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Dinner. Miss Lili Habegger (soprano) and Mr. Lennart Rabes (piano) were unfortunately prevented from coming, but some recorded Christmas Music was played after dinner when coffee and Swiss Christmas "Guezli" were served in a happy Christmas atmosphere created by the light of candles and the smell of fir, as much as by the friendly chatting of members and visitors.

TS

The next two Open Meetings of the Society will be held on 15th and 29th January. Please see special announcement "DOUBLE BILL".

DOUBLE BILL

Two forthcoming film evenings

The London Group of the Nouvelle Société Helvétique has at the start of recent years shown a special film of events in Switzerland during the previous 12 months. The Secretariat of the Swiss Abroad in Berne have informed the Society that the demand in Swiss communities abroad had been rather disappointing, and that the review film was now no longer compiled. The Council decided to keep to the tradition of showing films at the beginning of a new year, and they have pleasure in announcing two film evenings in January.

On **Thursday, 15th January**, the full-length film based on Gottfried Keller's famous story

"ROMEO UND JULIA AUF DEM DORFE"

will be shown by courtesy of the "Pro Helvetia" Foundation.

On **Thursday, 29th January**, the well-known Swiss mountain guide Mr. Denis Bertholet, Verbier, will show two films on

"SWISS MOUNTAINEERING SCHOOLS"

combined with a talk in English.

Both meetings will be held at 7.45 p.m. at the Swiss Hostel for Girls, 9-11 Belsize Grove, N.W.3, only three minutes away from Belsize Park Underground Station (Northern — Edgware-Line). All Swiss and their friends are welcome.

OUR MANCUNIAN CHRISTMAS

On Saturday, 13th December, the traditional annual Christmas Tree Party, organised by the Swiss Club of Manchester, took place. The main purpose of our party being to give our youngsters, including the tiny tots, a really enjoyable time, and hoping that such an afternoon would provide them with happy, unforgettable memories, which for many of them in later life could prove of great benefit and help outweigh the many worries and disappointments of our restless, exacting and sometimes cold everyday life. Even for those of us who were behind all this with our thoughts, work, and material help, can only benefit from mingling with our younger generation, and which can only be described as healthy, invigorating and extremely rewarding.

Having stated this, let me say that for many of us who had braved the inclement weather with its hazards of fog, snow and rain, it was a great relief to enter the Midland Hotel which once again received us in their customary warm and hospitable way. Well over a hundred people, of which the children formed the majority, assembled in the newly decorated "Rotonda", sat down at delightfully decorated tables and enjoyed the very rich afternoon-tea, which had special emphasis on sweets, multi-coloured jellies, trifles, and other goodies, as befitted the company. A truly youthful, if at times a somewhat noisy crowd, full of life, brimming with expectation and excitement.

Our President, Bernard Simon accompanied by his wife and young family, welcomed us in his typical warm and witty way. He then invited us to furnish ourselves with a chair and move to the nearby small ballroom where a beautifully and brilliantly lighted Christmas Tree greeted us. I felt that this year particularly, the room was well decorated and inviting. Soon the traditional multi-range ring was formed, the children, of course, having the privilege of sitting nearest to the Christmas Tree with its bounty spread around it. I caught the glances of several youngsters who were casting eager looks towards the many small and large parcels neatly arrayed beneath the tree.

Eventually the first strains of "Stille Nacht, Heilige Nacht", played by one of our Lady Members, echoed through the room, and soon everyone joined in this lovely Christmas Carol. Suddenly we were interrupted by a loud bang at the door! Sure enough, it was Father Christmas, with his flowing white beard and dressed in his seasonal red and white attire — perhaps a trifle on the warm side for him. He was heavily laden with what seemed to be an immense and well-filled sack. For many of our youngsters it was the moment of truth, for the believers and even those who may have started to nourish some doubts. The latter may not have been the more happy ones (this could have been the case with the adults, too.) Bravely and with so much goodwill, our children singly or in small groups, stepped forward to entertain our *Sankt Nikolaus* with song, prose and music. A very young chap pleasantly surprised us by flawlessly narrating the story of the Nativity. He was resoundingly applauded by the appreciative audience. There was some instrumental virtuoso and one of our younger members regaled the Saint with a soundless invocation. Nevertheless, everyone received a kind word of encouragement and was rewarded with a parcel filled with sweets and other things. Inevitably the time for our *Sankt Nikolaus's* departure arrived. He left with our deepest regrets, accompanied by our thanks, good wishes, and thunderous applause. Thus, we made sure that

he would return again next year. After *Sankt Nikolaus* had gone, the remaining contents of his sack were distributed to the children who had stayed in the background, echoing the sentiments of the season that at such a time people should be generous, charitable and of good will. We then joined in another popular Christmas Carol after which the President, helped by some of the Ladies of our Committee, distributed the many individual Christmas gifts. There was a gift for everyone, all of which had been carefully chosen and were a great credit to the organisers.

Some of our usual supporters and our Consul could not be with us, having had to attend the Christmas Shoot of The Manchester Rifle Association, of which we form a part. Nevertheless, it was a great pleasure for all of us to greet Madame Born and a few of our other notable ladies. There was also a representation of the Yorkshire Swiss Club, accompanied by one of their veteran members, Mr. Amman of Halifax. All this helped to wards the success of the evening, which alas for many of us was too short. Perhaps, therefore, we may be allowed to express the hope that next year such a party could be slightly prolonged by organising games for our youngsters. Gradually our company disbanded, everyone having had a most enjoyable afternoon. We were all very happy and grateful to our Club for organising such a successful Christmas Party.

E. Berner

THE CITY SWISS CLUB CHRISTMAS DINNER

Eighty of the businessmen of our Colony were present at this year's City Swiss Club Christmas Dinner. Addressing us with a few after-dinner-words, Mr. Alfred Kuhn congratulated the chef who had prepared us such exquisite red cabbages and thanked Mr. Keufeler, of the Dorchester Hotel, for the advantageous conditions he had been offering to the City Swiss Club table-companions. He mentioned the fact that three elderly members of the Colony had entered the Club half-a-century ago and over. They were Mr. Jean Oltramare, who became a member on April 4th 1917, Mr. Silvain Dreyfus, who joined the City Swiss on 3rd December 1918 and Mr. Adrien Rueff, the "late-comer", who entered it on 3rd June 1919. All three are "Swiss Observer" readers and, in passing, we take the opportunity of warmly congratulating them. Mr. Alfred Kuhn said that they had been elected honorary members of the City Swiss Club.

During the address, Father Bossard stole away deftly from the Orchid Suite. We were told not to leave until we had received a surprise, and sure enough, it came when Father Bossard, dressed up as a portly Santa Claus with a big white beard, and accompanied by his acolytes — the Devil and a band of sexless angels — returned to the room.

Having told us that he had been instructed in the Other World to visit the City Swiss Club, Father Bossard proceeded with his angels to sing a composition of his in which half the members of the City Swiss Club were portrayed individually. We joined in the singing, and participated in a second of Father Bossard's chansonnier-compositions.

The singing died down, Santa-Claus and the angels left the room, we applauded and Mr. Kuhn congratulated Father Bossard for having helped make the evening so successful.

(PMB)

SOIREE DE L'ESCALADE

The "Cercle Genevois" is probably the most floating and changing Swiss society of London. Members come and go, attendances at "Escalade" evenings change by leaps and bounds. Last year, the Park Suite at the Dorchester was hardly large enough to contain the big crowd Madame Heisch-Dominicé, the Cercle's former president, had managed to gather. This year, the thirty-odd faithfuls and sympathisers who turned up were given the humble Stanhope Suite. But small numbers make for intimate and very friendly evenings.

The Ambassador and Madame René Keller honoured us by their presence, and when the president, Mr. Michael Metford-Sewell, had welcomed

us and wished us a happy evening, Monsieur Keller (a remarkable after-dinner speaker) said a few words off the cuff and mentioned his ties with Geneva and the advantages he had reaped from his Geneva citizenship.

"Escalade" entertainment consisted in listening to a record of the Escalade produced by the *Compagnie 1602*. We sang the Escalade song and stood up to hear the names of the Escalade's 18 victims in respectful silence. The breaking of the *marmite* was entrusted to the writer. Unfortunately the *marmite*, fabricated by the Dorchester's confectioners, was one of massive chocolate, and instead of smashing it to smithereens, he managed to leave it fit for second-use and got himself badly bruised on the hands and arms in the process.

The vice-president, Mrs. Metford-Sewell, asked us all to decline our age and origin. It turned out that we were only five real Genevese. But we were all Genevese at heart, and that was what counted.

(PMB)

SCHWEIZERBUND

The "Nouvelle Société Helvétique" is an intellectual and highly-cultured assembly, the City Swiss Club is an exclusively masculine, and the Rifle Association, virile, institution. The Schweizerbund, on the other hand, is open to all, illiterate and non-male alike, and genuinely Swiss.

Its Annual Dinner, last December, was highly successful and colourful. We sang and sang till our hoarse voices were like dying rasps. Mr. Charles Abegglen, with indomitable energy, conducted the Sing-Song and the whole repertoire of Swiss folklore was surely exhausted.

Mr. Virgil Berti, the president, welcomed us all to an enjoyable evening, expressed his satisfaction at seeing the presence of some old-time friends, among them Adolph Gandon, Adolph Schmid, Ernest Nüssli, Renata and Albert Meyer. He regretted the absence of Mr. Leu, who had to stay at home because of the illness of his wife.

A particularly friendly and agreeable evening.

(PMB)

SWISS MERCANTILE SOCIETY

The Society's December meeting was highlighted by the very interesting colour-slide talk by Mr. Walter Stettbacher on the Engadines. Mr. Stettbacher had recently spent a holiday in the beautiful resort of Sils and recorded the splendours of the Bernina, the Corvatsch, the Silser- and Silvaplannersee and the Maloja on film for our benefit. A highly entertaining evening which doubtless gave to everyone present an ardent desire to be on the snowy slopes of the Alps right away.

(PMB)

THE SWISS OBSERVER 30 YEARS AGO

The following is a résumé of the news that appeared in the December issues of the Swiss Observer in 1939.

On December 9th, the Swiss Mercantile Society held its monthly meeting, presided by Mr. J. J. Boos. There had been no further progress to report over the eventual subletting of the Swiss Mercantile Society's premises in Fitzroy Square. The School had been shut down because of the war. The meeting recalled the arrangements already made for the Swiss Minister's departure and voted a £50 donation to the funds of the Swiss Benevolent Society, as well as a £20 gift to the annual Christmas collection of the S.K.V. To the pleasant surprise of all present, trays full of Neuchatel wine were brought in and everybody drank to the health of Mr. Boos, the president, and his newly-wed wife. Messrs. Oertli and Senn, who had recently returned from military service in Switzerland, were called upon to give their impressions. Mr. Oertli related his experiences as an officer in charge of sentry posts at Bergün, Filisur and Tiefencastel. Mr. Senn related his experiences with his regiment, stationed in the wooded valleys of the Jura and busy working at defence works with spades, pickaxes and saws. He had had a number of adventures on his way back to England. Mr. Max Schneider, Hon. Secretary of the S.M.S. was still in the ranks and the meeting decided to send him a Christmas parcel.

The Civil Swiss Club's December meeting had been held on the 5th. The after-dinner speaker had been Mr. Maurice Thiéry, and the theme of his talk: the French Revolution, and some parallels with current events. The dinner was honoured by a strong representation from the Legation, including Dr. A. Kock, Colonel Zürcher and Mr. Preiswerk, head of the German affairs division.

The Minister, Monsieur Paravicini, was to leave the post that he had held for almost twenty years. He was exceedingly well known and loved in the Colony and, on the 15th, it honoured him with a farewell dinner at Pagani's restaurant; on the 18th, it was for personnel of the Legation to invite him and Madame Paravicini to a farewell dinner at the Dorchester. Monsieur Paravicini's renown extended beyond the Colony and on the 20th, he and the Ambassadors were offered luncheon at Buckingham Palace by the King, and on the 21st, a reception was given in his honour by the Belgian Ambassador, acting doyen of the Diplomatic Corps.

Most of the balls and annual dinners that usually take place in December were cancelled that year (although the Cercle Genevois held its exclusively male Escalade-dinner).

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