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In terminating his very lucid and interesting *exposé* (space unfortunately does not allow to insert it *in toto*.) the Minister extended his best wishes to all the members and their families during the coming festive season.

Monsieur Ruegger was heartily cheered on resuming his seat.

Monsieur Charles Huber, Delegate of the International Red Cross expressed his thanks for having been given an opportunity to meet the members of the City Swiss Club. "I felt at once at home in your midst" he said, "and I wish to congratulate you for the patriotic way in which you are conducting your meetings."

Colonel de Watteville, Delegate of the International Red Cross mentioned that he had just received news that the vessel "Henri Dunant" belonging to the Swiss Fleet has been commissioned by the committee of the "Don Suisse" to unload, at a certain Dutch port, supplies amounting to 5,000 tons for the Dutch population. This announcement was greeted with applause.

Before closing the meeting, M. Bon intimated, that owing to future heavy engagements, he might not be able to accept a further term of office as President, but, should this happen, he would willingly put his services at the disposal of his successor.

Mr. de Cintra, on behalf of his colleagues in the committee, and the members, urged Mr. Bon to reconsider his decision promising him the full support of his committee. This was heartily endorsed by the entire meeting.

Wishing the members and their families a Happy Xmas and a prosperous New Year, the President closed the meeting at 9.15 p.m.

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### THE SWISS BENEVOLENT SOCIETY.

Early in the New Year the Society will have reached its seventy-fifth anniversary. Founded on the 1st January, 1870, it has gradually become an organisation which, though unassuming, reflects much credit on our colony, which has born the brunt of a total relief expenditure, during that time, of some £98,000, and a yearly outlay, at present, of £4,700.

Beginning in a modest way, relief was granted up to 1901, on Sundays at the Swiss Church and on week days through a Committee in the City and in the West End. In those early years the assistance given was, more or less, in the shape of "part help" and it is largely due to Mr. E. A. Steiger, one of the Vice-Presidents, that an important change was then brought about in the policy of the Society. From that time it was agreed that sufficient help be given, in all cases, to enable the recipient and his dependants to make ends meet on an economical basis. The result of this step was to put a stop to any calls which might have been made on private charity or on the English Poor Law authorities and from that day the Society could really claim that no countryman of ours needed to have recourse to outside help. This meant a close study of the circumstances of each applicant and keeping a check on the cost of living which, as we all know, has varied considerably in the last thirty years. It

also meant a very substantial increase in the amount of help given, as illustrated by the fact that during the first thirty years of its existence the Society spent in relief £6,093 compared with £88,800 during the last thirty years.

In this connection it may interest readers to learn that in 1920, for instance, the Society allowed a single person 7/6 a week for a room and 7/6 for food, those grants being increased to 10/- and 14/- respectively for a couple. From 1934 a special fuel allowance of 2/6 a week was granted during the winter months. These figures were increased from time to time, as necessity arose, and they stand to-day at 10/- for room and 20/- for food for a single person; 13/- for room and 37/- for food for a couple, plus a winter fuel allowance of 3/- a week.

The allowance for room can be increased if special circumstances warrant it.

As is well known, one of the main activities of the Society is the maintenance of some seventy old pensioners which costs over £2,000 a year. To many of these helpless ones, the Society is the only thing they have to look to and lean upon.

However large the financial assistance may seem, this only represents part of the work done and very often more time and labour is spent in consoling, advising and morally helping compatriots in distress. We need not enlarge upon the numberless pitfalls awaiting our men and women living in this great metropolis. Many a sad story has been unfolded at 31 Conway Street, for which, more often than not, a satisfactory sequel has been arranged there.

Mention should also be made of the huge amount of clothing distributed, especially at Xmas. We are told however, that, owing to rationing, stocks are very low.

Looking back, names stand out particularly from the numerous friends and helpers of those last seventy-five years, such as E. A. Steiger, already mentioned, George Forrer, of the old school, meticulous treasurer and dry old wit, Georges Dimier, big-hearted and open-handed. Among others who were instrumental in collecting the large sums required, we think of our late Minister, Mr. G. Carlin, Gustave Aguet, M. Golay, A. C. Nussbaumer, and our old and staunch supporters The Swiss Church, The City Swiss Club, the Swiss Mercantile Society and the Unione Ticinese.

We did not wish to let this record of seventy-five years pass without reminding our readers of the wonderful work going on unceasingly for the benefit of our unfortunate ones.

True to its tradition, the Society has decided to mark this anniversary by making a specially generous distribution this Xmas to all those in need who, at that time more than ever, are handicapped by the high cost of most things. Their number is large and it will mean an additional expense of some hundreds of pounds. We know that many of our readers will wish to contribute their share to the Seventy-fifth Anniversary Fund, opened for this occasion, and there could be no more fitting appreciation of the efforts made by the Society to keep well up the good name of our country and of the Swiss Colony in particular.

Incidentally, also in the New Year, Mr. Theo. Ritter will have been Secretary for forty years and both his numerous "wards" and friends will wish to congratulate him on this proud record.