

The tragedy of the Eiger [end]

Autor(en): **Meme, C.F.**

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XMAS CELEBRATION AT THE "SWISS HOME"

A Xmas party was given to the old people living at the "Swiss Home" in Fitzroy Square, on Saturday, December 19th.

It was a very happy party too, and the shining faces of the old Ladies and Gentlemen, were a sure testimonial that they enjoyed themselves.

A very sumptuous tea was served, during which, M. Conrad, President of the House Committee addressed the pensioners wishing them a very happy Xmas, and expressing the wish that they will enjoy good health in the coming year. He then acted as "Father Xmas" in presenting to each one a present.

Later on the company adjourned upstairs, where a fine Xmas tree was lit up.

Pastor Hahn, read the Chapter of the birth of Christ and also addressed the old people.

It was a very happy family-party and the Committee is heartily to be congratulated for having thought of them in such a generous way.

OLD FOLKS CHRISTMAS LUNCHEON.

A report of the "Old Folks Christmas Luncheon" which took place last Monday at the "Foyer Suisse" will appear in our next issue.

EDITOR'S POST-BAG.

To the Editor,

Swiss Observer,

23, Leonard Street, E.C.2.

A PROPHECY FULFILLED.

Sir,

In the Swiss Observer of October 20th, 1934, are these words in the report of a lecture I gave to the Swiss Mercantile College on "The Soul of a Nation" — "A Victory for Humanity and Liberty. Here let me add how deeply I regret that my country was not by your side on that epoch making day (when M. Motta opposed the admission of the U.S.S.R. to the League of Nations) — It is a real and deep sorrow to many in this land; and I believe the step this country took was both wrong and false and to be fraught with much future mischief. Your country speaking through M. Motta expressed the great and fundamental truths of what are the bases of a nation with a soul. To use a homely English saying "To Live and Let Live." There is the great reason for opposing the admission of the U.S.S.R. to the League of Nations."

Two years and two months have passed since then: and there are, unfortunately too many examples showing that the admission of the U.S.S.R. into the League has been fraught with much future mischief. It has not come to make peace, but to sow and promote strife, as it has done in Spain and elsewhere. Switzerland knows what the communist menace is, and the results of the recent elections at Geneva show that they are alive to that sinister danger.

J. T. Mustard.

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INFORMATION —

Swiss Federal Railways and State Travel Bureau, 11B Regent Street, S.W.1 (phone: Whitehall 9581)

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THE TRAGEDY OF THE EIGER.

By C. F. MEADE.

(Continuation).

Now that the last victim had succumbed, the guides returned by the same perilous way, and a rescue party of the dead climbers' comrades took over the dangerous and terrible work of cutting the bodies loose and dropping them down the remainder of the precipice. It is significant of the difference in skill that it took these devoted men four hours to negotiate the traverse that the guides had negotiated in 45 minutes.

There are many criticisms of such an ascent as this that occur inevitably to mountaineers. Such a route up the north face might conceivably be successfully completed; nevertheless, the most consummate skill, strength and endurance can avail nothing without luck. In fact, pure luck is essential to prevent stones and avalanches from hitting the climbers when they are slowly and laboriously grappling with constant difficulties and are helplessly spreadeagled on the face of the precipice. Persistent luck, too, is necessary to ensure four or five days of continuous fine weather. In this case, even at the outset of the enterprise, the weather appears to have been bad.

Probably these exploits of young men inspired by an ambition to earn an Olympic medal, or with a mistaken idea of winning glory for their country, could be appreciably discouraged by a word from the leaders of the countries they come from, leaders whose approval they are eager to secure. In this particular case the commanding officer of one of the young men had telegraphed to forbid his taking part in the expedition, but, unfortunately, the prohibition arrived too late for the party had already started.

Certainly in such an expedition the prolonged siege operations with engineering tools and methods that may be applicable in the Eastern Alps are far too hazardous to be practicable in the greater altitudes characteristic of the Western and Central Alps. Moreover, it is not possible; in addition to the necessary engineering tools and ropes, to carry adequate food or clothing for a climb lasting day after day high up on a really big peak. The Bernese Oberland, too, is a different proposition from the Dolomites or the Kaisergebirge, and in the higher Alps a shower can instantaneously change gloves, ropes, rocks and clothing into paralysing ice.

The Swiss Federal Government are trying the remedy of forbidding this particular ascent, and

it has even been suggested that climbers who may be contemplating exploits of a similar kind should bring their own rescue parties with them. The latter remedy, however, would not solve the problem of who is to rescue the rescue parties. End.

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