



THE OPENING OF THE CABANE BRITANNIA, August 17th, 1912.

THE

OPENING of THE BRITANNIA HUT
ON THE KLEIN ALLALINHORN.

On Saturday, August 17th, 1912, the Club Hut Britannia was opened and formally handed over to the Swiss Alpine Club. For three years the Association of British Members of the Swiss Alpine Club have been collecting the sum required, over 20,000 francs. The day was perfect, bright sunshine, a pleasant breeze and cloudless sky. From 6 a.m. "the slow processions" passed up the mountain side from Saas Fee, and when the Kesten Glacier was reached roped up, for on that route there are many crevasses to be passed before the hut is gained. At 12 o'clock the Geneva Section hospitably provided a cold "collation" and a bottle of wine or lemonade for each person. Between 200 and 300 were present at 12-30 p.m., when loud explosions of cartridges called the scattered groups to the opening ceremony. Miss Ursula Radford carried the beautifully embroidered banner woven in silk, its shaft an ice axe. It had been presented by Geneva to the British Association, and the Flags of Switzerland and Great Britain were worked on either side. M. Archinard opened the proceedings and the Swiss and British National Anthems were sung, the tune being the same for both.

Dr. O. K. Williamson, Vice-President, and Mr. Bruce, Hon. Sec., represented the British

Association. A letter from Mr. Clinton Dent of which we introduce a facsimile, was read. Dr. Williamson formally handed over the keys of the hut to Dr. Dubi and Mons. Meisser, representing the C.C. of S.A.C. His speech was afterwards translated into French by Mr. C. D. Lehmann.

The Hon. Secretary spoke in English, and afterwards Miss Ursula Radford translated it into French. "The accent is perfect, but perhaps you are from Paris" said one of the Genevoise to her.

Thinking those who were present would like some account of the proceedings as a souvenir, and that the subscribers who were unable to be present would wish to know what took place, we have collected various accounts of the opening and of the speeches made at the dinner at the Dom Hotel, at 8 p.m. the same evening.

Monsieur Viollier, the Chairman of the Club Hut Committee of the Geneva Section, which had undertaken the erection of the Cabane Britannia, gave an account of their labours, and handed the keys to

DR. WILLIAMSON, who said: Mesdames et Messieurs Chers Collègues du Club Alpin Suisse si vous me le permettez je dirai quelques mots en Anglais, et après M. Lehmann fera la traduction en Français.

In the unavoidable absence of our President, Mr. Dent, I am taking his place, and I am sure you will be glad to hear a letter which he has written on this auspicious occasion.

You will agree with me that a long speech would seem out of place here in the presence of these grand mountains of the Saas Grat, whose scenery is second to none in our Alps.

Ayot House
Wilmyn
Herts
13 Aug. 1912.

My dear Bruce

Please convey to the
organisers of the inauguration
ceremony my profound regret
that I am unable to take
part in the festivities at Saas
Fee - and elsewhere. And,
to all others who take a
share in the proceedings,
give my salutations and

best wishes, Alpine, architectural
and brotherly - discreetly
suppressing! The latter adjective if
many ladies are present. I am
glad to have the photograph of the
Cabane. The Hut appears to be
well and truly built and to
stand on a solid foundation:
and so, I hope, does the good
feeling between the English-speaking
and all other members of the
S.A.C.

Yrs truly
A. T. Dent

I would remind you that our Association of British Members of the Swiss Alpine Club is indebted for its very origin to an idea of yours, and that we owe to the Central Committee the suggestion of this excellent site.

British Climbers owe a deep debt of gratitude to their Swiss friends for allowing them the use of these mountain huts, and have I fear too often failed to avail themselves of the obvious means of showing appreciation of this kindness by joining one of the sections of the Swiss Alpine Club.

Under these circumstances we delight in the completion of the new Hut, because in the first place we hope that this will be recognised as a proof of our real appreciation of what our Swiss brothers have done for us, and also because we hope that it may be of real use to Swiss as well as other mountaineers.

We British mountaineers are united to our Swiss brothers by the strongest of all bonds—the love of the everlasting peaks.

It has been said—I forget by whom—“*la montagne fait l'homme*”; it is equally true that some of the most lasting friendships are made and cemented by our beloved mountains.

The object of a hut is both to provide a convenient starting point from which to explore the neighbouring mountains and to cross the passes, and also to afford a refuge to those who lose their way or become benighted, and I cannot doubt that this one is admirably placed for these objects.

Ladies and Gentlemen: we particularly wish to tender our most cordial thanks to the Central Committee, and also to the section Genève, both for the really admirable way in which they have made and carried out the plans of

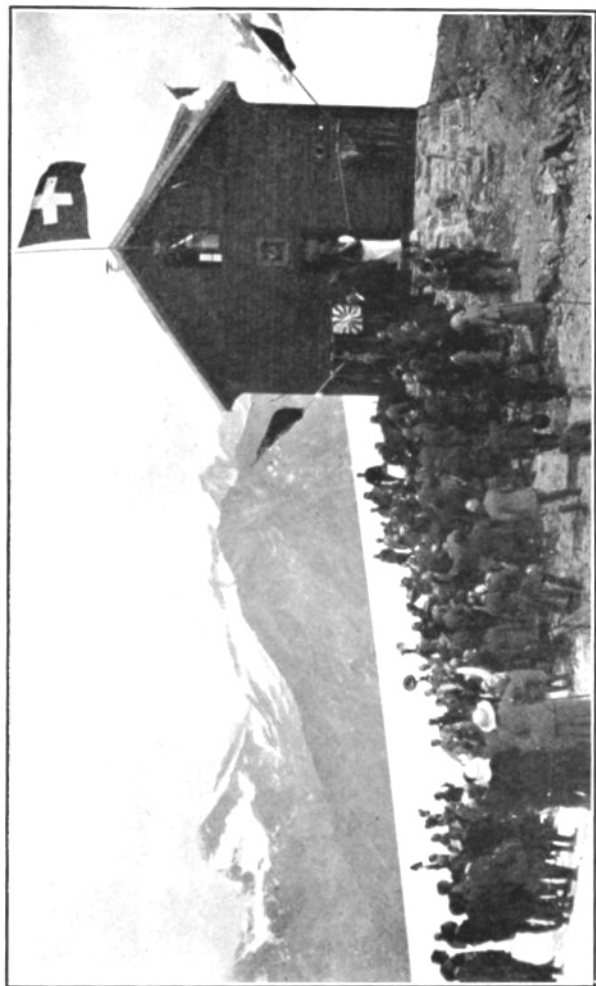
construction, and for the sumptuous entertainment which they have provided us with to-day. I should like also to add our heart-felt thanks to the guides and porters who have with so much toil carried out the work.

The success of collecting subscriptions has been, I think, due to two chief factors—firstly, the distinction of our President, Mr. Clinton Dent: and secondly, to the extraordinary devotion and untiring energy of our Secretary, Mr. J. A. B. Bruce.

In the name then of my colleagues of the Association B.M.S.A.C. I hand you over the key, heartily hoping that the bonds of good fellowship between you Swiss mountaineers and us British will thereby be tightened, and that the Cabane Britannia may remain as a token of our ever growing friendship.

MR. J. A. B. BRUCE: Mesdames, Messieurs et cher Collegues du C.A.S.: je parlerai en Anglais et après Mlle. Ursula Radford le repeterai en Français. I would particularly address myself to Dr. Dubi, who first suggested this admirable site for the Hut; to Monsieur Meissier, representing the all powerful Central Committee of the Swiss Alpine Club; and to Monsieur Archuard, the Ex-President of the Geneva section.

On the site itself of the Klein Allalinhorn we present to the C.C. of S.A.C. this Hut, which you have with so much propriety and good taste named the Cabane Britannia, thereby to show its origin. We give it as a token of our love for Switzerland and the Swiss, and to show in some small measure our thanks to the S.A.C. for their hospitality in the past. The Association of British Members of the S.A.C.



THE NATIONAL ANTHEMS—SWISS AND ENGLISH.

have commissioned Dr. O. K. Williamson, our Vice-President, and myself, one of the Honorary Secretaries, to represent them on this auspicious occasion. Our Association was inaugurated by permission of the C.C. of S.A.C. over three years ago. Our qualifications for membership are love of Switzerland and membership of the S.A.C. Our objects—(1) to induce all British Alpinists, whether climbers or not, to belong to the S.A.C.; (2) to collect funds and present this Club Hut to Switzerland; (3) and to promote among British Members the sociability which is so conspicuous a feature of your Club, but from which we would otherwise be debarred owing to our living so far from the head quarters of our section. This we have endeavoured to bring about by dinners and “At Homes” in London and showing at them, lantern slides of your beautiful mountains.

In collecting the money for this Club Hut, from over 500 subscribers, we have been greatly assisted by “The Alpine Club” in England, that earliest of Alpine Associations, the President of which, Sir Edward Davidson, sends through me his cordial greetings and good wishes for a successful career. The Ski Club of Great Britain, the Alpine Ski Club, and the Ladies Alpine Club, have also done their share. The gift has been accepted in a cordial spirit by your Central Committee. They have deputed the building and guardianship to the Geneva section, and you yourselves will see with what care and skill that body has executed the task entrusted to them. Owing to the practical knowledge possessed by the Commission des Cabanes of Geneva this Hut is I think the best, the most comfortable in your Alps.

Vivat crescat floreat—long may it stand, monument of the undying affection which has existed and shall ever exist between our two nations. Vivat Helvetia! Vivat Grand Bretagne!

REV. J. SALWEY : your President, Dr. Roch, has done me the great honour of asking me to speak on this auspicious occasion as British Chaplain at Saas Fée. It is a great pleasure to me not only in an official capacity but also as a humble member of the Swiss Alpine Club and its British Association.

It is, too, a great pleasure to be asked to take part with the Curé of Saas Fée, who is unfortunately unable to be present, and with Pastor Muller, of Geneva. I rejoice in this happy combination of the Christian Churches, for it enables us to express our thanks as Britishers for all the Hospitality we receive in your beautiful mountains, not only in your huts as climbers, but above all in the privilege of worshipping in our own mother tongue in whatever valley we may be residing, whatever its Faith may be.

We appreciate this immensely, and trust that the Cabane Britannia will testify our gratitude not only for the privilege of climbing, but also of worship too. The Cabane Britannia is a splendid example of what can be done to bring about the amity of nations; in old days the mountains used to separate men, now they are bringing together people of all languages and races. The brotherhood of the Alps. The Cabane Britannia is a concrete example of this fraternity; there it will stand, a British gift indeed, but for the use of every race; and here men who do not know each other's language



"CARRYING THE BANNER"

(Presented by the Geneva Section to the Association).

will meet as brother mountaineers. May this friendship stand as firmly founded as this hut and weather every storm.

One other thought strikes me, that this Cabane is not only a mark of brotherly feeling, but it has a very definite use. The sport of mountaineering has its risks, as have other sports.

This Hut is more than a resting place for many a happy day of health and enjoyment, it is also a shelter for the day of storm; and I would associate with the opening of this Hut not only the thought of the amity of nations, but above all something of the noble spirit of St. Bernard when he founded his shelter on the pass which bears his name, and would ask the blessing of God on the Cabane Britannia.

PASTOR MULLER, of Geneva, then closed the proceedings with the Lord's Prayer and Grace.

MOUNTAINEERING ON SKI FROM ZERMATT TO SAAS FEE.

"Times," March 21st, 1913.

After a night in Betemps Hut, the wind rose and Monte Rosa was abandoned, at 7-30 a.m. we started for the Adler Pass. . . . in seven hours reached foot of the Pass and lunched just below the Pass, 12,400 ft. above the sea. . . . In two hours we reached the Britannia Hut, which English climbers have recently presented to the Swiss Alpine Club. As I am the first British runner to visit it I must testify to its convenience in Winter. It is wind and snow proof, and the gale which throughout the night fought through the gap where it lies only emphasizes the comfort of its cosy interior. The wind did not abate, and we were glad of a sheltered run down to Saas Fee. . . . of the many beauties of those days few stand out so vividly as the last golden vision of the Bietschorn glowing in the sunset, a vision which cheered the long descent through one of the loveliest of Swiss valleys.

The Opening of the Britannia Hut on the Klein Allalinhorn.

By Dr. H. Dübi (Berne Section).

Translated from "Alpina."

THE latest addition to the list of the S.A.C.'s club huts is, in the judgment of competent people who have seen many such buildings ancient and modern, one of the most valuable our association has ever seen. This in respect both of its convenient situation and its external and internal arrangements. The situation was chosen after a thorough and lengthy search by the "Association of British Members of S.A.C.," who collected the money for the building from subscriptions from its members and similar associations, the Geneva section of the S.A.C., which kindly undertook the actual building, and the Central Committee of the S.A.C., to whom the plans were submitted for approval. The spot finally chosen lies in the little known ridge that divides the Kessjen and Hohlaub glaciers, and connects the north-eastern spur (called by Siegfried the Hinter Allalin) with the neighbouring "Klein Allalinhorn" (summit given as 3,077 m. by the topographical atlas). The Hut lies at an altitude of something over 3,000 m. and commands a wonderful view, which is still finer from the summit ten minutes distant. The Eggiven, Mittaghorn, Allalinhorn, Hinter Allalin, Rimpfischhorn and Strahlhorn can all be ascended or traversed by different routes from the Hut. It also offers a centre or starting point for the following



THE ARRIVAL OF THE SECRETARY.

passes: the Alphubel and Féejoch to Täsch, the Allalin pass (also to Täsch), and the Adler pass to Findelen and Zermatt. These are well-known and frequented routes, but it is also possible and well worth a trial to cross diagonally from the Hut, over the Hohlaub, Allalin and Schwartzburg glaciers to the east foot of the Weisstor, and so arrive direct at the Riffel and Zermatt, or over one of the gaps in the Roffelhörner to the Belvedere and so to Macugnaga. And whoever wishes to take a short-cut to the latter place, can come from the Upper Schwartzburg glacier over the Seewinen glacier without wasting time and labour on the ascent to Mattmark. The Hut has thus a great future. It should not be forgotten that in winter, too, in fine weather it forms a safe and practicable excursion as well from Zermatt over the Adler pass as from Saas Fée over the Fée glacier and the Kessjen or Eggjuerjoch. The Hut is not exposed to avalanches, and is well protected by double windows and strong shutters against the gusts of wind always to be expected in open places.

We come thus to the structure of the Hut, of which we will say little, as a detailed description is expected from the Geneva section. The Cabane Britannia, so named in honour of its founders, is a wooden building, consisting of ground-floor, upper storey and an added loft on the south side, and rests on a masonry foundation. The roof is of galvanised iron, which has been tried already for several new huts, and also for the Saas Fée church. The ground floor is entered on the western side by stone steps not yet provided with a balustrade; then come no less than three doors with locks—a front door, a second door, behind

which is a passage to a store room and the equally lockable separate room of the caretaker, and at last the living-room door. It was therefore no mean thing that I undertook when on August 9th I, as representative of the Central Committee, made a previous inspection of the Hut with a few members of "the Association with the long name" as the A.B.M.S.A.C. is jokingly called. The honorary secretary, Mr. Bruce, handed me a bunch of keys, with which, in exercise of my rights, I unlocked the Hut in their name and commission. That no one may think, however, that so much ceremony will be necessary in future, I will hasten to add that from the day of the opening onwards the Hut was given over Unlocked to all comers, and must always remain so, even after the departure of the caretaker, who is engaged for the summer months. A room in the upper storey with a special stove is reserved for winter visitors. The staircase to the upper storey starts from the ante-room. The ground floor contains, behind the third door, a room serving as living and dining room with stove and washing-up apparatus. From this well-lighted and ventilated room, the guides' sleeping room is reached through a sliding door to the east, where there is room for from 8 to 10 people on two wooden shelves, furnished with straw mattresses and pillows, and divided by a narrow gangway. Here, as in the kitchen and upstairs, pegs for clothes and so forth are in such abundance as I have never before beheld. In the upper storey are several sleeping rooms, one specially luxuriously appointed for ladies (there is a looking-glass!), a toilet room with water laid on, and an agreeable little sitting room with



ADLER PASS, FROM CABANE BRITANNIA.



CABANE BRITANNIA. A LAST LOOK.

books to read, writing materials and games. There are also four hammocks in the upper sleeping rooms, which raise the normal number of 36 sleeping places to 40. (Already since the opening, 54 people have passed the night in the Hut together, and appear to have had a lively time). Water can be obtained in considerable quantities (when the weather is not too cold) from the rocks of the Hinter Allalin; failing that the snow supply is near and inexhaustible. The W.C. is about 60 paces distant and might be improved. The Hut will be provided with wood by the caretaker, and the furniture and appointments are good and of course new. I will not relate the history of the building, only mention the cost, which with the appointments runs up to 20,000 fr., recruited exclusively from the subscriptions of the 400 (or thereabouts) members of the Association, the Alpine Club, the Ski Club of Great Britain, the Alpine Ski Club, and the Ladies' Alpine Club), and will go on to the opening.

Desperate efforts were made at first to postpone the opening from the 17th to the 26th August, as the three Hotels of the Lagger family, the two belonging to other proprietors, and even dépendances and furnished rooms in Saas Fée are generally full in the middle of August, so it was feared the invited guests would not have where to lay their heads. Finally, however, the original day was adhered to. And well that it was so, for the 16th and 17th August were not the just bearable days that were greeted with acclamation this summer, but fine and sunny without any qualification, the festal day in particular. Towards evening of the 16th August all the guests, about 130 in number (200 had been

expected) met in Saas Fée, and a "reception" was offered them by the Lagger family in the verandah and on the terrace of the Grand Hotel. This appears to have been very friendly and kept up very late. Whether any other speeches were made besides the welcome that I pronounced to the members of the Geneva section, I know not. I had, in fact—out of burning zeal of course—considered it necessary to ascend to the Hut already, behind the commissariat, which was taking up the last necessaries for the lunch of the 17th. This time I approached the Hut by the Plattje, where Cleucus Imseng (who helped so much in building the Hut) has a mountain hotel, overlooking one of the finest views in the valley. Thence by a rocky path, carefully made at the expense of the above and strengthened by a fixed rope in places, behind the Mittag-horn and the Eggner on to the top of the moraine of the Kossjen glacier, from which the Hut is reached up an easy and gradual snow slope. After this pleasant four hours walk and an agreeable night's rest in the guides' room, I acquired the necessary tranquillity of mind to look on, while the members of hut-building commission of the Geneva section of the S.A.C., who had been working like blacks for the last two days, prepared for the reception of guests with hammering and knocking, hanging up of placards (rules and good advice), hoisting various flags, and planting out harmless bombs. Others, like two further representatives of the hotel-keeper Lagger and *Chef de Cuisine*, who arrived in the early morning of August 17th, joined with those who had already ascended with me on the day before in preparing the



RIMPFISCHORN AND ALLALINHORN FROM CABANE.



THE PORTJENGRET FROM TOP OF SONNIGHORN,
FIRST ASCENDED BY CLINTON DENT.

lunch packets, which with a bottle of Valais, were to fortify the tired and hungry. As I found, after some time, that things went on all right without my looking on, I ascended the "Klein Allalin horn," for the tenth time in my life the second that morning, to await the arrival of the guests and other loafers, for the ceremony attracted outsiders and travellers too. From up there, where it was so pleasant on the warm plateau, in the sunshine and out of the wind, caravans could be seen approaching from ten o'clock. As soon as one came in sight from the Kessjenjoch or the Egginer, it was greeted (if it looked at all festive) by a bomb explosion. Thus came the Genevese, about 25 in number, the English, some 70 strong, with the Vice-president, the two secretaries and the treasurer of the Association at their head, a deputation from the Monte Rosa section, such other Latin sections and individual members of German speaking sections as personal idiosyncrasy or holiday chance had brought into the neighbourhood, the representative of the Central Committee, Herr S. Meisser, who had not shirked the long journey from Chur in order to take the latest addition to the club hut family into their protection, friends and visitors to boot, men, women and children of all nationalities, and many natives of the Saas valley, in all over 200 persons. The happy possessor of an invitation was (on giving up his ticket of course) given in the hall a lunch packet in one hand, containing as per programme, bread, roast beef, ham, cheese, Italian salad, a cardboard plate as well; in the other hand, a paper bag containing offerings of biscuits, chocolate, and so forth from various firms and variously packed; thus laden a bottle was stuck under

his arm and a Valais cigar in his mouth, he was then wheeled round and requested to leave as quickly as possible (as others were waiting) and to enjoy his booty in peace in the open air. As the weather remained fine, the platform around the Hut was very merry. One met old friends, made new acquaintances, chattered and bragged, praised the fine weather, and railed at the bad of the day before yesterday, and (likely enough) to-morrow, let one's self be photographed without a pang, and prepared thus for the ceremony of the Opening. This began at one p.m. with the National Anthem, which, it is well known, can be sung in English, French and German to the same tune. Then a representative of the Hut commission of the Geneva section S.A.C. gave the French report of the building of the Hut to the master builder, the Association, and handed the key to their Vice-President (the President, Mr. Clinton Dent, was unfortunately prevented from appearing). He, in a short English speech which was afterwards summarised in French, gave over the Key and Hut to the representative of the Central Committee, as a gift from the British members to the whole S.A.C., and as a token of their sympathy for Switzerland and their common love for the Alps. Herr Meisser (in a German speech, with warmest thanks to the givers), received the Hut into the Hands of the S.A.C., and gave it over to the care and trusty protection of the Geneva section, who had undertaken the building of it, and carried it out exactly as planned after nearly two years work. The official opening was followed by a further English speech from the Secretary of the Association, who thanked everyone who had



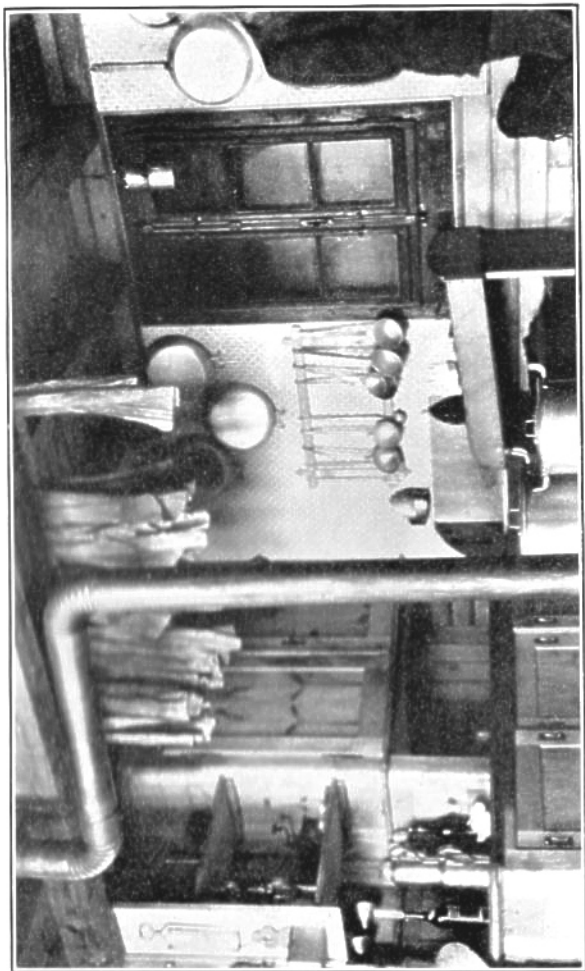
RETURNING FROM THE OPENING OF THE CABANE BRITANNIA.

helped with advice or actively to the success of the building (forgetting himself, however). The French translation of this speech was given by a dear little English girl, and followed by a benediction from the chaplain of the English church at Saas Fée, himself a member of the Geneva section of the S.A.C., then followed an eloquent discourse from Pastor Müller, who, as Vice-President of the Geneva section, had stayed at the Hut for several days previously and prepared the place for himself and us. After the Swiss Psalm, with which the proceedings closed, had rung out, and a grouped inspection of the Hut had taken place, farewells were said and the descent to Saas Fée started on about three, where the last arrived about 7. At 8 p.m. about 120 guests met at a banquet in the Hotel du Dom, that was celebrating at the same time its thirtieth anniversary; among others the Prefect of the Visp district, and the Presidents of the four quarters of Saas—Baln, Grund, Fée and Almagell, which had given their common right to the ground on which the Britannia Hut was built without payment.

Here speeches were made and toasts proposed in English, French and German: Pastor Müller proposed Switzerland, the Prefect of Visp the Swiss Alpine Club, to which he guaranteed the sympathy of the Valaisian authorities and people, Mr. Bruce and others spoke in the name of the Association of the friendly relations and common interests of Alpine Clubs. The present writer, who spoke in the name of the Central Committee, but also as an old friend of the house and the Valley, united in his toast the Association, the S.A.C., and the A.C.; also thanks to the good people of Saas, who had

helped forward the work so far as in them lay, and for whom we may wish this blessing, that they keep their own solid individuality as they have done in the midst of all increasing traffic and innovations. In the middle of the banquet fireworks were let off on the open space between the hotel and the Church, and afterwards, stimulated by a local choir, songs, chiefly French and German national and folk songs, were sung, and it was midnight before the singers grew weary.

Next day, most of the comrades in festivity left Saas Fée—everyone with the feeling of having passed a day as happy as full of promise for the future, and with feelings of the liveliest gratitude towards those who had called the Britannia Hut into being.



INTERIOR OF CABANE BRITANNIA.