

Christmas at the Swiss Church

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CHRISTMAS AT THE SWISS CHURCH.

Sunday, 26th December, 1943.

A Christmas Celebration was held this afternoon at Endell Street, where the Swiss Church was packed with members of the colony from both the French and German-speaking Swiss congregations. In the centre of the altar stood an immense Christmas tree ablaze with candles, red and white, which had been sent from Switzerland for the occasion.

The celebration opened with Handel's Sonata played by the organ and two violins. The familiar Christmas story, as recorded in the gospel according to Luke, chapter 2, was read by Rev. M. Pradervand. Then a male choir sang: "O nuit calme et sereine."

Rev. Pradervand, in his address, laid special weight on the words in the Christmas message: "Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all the people." Far from the homeland, speaking in different tongues, we have come together for the same purpose, to see the Christmas tree and to hear God's message: "Fear not"! We have entered the fifth year of the war, and fear in many forms, due to the uncertainty of our time, threatens us from many sides. Fear of illness, of death, of danger to relatives serving in the forces but stronger than fear sounds forth the angel's message: "Fear not"! It is not only a message of great joy to a few who saw Christ in the cradle, but it is meant for all who hear this message to-day. It is a divine message and therefore we are able to conquer fear.

After the address followed a violin duet: Pastorale by Corelli. A message of greetings and good wishes was read from the Federation of Protestant Churches in Switzerland, and then the choir from the "Schwyzerchränzli" sang: "Tochter Zion, freue dich, 'Jauchze laut, Jerusalem! Sieh', dein König kommt zu dir, Ja, er kommt, der Friedefürst"!

Rev. Paul Rad, on behalf of the German-speaking Swiss congregation, spoke on the text: "Unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord". Rev. Rad mentioned that this message was originally proclaimed to those who were waiting for their Lord, but we may note that the words "this day" apply for the present time to all who seek the Saviour. They are very significant words and occur again and again in the Scriptures. They often represent a warning not to be hardened through sin, in departing from the living God, but accept His word as long as it is proclaimed. May we to-day receive the Lord Jesus Christ as our Saviour, so that he can rule our hearts, control our thoughts, and direct our wills. May we be ready also to welcome this Saviour in our homes, so that He may give us His peace which passes all understanding, and the certainty of His abiding presence through time and eternity.

The celebration was concluded by the hymn: "Silent night, holy night," sung by the whole congregation.

A cup of tea was served to all who could stay and this gave an opportunity for many a friend to shake hands and to wish each other a Happy New Year. By and by the candles burnt down, and one worshipper after another left the church, pondering over the message of unspeakable joy: "Unto you is born this day a Saviour, — Christ the Lord."

W.F.

CHRISTMAS CELEBRATION OF THE

"SCHWYZERCHRAENZLI."

A cold wind was sweeping down Holborn as I hurried along to Kingsway Hall on the afternoon of Wednesday, 22nd December. I was going to attend the Christmas Celebration of the "Schwyzerchränzli."

When I got there the Lecture Hall with its dark panelling looked warm and cosy. Long tables were laid for tea, and their simple decorations of fir-branches, pinecones and candles at once put one in a festive mood. While some ladies were busily making last minute preparations the 60 or 70 seats gradually filled up.

The communal singing of "Oh, Du Fröhliche" opened the programme, and by the shining faces one could tell with what pleasure the old carol was sung. Mr. W. Fischer, a member of the *Kirchenrat*, addressed the gathering in English and then in Swiss. It seemed that his homely speech was appreciated by everyone.

When the Christmas tree was lit up the Christmas atmosphere was complete. Many were the candles and happy the faces they illuminated. The choir sang several songs under the direction of Mr. E. P. Dick of Orchestral and Choral Society fame. Every one of the young girls gave her best, and the beautiful old hymns sounded refreshing and harmonious.

Some girls read the story of the birth of Jesus and others recited passages from the Scriptures. The fatherly kindness of Pastor Rad was always in evidence, when he prompted the girls who recited poems, when he led the congregation in prayer, and again in his address. In his usual way he held the audience spellbound when he related some of his personal experiences as a clergyman.

Punctually at 5 o'clock the young girls passed round cups of hot tea and platefuls of cakes. Home-made "Guezi" made by some of the members of the "Chränzli," "Schenkeli" and "Lebkuchen" presented by friends, and other delicious things were much appreciated by the few children present and grown-ups alike.

Some more singing both by the efficient choir and the whole community brought the party to an end. Pastor and Mrs. Rad well deserved the flowers which the girls presented to them. They had worked hard towards the success of the programme. The ready help and the sincerity which they both bring to everything they undertake in the *Schweizerkirche* has endeared them to everyone who knows them. — Many thanks, too, go to Mrs. G. Jenne. Her untiring energy and enthusiastic support are a great asset to the "Schwyzerchränzli."

After many chats and friendly handshakes we finally left the cosy hall for the cold darkness of Kingsway. It had been a happy party and one could have wished for nothing better to start the Christmas holidays with.

It is good to know, too, that at the "Schwyzerchränzli" young Swiss girls have an opportunity, every Wednesday afternoon, to meet others. The friendly atmosphere of these meetings makes it easier for many of them to bear the separation from their families at home.

Mariann.