

The Manchester Colony's Christmas Party

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THE MANCHESTER COLONY'S CHRISTMAS PARTY.

The success of this party and the unprecedented attendance must be ascribed to two people, our host and Father Christmas. They established a precedent last year and lived up to it again, beyond the highest expectations, to their own embarrassment. Let us say "Thank you" to them and leave it at that. The joy they gave to young and old is their best reward and both are of the quality to prefer that testimony to any words.

Never before has a Swiss gathering in Manchester amounted to a round 200 including over sixty children. It will be delightful to keep this standard when the consumption of milk and sugar make inroads on less tightly rationed stores.

The Swiss flag was there and in the centre of the room stood the Christmas Tree, with pre-war candles and coloured bulbs; beneath it a pile of "Päckli". Christmas tunes were played on the violin and piano; the gathering joined in the singing of "Stille Nacht" and the President gave an address of welcome, conveying at the same time the Christmas Greetings from Minister Ruegger.

After tea, satiety from all the delicious cakes, tarts and ices was aided by the dimming of the lights to create a stillness of expectancy. A rustling was heard in the neighbouring chimney, then a knock came at the door and the opening chords of "O, Du Fröhliche" were quickly taken up by the whole assembly. Through a chink of light, Father Christmas was seen to advance in his resplendent array of scarlet and ermine — the Swiss colours — bent under the load of a promising sack. The candles began to flicker and the bulbs to sparkle in their delicate light. It was still dim enough to hide the blushes that rose when Father Christmas went between the children's tables to receive the assurance, some timid and some bold, that they had been good and would be even better. This much may be said to their credit, they stood the test of patience well until the sack revealed its mysterious contents, shining bags of a respectable size filled with chocolates, biscuits and sweets. Of course, Father Christmas comes from happy regions where people have rations to spare! And then there were still other presents, all those little packets under the tree, each brightly wrapped and neatly labelled with the recipient's name. There was one for every child, even the late-comers managed to get something; it was the grown-ups' joy to watch their delight and afterwards to hear their recitations, some of them very timid and small-voiced. Little Bobby, two cheeses high, won an unexpected success. Picked out to set the ball rolling, he was gently lifted on the table by Father Christmas; all eyes were centred on him; he found it too much and changed his mind; with a decided "No, I won't," he jumped down and fled. Others, less self-conscious, followed and earned applause; they were all eager to be lifted on the table by Father Christmas. For another hour the children played games: a potato-race, word guessing and mimicking, until all the prizes were won. Meanwhile the older generation mingled and made friends until the time came to "plunder" the tree and start making tracks for home; for several parties it was a long journey.

For a war-time Christmas this party has been an outstanding success. It was made so through the generosity of many friends who sent gifts in cash and

kind. Thanks be to all of them, most especially to Father Christmas' wife who also did the shopping and by whose sense of fitness the right things were found, so that every child got just the present that pleased him or her best.

It only remains to record Mr. Kübler's aforementioned address:

"Monsieur and Madame Pernet, Madame Schedler, ladies and gentlemen, friends all!

A year ago we expressed the hope that this Christmas morn the bells would be able to ring out a message of peace, at least our dear home country, and our land would no more be just an island in the ocean of war and terror around it.

Instead, the rollers of the tides of war have come nearer to our frontiers and its guardians look anxiously, yet confidently, across the breakers to see that at no place shall there be a dangerous leak or weakness. Yet our country is always ready to succour the shipwrecked and the distressed, to help those who need assistance, to carry on the work of mercy wherever it is needed, to be a haven of rest to the hunted.

And so, in spite of the hard and anxious times in which they at home and we here are living, Christmas still stands as the symbol of "Good Will to all mankind", in fact more so than ever does this Christmas message shine through the dark clouds; the need to help, be it to help the needy or to see that at least the children shall have a taste of that feast which to us older ones meant so much in our childhood days.

And so in gathering round our Christmas Tree to-day we become, all of us, young and old, part of that large family at home and abroad, which presently follows the age-old tradition to be once more enchanted by the candle-light and the scent of the pine-needles, transplanted again to the home of our childhood with all the wonders and charm of Christmastide and surrounded by our loved-ones to whom our thoughts go out with all the warmth and longing of our hearts.

As a token of their regard towards us, I have the great pleasure of giving you a message from our Minister in London — Dr. P. Ruegger:

'Regret unable attend your Christmas Party but should be grateful if you would convey my very best Christmas wishes to whole gathering—Ruegger' to which I can only add on behalf of the Swiss Club, Manchester our heartiest wishes for a Happy Christmas to you all."

Finally, the Manchester Swiss send the season's greetings to all our compatriots at home, in this and other lands, coupled with the fervent wish for happier times in Peace and Freedom. r . . . r

SWISS MERCANTILE SOCIETY.

The Monthly Meeting of the Society, held at Swiss House on Saturday, January 13th, was attended by about 30 members and friends, with Mr. J. J. Boos, President, in the Chair.

One new member, Mr. Walter Roos, was admitted and the agenda being confined to routine matters, was speedily dealt with. Members thus had a welcome opportunity of spending the remainder of the afternoon with a game of "Jass" or table tennis.

Members are reminded that the Annual General Meeting will be held at Swiss House on Saturday, February 10th, at 2.30 p.m., and it is hoped that a large number will be present. W.B.