

the Mattmark catastrophe

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THE MATTMARK CATASTROPHE

During the four weeks after the "Black Monday" when the Allalin Glacier avalanche killed 87 people, the Glacier moved approximately 100 metres. This is the reason why it is highly dangerous to try and remove the 61 bodies still buried under ice and stone. Whilst the unrest of the people, especially the relatives of the victims, is understandable, also their wish to have the bodies recovered before winter sets in, those responsible for the operations are reluctant to endanger more lives. A new method is being tried by which ice may be shifted through high water pressure. Early in October, fifteen men and some heavy machines were put on new rescue work. Bad weather made operations even more difficult.

In spite of the glacier movement and the wide gap between the main glacier and the huge mass of ice (estimated at 1.5 to 2 million cubic metres) which detached itself, the dam and the lake are considered safe. The glacier is being filmed hourly at slow motion speed. Police and soldiers are on duty.

The authorities are investigating the catastrophe from every angle, also the legal implication. At the end of September, there was a Memorial Service in Lucerne for the Italian victims (56). At the Wasserkirche in Zurich, a special Service was held for the 32 employees of Swiss-boring Company.

Of those killed in the accident, 37 were single, 12 married without children and 39 fathers. 81 children under age became orphans. Help has come from many sources, and a Trust Fund has been brought into being so as to make the best use of the money. This foundation will be under the high patronage of the federal authorities. The "Glückskette" campaign arranged by the "Radio Suisse Romande" resulted in well over two million francs by the end of September. Concerts were given in aid of the victims' families, and in one instance, the soldiers, n.c.o.'s and officers of an alpine summer course renounced some of their pay which resulted in a donation of Fr.1,200.—.

[A.T.S.]

APPOINTMENTS

The United Artists Corporation chose Rafael Jaquier (Fribourg) as their Manager for Switzerland.

The new permanent Swiss representative at the Council of Europe in Strasbourg is Monsieur Daniel Gagnebin in succession to Monsieur Henri Voirier.

Prof. Dr. Karl Schmid has retired as President of the "Schweizer Auslandhilfe". He is succeeded by Dr. Walter Stutzer.

The Swiss architect and painter Walter Jonas has been elected Vice-President of the recently founded "Groupe International d'Architecture Prospective" in Paris.

The new Principal of the ETH, in succession to Prof. Dr. W. Traupel, is Prof. Dr. Hans Leibundgut.

The new Director of the Swiss National Library is Dr. Franz G. Maier as successor to Prof. Dr. R. Ruffieux.

Lieut.-Col. H. Perret is the new Red Cross Medical Officer-in-Chief. He succeeds Dr. H. Buergi who retires for reasons of age.

The newly elected Chairman of the Swiss Hotel Association is Dr. H. Bircher. He follows Dr. F. Seiler as Central President.

The Swiss Shortwave Service has a new Director in the person of Mr. Joel Curchod.

[A.T.S.]

COMPTOIR SUISSE

The 46th Swiss Autumn Fair, better known as the "Comptoir Suisse", closed its doors on 26th September. During the fortnight of its duration over a million visitors went to see the exhibition which covered art, agriculture, commerce and industry. It gave an excellent picture of Swiss efforts and activities in these fields. Under the patronage of the Chamber of Commerce and the Industrial Co-operative of Hong Kong, there was also a fascinating Hong Kong Pavilion, as well as the halls of this year's guest countries, Belgium and Luxembourg. The Organising Committee are already making plans for next year's Comptoir to be held from 10th to 25th September and, in accordance with tradition, will feature a pavilion of a guest nation — Finland.

[S.N.T.O.]

JUBILEES

One thousand members of the Salvation Army took part in the Centenary celebrations in Berne at the end of September. In seven groups, it was shown what the Salvation Army is, how it began, what it believes and does, how it gets young people to believe in Christ and that evangelisation and social work belong together. Twenty-one social institutions have been founded by the S.A. in Switzerland: homes for women, children, mothers and girls; the poor and the sick are looked after, as well as prisoners; there are homes and hostels, holiday homes and workshops for men. At the celebrations in Berne 3,600 people were present. Federal Councillor Bonvin and many important personalities were amongst the guests. The programme included an impressive pageant "The Path of the Salvation Army".

One hundred and fifty years ago, André-Alfred Gosse (Geneva) and Samuel Wytttenbach (Berne) founded the "Schweizerische Naturforschende Gesellschaft". At the end of September, members of the eighteen groups in Switzerland met in Geneva to celebrate the jubilee. The President of the Confederation was present, and Prof. Paul Huber (Basle) was in the chair at the meeting at Geneva University.

At the same time, the Basle Mission commemorated its foundation 150 years ago. Pfr. von Brunn and a few contemporaries began the important activities by starting a mission school. The jubilee had already been celebrated in June at the annual "Missionsfest", but a special service was held at the St. Martinskirche on 26th September.

On the first Sunday in October, the Valais was going to celebrate the jubilee of joining the Confederation 150 years ago. The celebrations were postponed because of the catastrophe at Mattmark. Strangely enough, the centenary commemoration in 1914 also had to be postponed owing to the outbreak of the first world war.

On 14th September 1515, the battle of Marignano took place, and with it there was a decisive change in Swiss history. It meant the turning point from dreams of grandeur and power to a policy of peace and neutrality. To mark the 450th anniversary, a monument was unveiled on the site of the battlefield of Marignano, called Melegnano today. It was erected at the initiative of a committee chaired by the former Federal Councillor Etter, and various Swiss and Italian personalities, clerical, secular and military, were present.

[A.T.S.]