tschiffely †

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THE CHILDREN'S CHRISTMAS SERVICE AT THE SWISS CHURCH.

By DEREK MEAKIN.

Looking back on the Christmas festivities, one of the most delightful events I attended was the children's service in the Eglise Suisse on the Sunday afternoon before Christmas.

Pasteur Reverdin did the French-speaking community proud on this occasion, and his efforts were certainly well rewarded by the large congregation present for the service.

In one corner of the church stood a massive Christmas tree, whose flickering candles, I thought, looked far more impressive than the coloured lights which decorate so many trees these days.

The number of children who went to see the tree and take part in the singing must have pleased pasteur Reverdin no end. He is a young man himself, and a great believer in that well-known verse from St. Matthew — "Laissez venir à moi les petits enfants, et ne les en empêchez point; car le Royaume des Cieux est pour ceux qui leur ressemblent."

I wondered how many of them, like my own two-year-old Denise, were visiting church for the first time since their christening, looking wide-eyed at that wonderful tree, listening with undisguised admiration to the rich voices of the two choirs whose contributions did much to make the afternoon so memorable.

This was the first major Swiss function in which the Meakin family has been privileged to take part since our recent move to London from Manchester — which is another city where the warm-hearted Swiss do all they can to ensure the children have a good time over Christmas.

It was indeed gratifying on this occasion, to see living proof of the important part played by religion in the life of the colony down here.

And for my wife, the occasion also meant a pleasant surprise. Ever since we came to London she has been wanting to meet someone from the "right" side of the Sarine. And there, sitting in the pew in front of her, was an old friend she has not seen since they were at school together in Montreux almost ten years ago!

Now I know just what is ment by "It's a small world. . .!"

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A. F. TSCHIFFELY †

Our compatriot Aimé Felix Tschiffely, author and traveller, has died on the 5th inst., in a London Hospital, aged 58, after an operation for kidney trouble.

He will best be remembered for his 10,000 mile ride on horseback in 1925. He started his journey, in Buenos Aires with his horses Mancha and Gato, and arrived at Washington two and a half years later, they carried him from the pampas of the Argentine over the barren Andes, down into steaming jungles, across the Isthmus of Panama, through Central America and into Mexico. He described that journey in his three books *Southern Cross to Pole Star*, *Tschiffely's Ride*, and *Mancha and Gato*, describing his experiences, he never wrote of "I" but of "We", meaning himself and the two horses, for he was anxious to emphasize that this journey was undertaken to prove the worth of the native Argentine ponies and that it was their stamina and spirit that had made the famous journey possible.

Tschiffely has written a number of other books, best-known amongst them are: *Bridle Paths* (published 1936) describing a journey on horseback from Salisbury to Scotland, a biography of his friend R. B. Cunninghame-Graham, *Bohemia Junction* (published 1950), *Round and About Spain*.

A. F. Tschiffely was born in Switzerland in 1895, and received his education in England, where for a time he was a tutor at various preparatory schools, among them Park Hill, Lyndhurst, and The Priory, Malvern. He then went out to Buenos Aires, where he acted temporarily as headmaster of the English High School there, it was after this episode that he undertook his great ride.

The deceased lived for many years in London, and although he was not often seen in the Colony, he, on several occasions, prior to the last war, gave lectures to Swiss audiences in London.

He married in 1933 Miss Violet Theodora Hume. As Violet Marquesita she sang for three years the role of Lucy Locket in "The Beggars Opera." She was with him when he died.

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