

The festive season at the Swiss Club Manchester

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THE FESTIVE SEASON AT THE SWISS CLUB MANCHESTER.

Weeks before Christmas our children heard rumours that soon Father Christmas intended to pay us once more a visit and that on Saturday, the 19th December, there would be a annual Christmas tree party at the Midland Hotel.

Busy members of the club and their wives were collecting funds and gifts in kind so that none of the youngsters would be without a present and some of the children were rehearsing their vocal contributions to ensure the success of our gathering.

When we arrived at the hotel that very important Saturday afternoon — what a babble of voices greeted us. Some 170 members, their families and friends, including some 60 children were anxiously waiting for the opening act, tea, with all the good things spread on the well-laid out tables.

The children, eyes gleaming in anticipation of the good things to come were seated at tables forming the cross and the grown-ups filling in the field at small tables, so that the tea-party represented our flag in its entirety, even though the colours were somewhat intermixed.

The chairman, our indefatigable Vice-President, Mr. E. Berner, greeted the assembly with a few words of welcome and hoped everybody would have a happy evening. Not much doubt about this, for our hosts did everything possible to lay a splendid foundation to everybody's wants.

Meantime mysterious goings on behind the scene roused the anticipation of all until after a short interval the door to the ballroom opened. There was our Christmas tree in all its glory. Soon the great family had filed in and the children, both young and not so young had their fill of the beauty of the gorgeous spectacle. After some traditional Christmas Carols, sung by the whole gathering, Father Christmas, heavily laden, asked for admittance and was greeted with a vociferous welcome by the youngsters. Having made the necessary enquiries about their behaviour he then asked the children for their contribution to the Christmas party. Soon he was almost overwhelmed with offers to sing and to recite and the grown-ups were astonished at the talents amongst our colony. So Father Christmas' sacks were empty in no time and then began the distribution of the presents under the tree. These were addressed to each individual child. Eyes gleamed at all the many varied parcels and their contents and Mrs. Berner and Mrs. Money had their hands full to find all the recipients of the lovely presents.

The scene changed once more as the happy youngsters now took the floor with their new toys. Soon the room was filled with shouts of joy and laughter as the unravelling of the various packages disclosed their contents. What efforts must have been put into the choosing of the right article for each child, but what satisfaction for those concerned to see the happiness resulting from their labour. No wonder then that the party lasted till long after the bedtime-hour for some of the children, but then, its Christmas only once a year.

And so the Swiss Club Manchester can look back with pride on a most enjoyable Christmas celebration.

New Year has always been of special importance for the members of the Swiss Club, for on the first Saturday in the new year the members gathered for their "Schweinsrippli and Sauer kraut" lunch. Up to a few years ago this event was for males only, as it was considered a "wet" afternoon. Some years ago, however, it was decided that we should not be so exclusive and that the ladies too would enjoy a "waerschaft" Swiss lunch. This supposition proved to be well supported and now such a stag party cannot any longer be entertained. Times have changed for the better in our opinion.

So on Saturday, the 9th January, members and their ladies, 50 in all, met at the Midland Hotel for their aperitif to exchange New Year's greetings and then adjourned to lunch in the Grill room where an excellent meal was served and what is most important, enjoyed to the full by everybody. But who could have resisted the temptation to feast on Minestrone, Sole and a Berner platte, followed by fresh fruit salad, ice cream and coffee.

Only too soon we were reminded that in the library room of the hotel other members and friends were waiting for the second part of the afternoon's entertainment and that we could not linger any longer. Our friend, Mr. Sam Hanna, A.R.P.S. of Burnley, had very kindly offered to show us some colour films of his own taking and these together with two films from home formed an ideal programme for the rest of the afternoon.

Some 80 members of the colony enjoyed seeing the "Review of some of the events in Switzerland during the past year" and "Lucerne", the two colour films sent from Switzerland. The films shown by Mr. Hanna were of a more educational character. The first "Scottish Holiday" showed old stately homes taken over by the Holiday Association in Scotland where the guests enjoy their community lives. A series of further films depicting old handicrafts such as "Shoeing by the village blacksmith, Basketweaving and Handloomweaving" made us familiar with the activities of the inhabitants of various rural districts of England. In many ways these films recalled to some of us the days of our youth when we watched with wondrous eyes the artisans at work in our own villages at home.

At the end of the afternoon the members expressed their heartfelt thanks especially to Mr. Hanna for the trouble he had taken to provide us with such an illustrative entertainment to round off another happy meeting.

E. K.

