

FRANÇOIS EMILE MATTHES

AN APPRECIATION

IN several letters written to me since his retirement from the post of Chief of the Glacial Section of the United States Geological Survey in July 1947, F. E. Matthes had expressed his hope and his delight at the prospect of actively occupying his leisure in working up the results of the many researches which his exacting professional career had kept him from completing. It is a tragedy that his expectations were not realized.

Born in Amsterdam in 1874 and educated in Holland, Switzerland and Germany, Matthes went to the United States in 1891 and graduated at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 1895. He became naturalized in 1896, and in the same year began his long and distinguished career with the United States Geological Survey. By 1928 he had attained the position of Senior Geologist in the Survey and had served as Secretary, and later President, of the Geological Society of Washington. In 1920 he was decorated with the Belgian Order of Leopold II. His last distinction (about which he wrote to me in a letter of great modesty) was the honorary degree of LL.D. received from the University of California in 1947, an honour richly merited.

An outstanding student of glacial geomorphology, particularly in the Western States, he had been in charge of surveys in the Cloud Peak Quadrangle, Wyoming, in the Grand Cañon of the Colorado River, in the Yosemite Valley and in the Mount Rainier district. He was responsible, too, for the direction of much important work on the geomorphology of the central Mississippi Valley and the Sierra Nevada. The fluctuation of the American glaciers was one of his great interests. These are but a few of his accomplishments in the field.

In spite of heavy office duties at Washington, D.C. he devoted much time to glaciological studies and to matters affecting snow surveying and melt water conservation, a subject of great economic importance in the arid Western States.

Just before the Second World War Matthes became Secretary and Acting President of the International Commission on Snow and Glaciers. He was a devoted supporter, from the beginning, of the British Glaciological Society and contributed one of the two dedicatory articles to the *Journal of Glaciology*.

Of his many contributions to glacial literature perhaps the best known was his excellent monograph "Glaciology" which was published as a chapter in *Hydrology: Physics of the Earth—IX* (New York), edited by O. Meinzer in 1942.

His last notable contribution to glacial science was entitled "The Glacial Anticyclone examined in the Light of Recent Meteorological Data from Greenland: Part 1." (*Transactions American Geophysical Union*, Vol. 26, No. 3, 1946). This is a masterly critique of an all-too-readily accepted hypothesis.

But it is not only as a first-class scientist that François Matthes will be greatly missed; to those of us who knew him personally his passing is that of a noble character and most kindly friend.

N. E. ODELL