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LOETSCHBERG A Jubilee and a Book

It is fifty years since with the completion of the Lötschberg Railway a direct connection was established from Berne through the Bernese Alps to Brigue in the Rhone Valley and further through the Simplon tunnel, which had been opened to the traffic a few years earlier, to Milan. An official ceremony in the town hall of Berne on 22nd June will commemorate the inauguration of the railway which, from Spiez to Kandersteg and Brigue, passes through a region of great scenic beauty. There will also be a ceremony in Brigue. May to October is the traditional season of the school excursions, and the management of the Lötschberg Railway this year is making Swiss school children and their teachers special offers.

There is an exhibition on the old steamer, "Buben-berg", at Thun, which shows the development of the "B.L.S." railway. Of special attraction are models which show the most outstanding parts of the railway at a scale of 1:50. On 25th May, 220 retired employees who had been in the service of the "Lötschbergbahn" in 1913 were received on board the old steamer. Later they were invited to lunch and a round trip on the Lake of Thun on board the new "Buben-berg". [A.T.S. and S.N.T.O.]

To commemorate the Golden Jubilee the "Verlag Berner Heimatbücher" (Paul Haupt, Berne) have issued their 88th book, called "Der Lötschberg", by Otto Zin- niker, which happens to coincide with the 200th volume in the series "Schweizer Heimatbücher".

These beautifully illustrated books (16-24 pages of text and 32 full-sized pictures) are obtainable at only Fr.5.— and cover Swiss towns, mountains, lakes, architecture, famous men and women — in short every aspect of Swiss life.

Dr. Walter Laedrach founded the series. He visualised about a dozen only, but when in 1944 twelve Bernese volumes had become popular, the need for a Swiss series became evident, and so the publication of other volumes began which were further enlarged in 1948 by an international series, "The Open Window".

The 200th volume, "Der Lötschberg", is a very interesting description of the valleys, like the Lötschental and the Gasterntal, of the Gemmi and the Lötschenpass, the Frutigland, Kandertal and Kiental and finally of the Lötschberg Railway. The pictures are, as one has come to expect of this series, carefully chosen for their excellent photography. They give more than an impression of landscape and people, and there is no doubt that "The Lötschberg" is outstanding value for money.

THE STORY OF THE FIRST SWISS TOUR CENTENARY

On 25th June at half past nine in the morning a party of tourists will leave Victoria Station, London, en route for Switzerland. A typical holiday group? Not quite — these tourists will be in nineteenth-century costume and led by the great-great-grandson of Thomas Cook.

They will re-enact the first conducted tour of Switzerland, by British people, one hundred years ago, organised by Thomas Cook of Leicester. This party will be the guests of Switzerland during the 12-day tour which will cover the original route using many of the old methods of transport.

Although the present Cook family has no business connection with Thos. Cook & Son Ltd., 26-year-old Mr. Thomas Cook, great-great-grandson of the founder, will be accompanied by his wife and sister on the journey. His father and mother, Sir Thomas and Lady Cook, have been invited to be present at some of the more important functions. The other ten members of the party have been drawn from leading London Amateur Dramatic and Operatic Societies.

The first Swiss Tour, which also left in June, marks the beginning of Switzerland's development as a major holiday country. Those original tourists followed a path, since well-trodden by millions of Britons, and brought the Grand Tour within the reach of the common man.

Details of the 1863 tour came to light when a journal which had been written by a 'Miss Jemima' (see "Swiss Observer", 26th April) a member of the original tour, was found. From it we learn of the 'Junior United Alpine Club' — as Miss Jemima so described the party — battling as the 'pioneers of civilisation' against discomfort or ecstatically admiring the beautiful and the sublime.

The centenary tour will follow the 'pioneers' route by rail, lake steamer, horse carriage and on foot, and festivities are planned at Geneva, Sion, Leukerbad, Spiez, Inter-laken, Giessbach, Lucerne, Rigi-Kulm, and many other places.

Among the special events will be a candlelight supper in the style of 1863 at the Castle of Chillon, a period evening at Interlaken, an official reception at Lucerne and even a balloon ascent at Berne.

The cost of all this holidaymaking? In 1863 the trip cost £19 17s. 6d. each — today the amount would be nearer £120!

[S.N.T.O.]

THE BASIC RULES OF MOUNTAINEERING

Summer holidays are approaching. No doubt, many are induced to spend them in the mountains. The editors of the "S.N.T.O. Bulletin" have therefore asked an experienced Swiss sportsman and mountaineer to formulate the advice he would give prospective mountain climbers. Here are the basic rules everyone should take to heart: "Mountaineering demands so much of the human organism that adequate training is essential. Should you arrive in the mountain resort without having been able to train your circulation, your muscles, tendons and joints at least to a certain extent, be sure not to do too much, start with easy walks and step up your 'performance' gradually. Above all, do not forget that even simple hikes without leading into the rocks and ice require adequate equipment. Solid hiking or mountain boots with good soles and possibly

nails are a must in any event. If you set your goal higher and wish to explore the high Alpine regions with their crags, snow and ice, the only reasonable thing to do is to try and acquire the correct technique. The best way, suggested already at the time by the outstanding mountaineer Alpine guide and author Andreas Fischer, is to take a guide. Switzerland offers a number of excellent mountain climbing schools such as Rosenlauri, Pontresina and St. Moritz where you can join a course suited to your abilities. Beware not to over-estimate your prowess and physical capacity! Many a hopeful youngster lost his life because he was too eager to accomplish great mountaineering feats and lacked the necessary skill, experience and endurance."

[S.N.T.O.]