

Greetings from the Consul

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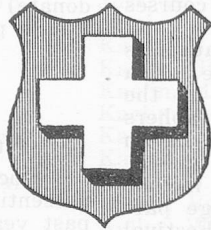
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AUCKLAND.

GREETINGS FROM THE CONSUL

My Dear Compatriots,—

Another year has elapsed. Some Swiss have acquired New Zealand citizenship and I feel sure that they will make good citizens, but I am also certain that in their hearts they will not forget their antipodal homeland.

I am glad that in spite of the naturalisations and a few departures, the number of Swiss living in New Zealand has increased by 84 new arrivals in 1951, who will soon feel at home, as there is scarcely another country in the world where living conditions and freedom are so near to what they have been accustomed to. Let us hope that they will be happy and that all of them will subscribe to the "Helvetia," which is in need of more income, as the printing of the bulletin is costly.

The year 1951 has been very kind to New Zealand, and to Switzerland as well. Our industries were worked to full capacity and consequently there was no unemployment. If it were not for the avalanches which claimed so many victims and plunged many families into grief, 1951 would be remembered as a blessed year.

There has been a lot of talk about a forthcoming gruesome war; but the New Zealand and the Swiss Nations have enjoyed peace. True enough, war clouds are menacing, but if there are reasons for anxiety, there are just as many reasons to be almost certain that the year to come will not bring the catastrophe so much feared by all mankind.

I wish you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

H. BLANCHARD,

Consul.

NEWS FROM SWITZERLAND

Following the catastrophic disaster of the avalanches in the winter 1951, the news that another calamity has overtaken the canton of Ticino has stirred the minds of the Swiss people. The conditions in the Calanca valley are desperate and it is considered that a catastrophe of such an enormous extent has never been known in human memory. Not only is the valley completely cut off from all traffic, but the mere existence of the inhabitants is threatened. With a very small exception all the bridges in the valley are destroyed. The road has at several places (at one place for a distance of several hundred yards), been washed away right down to the bare rock. Houses as well as industrial buildings have fallen victims to the raging element.

A Committee "Pro Calanca" has been formed from representatives of the valley, which has asked the authorities for sufficient assistance of troops to help in the restoration of communications, clearance and safety

measures. As the catastrophe has caused an almost complete destruction of the fertile meadows and pastures, the existence of the whole agricultural population of the valley has been ruined. Those working in industrial undertakings have equally been robbed of their livelihood, as the places of their activities are no longer existent and it is feared that the whole of the population eventually will have to emigrate, if assistance of the most lasting character is not at once forthcoming.

For more than a quarter of a century Neuchatel, charming capital of the Swiss canton of the same name, has celebrated its famous wine festival year by year with a programme that grows in scope and brilliance. This year it is being held on Saturday and Sunday, September 29th and 30th. On the Sunday afternoon the traditional procession will wend its way through the streets of the old town. More than a thousand people will be taking part, as well as numerous carriages gaily decorated with flowers, with spectators having their share of the fun with confetti fights. As usual visitors from the rest of Switzerland and many parts of Europe will be in Neuchatel for the Festival, and everyone is hoping for the fine weather that traditionally accompanies the event.

Special trains took to Zermatt on July 30th some of the many friends of Otto Furrer to pay their last respects to the celebrated Valaisan guide, Alpinist and skier. Otto Furrer, who was 48, was killed on the Italian side of the Matterhorn, which he had climbed more than 180 times, when a rope snapped and he fell 280 feet to his death. Everyone in the valley was present at the funeral of the man who had spent his life working for the development of Zermatt. Alpine guides carrying 80 wreaths preceded representatives of Alpine Clubs from all over Switzerland, Italy and France. At the cemetery Dr. Franz Seiler, a native of Zermatt and president of the Swiss Hoteliers' Society, gave the funeral oration. Among others who spoke in tribute was Arnold Lunn, founder of the Khandahar Club, who two years ago presented Otto Furrer with the Club's coveted diamond badge.

Some of the most valuable stamp collections in Switzerland will be on view at Lucerne's Museum of Art (Kunsthhaus) from September 29th to October 7th on the occasion of the Swiss National Philatelic Exhibition. The value of the exhibits is more than ten million Swiss francs (£817,000) and will include many old and rare stamps from Europe and countries overseas. Switzerland's leading stamp collectors have also been invited to take part in a special competition.

A selection of photographic art from nearly every country in the world will be on show in Lucerne next year. A vast World Photography Exhibition has been arranged there for May 15th-July 31st, 1952, and there