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CHRISTMAS THOUGHTS.

Christmas, like most birthday celebrations, is essentially an occasion for rejoicing. But the rejoicings, in this case, extend far beyond the usual family circle; they are shared by millions of people all over the world. Wherever the Christian tradition has penetrated there are men and women — and, of course, children — who commemorate Christmas Day with joy and gratitude, knowing that, centuries ago, “unto them a child was born” — an event of immense importance, the beginning of a new era.

It is a remarkable and noteworthy fact that the simple, moving story of the Birth of Christ, with all its delightful human detail and homeliness, has come down to us as it has done. It is a story which, unencumbered by dogma, is acceptable to every section of the Christian world, however much its adherents may be divided by divergent creeds and sectarian interpretation. After all, the Little Child of Bethlehem is to all who profess themselves Christians the foundation of their faith. The story of The First Noël has never lost its freshness or its universal appeal.

Let us, therefore, rejoice in our turn and make merry in the traditional manner. In saying this we are not unmindful of those who on account of illness, or because they have suffered the sorrow of bereavement, may find it difficult to do so. To them goes out our deep and heartfelt sympathy and the sincere wish that “Time, the great healer” may bring them solace and comfort.

Looking back over the year now drawing to its close there is much for which to be thankful. Our Colony continues its many activities, the various groups and societies of which it is composed are flourishing, we have lived happily in the great land whose hospitality we enjoy. Also, the colony is fortunate in having at its head a man of exceptional ability and distinction, one who most worthily represents our small Republic at the Court of St. James.

It must, however, be mentioned that a gradual decrease in the number of Swiss residents is taking place. This is due to the inescapable circumstance that the influx of fresh young blood is not sufficient to counteract the natural shrinkage. This tendency is causing some concern and it is hoped that ways and means will be found to remedy it.

The continued prosperity of our homeland is a further cause of gratification. There are signs of a slight recession which, however, does not amount to much and is in keeping with the general trend in most countries. Above all can we be thankful that Switzerland continues to enjoy the blessings of peace. No doubt much of its prosperity is due to the fact that for more than a hundred years it has been spared the horrors and the dislocation of war and that it is 150

years since it has known the calamities of a foreign invasion. May Providence grant us a further lease of such immunity.

The wider picture is not so bright, and the past year can scarcely be regarded as a period of international goodwill and understanding. The ideal of universal peace is, alas, a seemingly unattainable dream! As we look around we see little to rejoice the heart. Unrest in the Middle East, trouble in Africa, all but outright war on the off-shores of China, the festering sore of Cyprus, racial and nationalistic disturbances throughout the world — truly a distressing record. And, overshadowing everything, there is the apparently chronic and incurable state of tension between the East and the West, with its underlying frightful menace of modern means of destruction. All this contributes to one's fears for the future of mankind. We can but hope and pray that reason and common sense will prevail, and that the day will come when Christmas can be celebrated without this sinister background.

Meantime let us try, as we have so often said, to lay aside for a while our cares and troubles and lift our hearts in response to the call that Christmas makes on us.

With this appeal the Editor extends to every reader his personal greetings and his best wishes for a happy Christmas and a prosperous New Year.

The Editor.

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