

A Christmas message

Autor(en): **Winter, A.B.**

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A CHRISTMAS MESSAGE

Well, here's wishing the world at large and our readers in particular a happier Christmas and a New Year that shall indeed renew and fulfil our hopes of brighter and better things. May the Almighty Father so direct the hearts of the great gathering of Statesmen here in Switzerland's far famed little town of Geneva, that they may accept for the nations they represent that „Peace on earth” which is His will for men.

All experience tends to show that change is a characteristic of things mundane. Spring leads on to summer, and autumn yields to winter. And then once more the dark days grow brighter. Depression will not always darken with its clouds the horizon. So, as we enter the New Year, „Greet the unseen with a cheer!” We may not be gladdened with the usual flights of friends from the West this winter; then, we shall expect to welcome the more next season. Tomorrow is another day!

The passing year will likely be remembered in Switzerland for its glorious autumn weather. Summer was reluctant to put in an appearance. The tears which should have been shed in April flowed too abundantly in July. But then, the face of Nature brightened, and the sun shone out as suns are meant to shine.

And did not humanity respond! The lapping waters of the lovely lakes and the rivers with their swifter currents alike swarmed with bathers, reveling in the light and the warmth. They swam and they dived, they paddled in canoes, and even essayed to „skijor” over the wavelets in the wake of a motor-boat. And then they displayed themselves on the strand till the banks gleamed with the limbs of „fair women and brave men”, as the poets used to put it, though nowadays each sex is as brave and as fair as the other. Gather ye sunshine while ye may. It was gathered! Arms and legs, chests and backs deepened from white to fawn or pink or bronze as the individual skin reacted to the sun's rays.

As one writes here in mid November, the autumn tints are but now colouring the woods. Roses are still blooming on the bush in the balcony, and the plum-trees are still green with the lingering leaves of summer, though the larch tree yonder is clad in russët gold. Any evening now the nip of a sharp frost and the tear of a strong wind will strip the trees bare. And then Winter will again spread its mantle of snow over lowland and highland preparing the course for the visitors Switzerland welcomes so blithely to its vast amphitheatres.

Already fresh snow is lying on the mountain slopes. One anticipates a good season so far as weather goes. Why not? Switzerland each year offers increasing facilities for the enjoyment of winter sports. Snow there is sure to be. Comfort and even luxury is assured. At this resort or that the Swiss genius will have planned and built another „funiculaire” to save the guests the tedious, stiff climb to the spot where the skier will start on his exhilarating run.

Undoubtedly during the last few years the circles of English visitors have grown wider and wider. People

who never dreamed of going abroad have found that really there is no difficulty about it. And they enjoy the venture. The quaint old towns, the picturesque (or otherwise?) foreign villages, the strange customs and above all the strange language, all have an attraction. Why, it is real sport to bargain for some pretty thing in the shops, stammering out all the remnants of bad French our memory can collect, and putting them together in an ungrammatical jumble, and pronouncing it all with an awful English accent, till the buxom Fräulein looks up with a sympathetic smile and replies in excellent English.

Let me give a sample of what I mean. Maybe it was in a tea-room at Interlaken or Lucerne that the following conversation occurred between an English dandy, new to Switzerland, and the waitress:

He, curtly, „J'ai une grande famme.”

She, politely, „Monsieur est bien heureux d'avoir une femme si distinguée.”

He with emphasis, „Nong, nong, *Je suis* famme.”

She, „Mais, monsieur, avec ces belles moustaches, c'est impossible!”

He desperately, „Here, blow it all, I'm beastly hungry.”

She, „I am sorry, sir, here's the Bill of Fare.”

Probably, in these enlightened days, there are few in England who have not heard and read of even if they have not seen and tasted the many pleasures which are to be found so near home in Switzerland. It is not lack of desire but lack of means to gratify the desire that hinders many a friend from coming. There was that appalling war, which ruined victors and vanquished alike. The world is still tossing on its sick bed, longing for the cure, for mutual understanding between professed friends. Not only for a long pull and a strong pull, but for a pull all together.

For incomes keep falling. The British Sovereign has grown pathetically thin. It is, one must admit it, almost humiliating, to find an English shilling valued at less than a Swiss franc. But that is what we have come to. Still the Swiss know it. Prices have been lowered. Almost every article is to be had for less than it was two years ago. This is true of Sports wear. Do not use old price-lists and then complain, as was done in a recent number of an English sports paper. Don't forget the old adage, „Buy your sports outfit where you take your sport.”

All hotel prices are down 10%, and even more. In Montreux which enjoys an exquisite climate, nestling at the foot of those mountains which crown the head of Geneva's famous lake, pension terms for a good room at a good hotel have been offered at eight francs a day, as against eleven, — over a pound a week lower than before.

So then, come and you will find a hearty welcome. If you cannot manage it this year, do not forget that Switzerland is here all the time. The flowers still blow in the old profusion. The sunlight sparkles on its lakes and glows on its mountains and the snow falls through the brilliant air.

A. B. Winter.