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## CHRISTMAS AND A DEPARTURE.

Six years ago, Christmas time brought a new arrival to the Swiss Colony in London; somebody whose presence became very valuable. To-day at the same time we lose him again. Pfr. Blum arrived in January 1946, to take up his work in the Schweizerkirche; on Boxing Day we saw him off at Kensington Air Station where he left for his new field of activity at Wiesendangen (Zurich). Six years of hard, but successful work lie between arrival and departure. Untiringly and unselfishly he and his wife worked for church and community. They had to overcome difficulties which can't even be imagined in Switzerland, difficulties which are inherent in a parish spread over the whole metropolis and beyond. But with quiet determination Herbert and Sabine Blum went their way and gave help wherever help was needed. They never stopped to think whether it was convenient, and their house was always open. To many they gave assistance where no benevolent society, no welfare office and no authorities could help. As a clergyman he preached the Gospel with sincerity and conviction, and we never left Kingsway Hall without taking with us new strength. He brought sunshine to the old and the poor. He taught the children in their lessons, and his wife patiently looked after the Sunday School. And what a great job he did with the young girls! He helped them when they were homesick, he solved their many problems and showed them the right way, often the way to God.

In the Colony he did his share towards better collaboration amongst the various organisations, always justly and without bias or prejudice. But also for their friends Mr. and Mrs. Blum always had time and understanding. To all of us who had the privilege of enjoying their friendship their departure means a great loss. It is characteristic of their modesty that they declined an official farewell dinner. The Consistoire of the Church took leave of them at a simple supper arranged only on a small scale when a parting gift was presented to them.

The community as such showed their regret at Pfr. Blum's departure at the farewell service on 9th December which was already reported in an earlier issue of the S.O. At an informal gathering following the evening service on the same day he gave us some of his reminiscences of his stay in London. With his charming sense of humour he helped over the worst of the parting; for already a couple of days later Mrs. Blum had to leave for Switzerland. He himself stayed till after Christmas.

On Wednesday, 19th December, the *Christmas Celebration of the "Schwyzerchränzli"* took place. About 150 young girls met at the Eglise Suisse. For many it was the only time that they could enjoy a

Swiss Christmas atmosphere. They sang old familiar tunes like "Stille Nacht" and "O du Fröhliche" and heard the Great Message. The children of the Sunday School sang and recited their verses, and the choir of the "Schwyzerchränzli" rendered a few songs. The nativity play was followed by recitations and violin and flute solos. The girls had sacrificed many an afternoon to make their celebration a success. Afterwards they sat together happily chatting over an excellent tea which had been prepared by Mrs. Jenne, Miss Waldvogel and others. To show their appreciation they presented Pfr. Blum with a portable wireless.

On Saturday, 22nd December, the *Family Christmas Service of the Schweizerkirche* took place. Again bright candles shone from the huge tree, and again the lovely songs resounded in the festive church. The children recited their verses and sang of the child that was born unto us for our salvation. The girls' choir repeated their performance of Saturday. Once more Pfr. Blum's steady, friendly voice found its way to our hearts. Only on Christmas Day did he preach to us after that, and with the impressive service on the 25th his activities amongst us came to an end. But Pfarrer Blum's unselfish work will continue to bear fruit and the Church and the Colony will reap rich harvest from what he has sown. Let us follow his example and work in a truly Christian spirit for the good of the Colony and the benefit of mankind. In his new task we wish him and his family health, happiness and God's blessing.

MARIANN.

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