

Catastrophic floods

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performance in the Händel aria and the Schütz Cantata, and the Oboe-player Dennis Becher of the Bryanston School who completed the participation of the whole group of artists brought together to such happy effect in this "Musical Evening" by the initiative of Mr. Cogliatti.

Not content with offering the audience this great musical treat in their delightful home Mr. and Mrs. Cogliatti in the end also regaled those present with a delicious champagne supper much appreciated by everyone. *E.*

CATASTROPHIC FLOODS

As mentioned in the last issue, torrential rain in Switzerland turned streams into rivers and floods transformed roads into streams at the week-end of 21st/22nd September. At least seven people died in the catastrophic floods, three alone in the Canton of Berne, one of the worst-hit parts. It was really only the Grisons and the Ticino which can be said to have escaped.

In the Aarau *Dammquartier*, the water was *metertief* in the roads, and cellars filled with water to the ceilings. The whole quarter was transformed into a lake, and the inhabitants were completely cut off. In Geneva, the Arve rose from 70 cubic metres a second on Saturday morning to 800 cubic metres 24 hours later, and where the river joins the Rhone, it rose from 300 to 1,300 cubic metres per second on Sunday. 15,000 square metres of the Plain-palais Exhibition Hall were under water (40cm.). The Army had to help the fire brigade, as in other parts.

Half the 1,300 inhabitants of Vernayaz in the Valais had to be evacuated. Its main road looked like a wild river in which the debris was thrown about. At Langenthal, bridges were put across the river which was the main

road. According to an old tradition, the children floated boxes with burning woodshavings on the "river". In many places turned into a Venice, tubs and all kinds of floating vessels were used as boats.

There was serious disruption of traffic, and worse accidents happened than in snow and ice.. Landslides and fallen rock blocked main and subsidiary roads and in some parts caused derailments and chaotic conditions on the railways. Bridges were torn away or damaged, e.g. over the Kander between Spiez and Wimmis and near Trient (Valais). Thousands of telephone lines were disrupted, in Zurich alone over 1,000. There were electricity cuts in many places. Firemen and other helpers were out day and night, and in Zurich it was so bad, that they had to confine their efforts for a time to public buildings, mainly at Hoengg, Schwamendingen and Affoltern.

It has since been made known that the rainfall during that week-end was the third-highest ever registered since 1864 when records were started. The damage in the Thurgau is estimated to be between two and three million francs, and in the Aargau probably as much.

This sounds almost exciting, and no doubt to those who were not affected, it sounds like adventure. But what of those afflicted? Even the townpeople forgot to enjoy the usually happy harvest time at the sight of the black grain. The farmers are often accused of asking too many subsidies. But they cannot be made responsible for the bad weather. Take the corn-growing farmers of Jegenstorf in Berne. They were unable to deliver even one single kilo of ground-worthy grain. If that does not make one compassionate

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