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38th SWISS CHILDREN'S CHRISTMAS TREE PARTY.

It is perhaps one of the nicest things to see children enjoying themselves and this is exactly what 200 Swiss children were doing on the 5th of January, at the Victoria Hall, being the occasion of the 38th Swiss Children's Christmas Tree Party. It was indeed a joy to see the children arriving well on time, full of expectations.

The Party was opened with a few welcoming words by Mr. C. Reverdin, then followed the reading of the Christmas story from the Gospel, and the children of the Swiss French Church acted a little sketch, singing french songs, telling of the Shepherds' visit to the Cradle, bringing gifts. The flute was particularly well played by one of the boys. This short naturally-acted sketch was well appreciated by the children; but the conjurer that followed was really what the children were waiting for and, while some accepted the magic tricks with glee, others were rather bewildered and tried to puzzle out how dirty hankies put in a packet of Lux, came out clean. . . The films were especially good this year and I think all the children would have loved to have been with the Swiss children trying to ski. It looked so simple and everyone appeared to be so happy in the beautiful sunshine amongst the snow-covered slopes of the mountains. Tea followed the entertainment and bread and butter and cakes soon disappeared from the tables. Father Christmas was then expected to appear and even the more grown up children who do not believe any more in this Christmas tradition are still anxious to hear what message he has for them. Then followed the rush of the children to collect their carrier bags containing the presents. This year the carrier bags not only contained a toy or game, an orange and an apple, but also the most delicious chocolate and in addition a large piece of "pain d'épice" which had most generously been given by Madame Daeniker, the gracious wife of the Swiss Minister. Madame Daeniker kindly attended the Party and the children gave her a loud hand-clap to thank her for her kindness.

The whole party was a great success and the children thoroughly enjoyed themselves. Warm thanks are due to all those who so generously contributed to make this such a happy occasion.

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"ALL FOR ONE AND ONE FOR ALL!"

The January Meeting of the Swiss Mercantile Society was devoted to a discussion, to which the members of the Nouvelle Société Helvétique had been invited, of the proposed "Solidaritätsfonds — Fonds de solidarité" for Swiss living abroad. The presence of the Swiss Minister, Monsieur Armin Daeniker, and several of his collaborators, who provided much authoritative information, added to the interest of the meeting.

Details of the draft scheme were given by Dr. H. W. Egli, whose recent article on this subject in the Swiss Observer will be remembered. A lively discussion followed of examples of insurance, loss and compensation. There was clearly a wide measure of interest in the scheme, although it was generally assumed that in the event of war the British authorities would again provide insurance cover against loss of property for all residents. On the other hand, insurance against "Existenzverlust — perte de situation" certainly constituted a valuable innovation. The suggested premium of one per mille was generally considered to be reasonable.

In his concluding remarks Dr. Egli addressed a strong appeal to the Swiss Minister to impress upon the Swiss Federal Authorities the importance of giving the scheme their support right from the start. Being on voluntary and co-operative basis, it could only succeed if the largest possible number of Swiss living in foreign countries would join from the beginning and their participation would be greatly encouraged by official financial backing. By providing this, the Swiss authorities could in their turn cover themselves against future claims for compensation, such as had been made upon them by compatriots who suffered loss and hardship during the last war.

The whole matter is obviously still in a preliminary stage and a great deal more information will be required before every Swiss abroad can decide whether he should become a member of the scheme or not.

W. M.

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