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Our Christmas Celebration

Many of our members and friends come to Zürich but once a year and reserve in many cases their visit for our Christmas meeting. Once again this Christmas we all felt a different atmosphere at the Club. There was something intangibly solemn about that evening. People wore dark suits, and sat quietly together, the tables were charmingly decorated with candles and there was of course a large Christmas tree in one corner. We all listened to beautiful sacred music, enhancing the charm of the evening. Many friends are only too eager at such a time to seek some spiritual consolation. It was given to them when Rolf rose to make his traditional speech. Who amongst us will ever forget the deep silence in which all of us listened to his words? It is short of a miracle — this gathering itself, for which hundreds of friends from all over Europe come together to render thanks to Our Lord whose birthday we celebrated. Our secretary in his opening words told us that some time ago someone had remarked to him that people like us had actually no right to celebrate Christmas at all. Such words stab at our hearts, implying as they do that we are nothing better than a group of degenerates, of outcasts, good for nothing, violating the laws of decency and even those of God himself . . . In a world where even the churches judge us harshly we must not waver for a moment in our firm belief in the words of Our Saviour. We must remember that there may be a greater beauty in a sincere friendship than in many a marriage. Many of us have gratefully experienced the love of a true friend; a friend who stands by us in hours of need and gladly shares the burdens of our life as well as its joys. Such a friend puts into practice indeed of what Paul wrote so significantly in the 13th chapter of the First Letter to the Corinthians.

Continuing Rolf emphasised the efforts still necessary to be made in this world of ours. It was heartbreaking to hear of the tragedies occurring in Austria and Germany, of the «witch hunt» in other countries and of the friends driven to an untimely suicidal death by despair. Christ's message «I will never refuse anyone who comes to me» may help us at Christmas to realize more than ever that without His guidance our own life could and would not improve. We all felt grateful when Rolf made us see once more that the Angels' Message was meant for all men of good will on earth.

The singing of the old Christmas carols, the burning candles — it all made us realize that the true spirit of Christmas had come to us.

We all thoroughly enjoyed the performance of a short play afterwards and when the bells of all the churches in town announced the coming of midnight the official part had come to a happy end.

As was only expected by all Santa Claus put then in his welcome appearance. But he did not only scold those in need of it but was also the bringer of some specially deserved gifts to others. When in the course of his speech he mentioned that fact — applauded by many of us — that in one way the people from Bern could not be blamed for

being what they were — his words held a deeper meaning — for all of us cannot be blamed in another way for what we are.

I feel sure that I am speaking for many in expressing our gratitude to Rolf and to all those who helped him not only for this Christmas party but for all their ceaseless efforts to easen the burden laid upon us.

Reno.

C o n t e n t e d

*You have taught me how to live, my
dearest one, my love, my friend. In
the sweetness of your presence, joys
begin and sorrows end . . . When I walk
in step with you no hill's too steep,
no road too long — every cloud is edged
with gold and every sigh becomes a song.*

*In the circle of your love my world is held,
my life contained. I would not wish it other-
wise, for see what riches I have gained:
a mind at peace, a heart contented; all I
have desired is here: happiness, romance,
fulfilment, safe from every doubt and fear.*

*I have found my house of dreams and here
with you will I abide — grateful for each
happy moment and forever satisfied . . .
The gate is shut; no need have I beyond
this quiet place to roam — for where you
are I too will dwell, and make my heaven
and my home.*

by P. Strong.