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“CHALANDA MARZ”

*Chalandamarz, chaland'avrigl
laschè las vachas our d'uvigl.
Las vachas vaun culs vdels
las nuorsas culs agnels
las chevras culs uzöls
e las gillinas faun ils övs.
La naiv schmarschescha
e l'erva crescha.
Scha'ns dais qualchosa
schi Dieu as benedescha.
E scha nu dais ünguotta
sch'l luf as sbluotta.*

*Chalandamarz, chaland'avrigl,
lässt die Kühe aus dem Stall.
Die Kühe gehen mit den Kälbern,
die Schafe mit den Lämmern,
die Geissen mit den Zicklein,
und die Hühner legen Eier.
Der Schnee wird faul,
und das Gras will wachsen.
Gebt ihr uns etwas,
so segne euch Gott.
Doch gebt ihr uns nichts,
so fresse euch der Wolf!*

*First of March, first of April,
let the cows out of the byre.
The cows go with the calves,
the sheep with the lambs,
the goats with the kids,
and the hens lay eggs.
The snow will perish
and the grass will grow.
If you give us something
God will bless you.
But if you give us nothing —
may the wolf eat you!*

This is the song chanted by all the Engadine schoolchildren on 1st March, to the accompaniment of an ear-splitting din. For, regardless of the snowy mantle which may still cover the countryside, the youngsters of the Engadine celebrate the spring festival of “Chalanda Marz” on that date. Thus, “Calendae Martis”, the ancient Roman new year festival coinciding with the beginning of the Italian spring, has lived on in name at least, in the form of a Rhaeto-Romansch custom carried on ever since the days when the Rhaetian valleys were under the rule of Imperial Rome.

Early in the morning the schoolchildren gather in the squares of every Engadine village to frighten away the demon of winter and entice spring from beneath the snow by means of an excruciating cacophony of enormous cowbells, handbells and anything else that will make a noise when banged or hammered.

The children are divided up into herds — and these into well-ordered ranks — according to the size of their bells, whose measurements are checked with micrometer-like accuracy. Representing Alpine herdsmen and shepherds, the senior boys take over their herds and lead them from house to house, pulling and puffing away at herdsmen's pipes filled with hay seed until they begin to feel queasy.

There is also a coachman with “horses” and a sledge in which the apples, dried pears, sweets, chestnuts and so on collected en route are stowed away to be divided up amongst all the “horses, cows, herdsmen and coachmen” in the evening.

The various “herds” sing traditional Romansch spring songs and in some villages the girls may also join in — by kind permission of the boys.

Today we know that no amount of noise and racket will banish winter or miraculously bring forth spring from beneath the snows. So nowadays “Chalanda Marz” represents the transition from midwinter to the spring skiing season. Despite this, the children are on a good thing. They make a satisfactory haul as they busily collect contributions towards their school outing fund from visitors and local people attracted into the streets by the furious clangour of the bells.

*Pic Per.
[S.N.T.O.]*

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This is the title of the quarterly magazine of the International Pestalozzi Children's Village at Trogen in Switzerland. The children themselves are responsible, and some 12,000 copies are printed each time (set by hand and illustrated by the children); annual subscription, Fr.3.—.

The following contribution has been reprinted from its fiftieth issue.

Is the village international enough?

In the Village we have ten national groups, all of which, with the exception of the Tibetans, are European. I sometimes wonder if the Village is really representative of the peoples of the world. Could we, perhaps, learn to live with more people from other continents? Could we have here a house containing Koreans? Africans? South Americans?

I know that the problems of running Pestalozzidorf are very complicated and difficult, much more so than in most schools, but I think the problems are not insuperable.

If we expanded, and took in, for example children who had become homeless because of the Iranian Earthquake, we would be providing a home and education for those in really urgent need, and at the same time making the Village more representative. In these days of welfare states and the Common Market, the problems of living together in Europe are already almost solved. But I'm not at all sure whether we shall be able to live side-by-side with our more distant brothers.

But even with these additions we would still be non-communist, and surely what we must prove is that people with different political beliefs can live together. It is very important that in this world communist and non-communist can live in harmony.

How should we feel if we had Russians or Chinese in the house next door? Would we befriend them, even though they were Communist or from communist countries? After all, that is what we shall have to do during the coming decades, otherwise how will man exist?

Susan Hollands (15) Thames House.