

The 40th Swiss Children's Christmas tree Party

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THE 40th SWISS CHILDREN'S CHRISTMAS TREE PARTY.

On Saturday, 3rd January, at the Victoria Halls, London, was held the 40th Swiss Children's Christmas Tree Party. The members of the Committee had met on various occasions during the past year and together thought out a programme for the children which might be different and yet follow the usual pattern of our previous parties. Well, I can sincerely say that all the people who put so much work into preparing the party were well rewarded by the great success and pleasure that it gave to all the children present.

We had a record number of children who attended — 190. Mr. Reverdin welcomed the children and reminded them of the people who had contributed to the party and presents. This year it was the turn of the children of the French-speaking Sunday school to follow with the Christmas story and carols in French and in English. Then came the surprise to which the children really look forward, and on this occasion we had Freddy the Clown to entertain them, and this he did most successfully. While the Clown was performing I was having tea in an adjoining room and I could hear the roars of laughter from the children — a sound so pleasing to listen to. Freddy the Clown asked various children on the stage to help him with various tricks and this much amused the onlookers. The happy entertainment continued with a Punch and Judy show, and children of all ages are always enthralled with this!

The showing of two films followed, the second — in colour — being "The Candle Maker", a truly simple but very human and lovely story. Then came the filing in to tea of our 190 children, and how orderly and well behaved they all were! Father Christmas appeared again; he had greeted each child on arrival and now he told them a story, but I am afraid many did not listen very attentively as they were anxious to get back into the main hall where the carrier bags were lined up on the window-sills in alphabetical order. This year, again, the children were very spoilt. Beautiful calendars of the Homeland, as before, were in each carrier bag, made again by the loving hands of the kind Mme. Bessire; Madame Daeniker most graciously sent each child a heart-shaped *pain d'épice*; apples and oranges and then a present were in the bags, and some of the older children had books. I think they were all very lucky, and they were grateful; and to see those smiling and contented faces pleased all of us who had organised the party.

M. Daeniker, the Swiss Ambassador, was present. We missed Mme. Daeniker, who was away at the time, but our thanks go to her for her co-operation and contribution to the party. But among all our happiness there is one great regret and that is that Miss Mathey was not among us — the first time she has missed. Because of poor health she has had to give up altogether her tireless work of sending out the invitation cards and assisting with the organisation of the party. This work has kindly been taken on by Mrs. Jean-Jacques Zwicky. Our thoughts were with Miss Mathey that Saturday afternoon and many of us have happy souvenirs of the many parties with which she had helped. We send her our grateful thanks for all she has done for the children of the Swiss Colony in the past and send her our best wishes for the future. It would take too long and take up too much space to

list the names of all the kind donors, those who subscribe in money and in kind towards this party, and I am sure that just to know how happy they made the children on 3rd January 1959 will encourage them to help us again next year. Thank you! E.B.

SWISS MERCANTILE SOCIETY.

At the Monthly Meeting of the Society, held on 10th December, the Chairman, Mr. O. Grob, on behalf of the Council proposed the election of the Swiss Ambassador, Monsieur A. Daeniker, as Honorary President, in appreciation of his continued support and valuable services rendered to the Society and the College. This motion was enthusiastically adopted with acclamation by all present.

The Ambassador later joined the meeting and expressed thanks for the honour bestowed on him. He praised the work done by the Society, particularly in the education of our young compatriots who would later have to safeguard our interests in trade and commerce with this country.

Following the official proceedings, Mr. Theodor Haller, London Correspondent of the Swiss Broadcasting Corporation, addressed the meeting on "How to misinform the Swiss about the British".

Despite a somewhat paradoxical title in English, Mr. Haller, as announced, delivered his talk in German, relating some of his experiences and impressions gained during eleven years of reporting to Switzerland the events and happenings in this country, on radio, in films and on television. In a speech full of humorous asides, he explained the difficulties of a reporter in trying to explain important pronouncements and trends to audiences who were not familiar with the Anglo-Saxon mentality and particularly its ingrained habit of self-criticism. It was easy enough to report facts which were self-evident, but infinitely more difficult to comment on news which needed amplification and elucidation. Particularly difficult to appreciate was the British sense of humour and even more difficult to explain it. For that reason, the danger of being misunderstood by listeners was greater than that of the public being misinformed.

Whilst it was evident from the speaker's many examples that it was difficult to give a clear and accurate account and interpretation of trends and events in this country without knowing their historic background and the mentality of the British, it was also evident from his talk that he was the right person for disseminating the news from here to Switzerland with full authority and with a deep understanding of the British mentality, sense of humour (often ironical) and way of life. To quote his closing sentences "How to misinform the Swiss about the English. Simple enough, leave it to the English."

A cordial vote of thanks was accorded to Mr. Haller at the close of his address and he answered various questions put to him by the audience with verve and often with a twinkle in his eye.

The Monthly Meeting, held on 14th January, opened on a sad note. With deep regret, the Chairman informed the meeting of the death of Mr. W. Fuchs, who had been a member of the Society since 1916 and a member of various Committees since 1937. The Society had further lost, through death, Mr. C. J. Bernheim and Mr. Henry Oswald, both of whom had