

# Notice to intending travellers

Objektyp: **Group**

Zeitschrift: **Helvetia : magazine of the Swiss Society of New Zealand**

Band (Jahr): **18 (1954)**

Heft [5]

PDF erstellt am: **29.05.2024**

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distance from the inn, they now returned to examine the debris which had fallen.

The first fall was from the east side of the mountain. Seventeen minutes later a second and larger fall descended from the west side. This fall overwhelmed the inn with many of the sightseers and four other houses, killing twenty people. Everyone was now seized with panic and started to run, many people making for the slopes of the Duniberg, the mountain rising opposite to the Plattenbergkopf. Here they felt they were safe from a further fall, and most of them stopped when they had climbed about 300ft up the slopes. Many people thought that the danger was now over, but the two falls had undermined the Plattenbergkopf, leaving the main mass of the mountain without support, and now, four minutes after the second fall, ten million cubic metres of rock broke away and toppled across the valley beneath. Horrified spectators gazing from Musli and points near that village saw the people on the Duniberg racing up the slopes "like a herd of terrified chamois." But most of them were too late. The huge masses of rock fell upon the mountainside and they were blotted out like insects beneath a steam roller.

Deflected from the Duniberg, the fall poured down the valley, wiping out Elm in a single instant. It flung a fearful wind-blast before it which whirled whole houses high in the air, together with their unfortunate occupants. Four of the six survivors on the Duniberg were saved by being carried through the air by the wind and cast on to places which the avalanche failed to reach. The other two had wisely used the four minutes between the falls in climbing as far as possible.

When a great mass of rock, millions of tons in weight, is set in motion the friction of its passage over the ground is negligible as compared with its mass and momentum. Thus the rocks continued to flow like water, and at tremendous speed, down the valley in a wide stream thirty feet deep, preceded by a tornado of wind and a great cloud of dust.

According to the schoolmaster, who escaped with the notes he made, the avalanche took about twenty seconds to cover the mile from the quarry to Musli and some of the sightseers on a bridge had time to run aside. The torrent of rocks cut the village in half. The parson, watching from his house and seeing the dust cloud rolling down the valley, believed that it was only dust that came so far. Imagine his feelings when it cleared and he saw that half his village had disappeared, and with it 115 of his flock.

The roar of the fall ceased suddenly, and in the silence came the screams of the mortally frightened and the lamentations of those who

feared for their loved ones. One man whose house stood undamaged to one side of the debris found it deserted. His whole family—wife, daughter, son, son's wife, and two grandchildren—had all run out and been killed. Few were the injured and few the bodies recovered. The injured were mostly those who had been hurled by the wind from the path of the avalanche.

Such was the disaster of Elm and Musli. The sturdy and industrious Swiss would not accept the devastation of their valley. The debris was levelled and covered with soil, and a channel cut for the stream. Trees now grow, their roots reaching towards the bones of those who perished. Only the scar in the hills remains unhealed by Nature. It provides an object lesson as to what the forces of Nature can do when man unlooses them.

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## NOTICE TO INTENDING TRAVELLERS

Due to the difficulties experienced in the past by Swiss nationals who have travelled away from New Zealand, and who subsequently have wished to return, it is thought desirable to draw the attention of all intending travellers to the fact that before leaving New Zealand they should make application to a Collector of Customs for a Certificate of Registration authorising their readmission to New Zealand. The procedure is for the travellers to produce their passport with two photographs of passport size and complete a written application. The period of validity of the certificate granted is shown on the face of the certificate, and the holder is permitted to return to New Zealand provided that on arrival back at a New Zealand port they establish their identity and the certificate is still valid.

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Printed by McKenzie, Thornton, Cooper Ltd., 126 Cuba St., Wellington for the Swiss Benevolent Society in New Zealand (Inc.).

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