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CHRISTMAS MUSINGS

Tempus fugit! How quickly time flies. It seems but a short while ago that we wrote a Christmas message, yet a whole year has passed and here we are again with another Christmas at the door and soon we shall be on the threshold of a new year.

As we have so often pointed out Christmas time offers to us all, young and old, an occasion for rejoicing and for relaxation, at least temporary, from our daily cares. Joy combined with gratitude and goodwill are indeed the essential elements of this great festival and blessed are those who can wholeheartedly enter into its spirit. Let us therefore make the most of it and at the same time give thanks for the privilege we possess of celebrating a birthday which has marked the beginning of a new and happier era for mankind.

The account of Christ's coming into this world, as related with such moving simplicity in the Gospel according to St. Luke, whether looked upon as fact or legend, confirms the importance the early Christians attached to the event. It certainly opened the way to a momentous change in the destiny of man and in due time led to an improved and more dignified existence for the human race. The high principles of Christ's teaching in later years, had they but been observed and practised in all their purity, would have transformed the world into a real brotherhood. But, alas, human nature could not rise to their noble heights and the progress of Christianity did not always reflect credit

on those who called themselves followers of its founder. The crimes committed through the centuries in the name of Christ, the superstition, intolerance and cruelty that throw such a dark stain on the history of Christianity's development, are so contrary and so radically opposed to Christ's teaching that were it not for the historical evidence, one would refuse to believe that such things ever happened. Fortunately a better and deeper understanding of Christian ethics prevails in our enlightened days and today men and women, whatever their denominational creed, are at liberty to accept and interpret the Christmas message according to their faith and their convictions without fear or hindrance.

Let us therefore rejoice in our religious freedom and give thanks for being able to celebrate, each in our own way, this the greatest of all birthdays. The traditional merry-making which generally accompanies it will naturally appeal to children more than to their elders. As we grow older our minds are apt to wander in the past. We then recall the carefree days of our childhood when Christmas assumed a tremendous importance in our lives. It is not easy to recapture in mature years the delight and the enthusiasm which Christmas gave us when we were young. We remember it all: the thrill of expectancy, the brightly-lit Christmas tree, the attractively wrapped presents, the tuneful carols and the jolly parties, all these contributed then, as they do now, to the happiness of childhood. Precious memories indeed, memories that never fail to awaken an echo in our hearts. Yet, age has its compensations and if our enjoyment is more sedate we can nevertheless enter into the festive spirit

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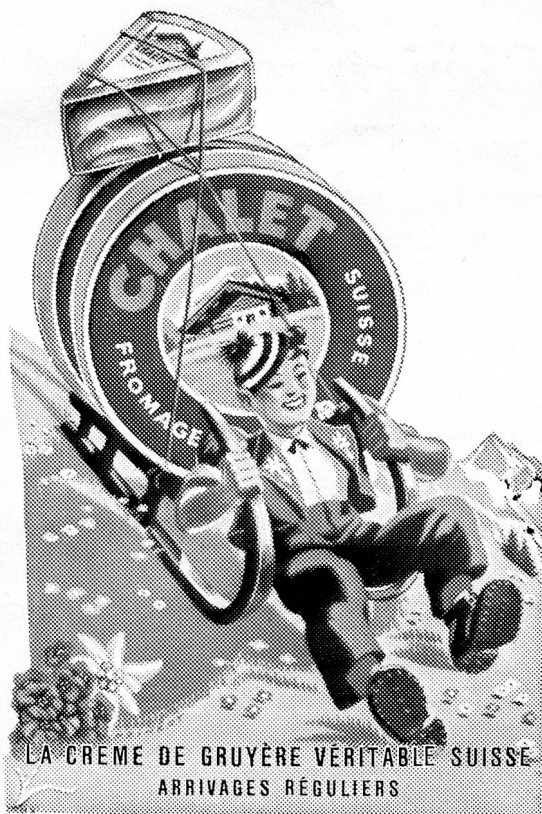
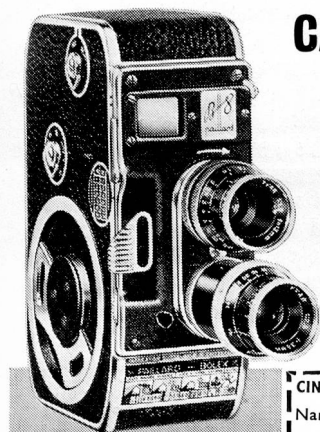
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Looking back on the year now drawing to its close our first thought is for those who have gone to their last rest, some of them prominent figures in our community. We honour their memory and we again offer our deep sympathy to those who mourn the loss of a loved-one. Theirs are personal sorrows, but the well-being of our colony is also affected. We can ill spare these departed friends, our numbers continue to be depleted, the vitality of the colony gradually lowered. Yet, though involved in a process of shrinkage, the colony shows no sign of exhaustion; it continues to perform its functions with unabated vigour and displays the usual activity in the many clubs and societies that are its outward form and the centre of its social life. The most pressing need for its survival is the stimulus of fresh young blood.

The outstanding event of the year was the "Swiss Fortnight" held last October. Its purpose was to give the British public an insight in the cultural life of Switzerland. By means of concerts, lectures, films and exhibitions, planned with skill and efficiency, it showed that our small country is more than a tourist's paradise, and that in the arts, literature and industrial achievements, it holds a prominent place in Europe. The "Fortnight" was a great success and reflects credit on the organisers.

Also worth mentioning is the appearance on television of Prof. Jung, the venerable and world-famous psychiatrist in an interview given to a B.B.C. reporter at his house on the shores of Lake Zurich, a well-prepared item of absorbingly topical interest.

Our homeland follows its march of progress and prosperity and displays every symptom of a sound economy. May it long continue thus.

By a majority vote of an all-male electorate it was decided to withhold political franchise from women. We regret this decision; it offends our sense of logic. However, this may not be the last word. A change of mind is not only a woman's privilege and we therefore hope that this much overdue reform will before long be introduced.

In the international field the outlook is distinctly brighter. True there is racial unrest in Africa with occasional outbreaks of violence, symptomatic of the present-day urge for political independence among the coloured races. Wise statesmanship will no doubt find the answer to this problem and confine its effect to local limits. Much more important is the unmistakable easing of the tension between East and West. If the recent pronouncements from beyond the Iron Curtain can be taken at their face value there seems to be a genuine desire for, if not friendship, at least tolerance and peaceful co-existence. If this is the outcome of the much-delayed summit meeting, which, we presume, will be held one day, the whole world will heave a sigh of relief. That this result may be achieved is our ardent hope and prayer.

Meantime we extend to all our readers our sincere wishes for a very happy Christmas and a prosperous New Year.

The Editor.