

A Matterhorn railway?

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At the "Gabentempel" is the exhibition of hundreds of valuable prizes, and the olive and oak laurels are ready to adorn the winner's head, or the flag of associations. The laurels are distributed by attractive maids of honour in traditional manner: The champion kneels, the girl puts the trophy on his head, and, by way of thanks, he gives her the traditional kiss. The successful society has the laurel fastened to the top of its flag.

Thus ends probably the most popular festival in Switzerland; and what an inspiring occasion it is for the young participants. Not only is it creating discipline and a sense of "fair play," but it also cements solid and lasting patriotic sentiments.

SWISS FARMING

(Continued.)

Fruit Growing.

Both climate and soil in Switzerland favour fruit growing to a considerable extent in vast regions, especially in lower and medium altitudes sheltered from the northern winds. The higher yields in fruit growing are obtained in the surroundings of the lakes. In those regions as well as in the foothills of the Alps in the northern part of Switzerland fruit growing has expanded to a considerable degree. In French-speaking Switzerland, the lake areas have, in the main, developed wine growing, while preference is given, at the same time, to the growing of stone fruit and table fruit rather than to the mass production of pip-fruit. In the Valais there are extensive apricot cultivations along with the growing of high-quality table fruit, like apples, pears, etc.). The Oeschberg fruit growing and horticultural school has been successful in advancing Swiss fruit growing to a particular degree. It was the starting point for the general adoption of the so-called Oeschberg cut, which enables a better insulation of the blossoms and fruits inside the foliage to be obtained, easing at the same time both spraying and fruit gathering.

The chart below shows the distribution and density of fruit growing in Switzerland for the year 1945:—

	High-trunk trees.	Dwarf and espalier trees.
Apple trees	6,500,000	500,000
Pear trees	3,400,000	1,400,000
Quince trees	190,000	10,000
Cherry trees	1,880,000	20,000
Plum trees	2,150,000	50,000
Apricot & peach trees	240,000	360,000
Nut trees	500,000	—
	14,860,000	2,340,000

In the Ticino the sweet chestnut tree grows profusely; its wood is processed industrially for the production of tanning substances for the leather industry.

Wine Growing.

This industry sustained a serious crisis at the end of the 19th Century. The reasons resultings in the rapid contraction of wine growing were the phylloxera, the sham mildew and the competition from abroad. In 1880 the wine growing area reached the largest expansion, i.e., 88,920 acres. In that period, vines were grown in many areas where the plants were exposed to serious damage from frost, and where the quality of the wine left much to be desired. It was these vines which were weeded out first during the crisis, followed, however, by many others. Today, the wine growing area is about 28,000 acres. It is prevalent mainly in the southern reaches, and particularly in the surroundings of lakes. On the other hand the Fohn valleys also, in the cantons of Valais, St. Gall, Grisons and Ticino grow excellent wines at present. Then also good wine is grown in the Cantons of Zurich, Schaffhausen, Thurgovia, Argovia, and the vintage grown in the eastern regions of Switzer-

land is also much appreciated. White wines are prevalent in French-speaking Switzerland, while German-speaking regions are more in favour of red wines. Likewise there are excellent white wines in the Cantons of Neuchatel and Valais along with the red. The specialties originating in the Valais have time and again astonished the foreign visitor by their quality.

The finest compact wine-growing areas are in the Canton of Vaud. The vineyards covering the shores of the Lake of Geneva afford one of the most charming views to be enjoyed in Switzerland. Particular features of wine-growing in the Ticino are the pergolas formed by vines, and also individual vines creeping up on trees and props of various kinds.

In North-eastern Switzerland, inarching, securing a higher yield, is still much practised, while the long-rod system, a practice favouring the quality of the wine, is in common use in French-speaking Switzerland. The spur system practised in Argovia is designed to achieve the same end. The best wines are produced by the species "Fendant" and "Gutedel," followed by the "Rauschling." For red wines, there is a growing tendency for using the vine known as "blue Burgundian."

A MATTERHORN RAILWAY?

In recent times much has been published in Europe's Press regarding the fantastic scheme to erect a cable rail to the top of the Matterhorn, 15,000ft. high!

Not so long ago one of Europe's highest cable rails for skiers, from the Italian village Breuil to the very foot of the towering Matterhorn, the Furggengrat, was officially opened by the Italians. The keen venture, similar to the famous cable to the Santis in Eastern Switzerland, has a cable connection traversing 9000ft. distance (not height) without a single supporting steel pillar. It is able to transport 300 passengers every hour, if necessary. The builder of the new construction, engineer Count Totino, of Turin, has planned the project to open the Matterhorn itself for "large-scale tourism."

A reporter of the "Schweizer Illustrierte" interviewed Count Totino, who promptly denied that he intended to "break the hearts" of thousands of enthusiastic mountaineers in defiling such a "holy domain." And, although the builder's two chief engineers at Breuil likewise denied any impending project, they had all the facts and figures available to implement the hazardous venture. They know how many people would be necessary to transport the heavy cables to the peak, they know how to overcome weather adversities; in fact, they had studied the complete technique on the spot.

However, there is little likelihood that the scheme will ever be allowed to eventuate; the Swiss nor the Italian Governments will never grant permission to erect the funicular. (Incidentally, the border-line of the two countries actually traverses the peak.) A similar project was put forward already in 1907, but a widespread outcry against such vandalism ensued, that the Swiss Government refused the sanction. Another serious consideration against the construction of a cable rail would be the effect to transport people from a height of 6000ft. to 15,000ft. in a comparatively short space of time. Except trained mountaineers, all would suffer from very severe mountain sickness, as such cases are known to much lower mountain railways already in use.

Today the president of the Central Alpine Club and countless other associations (including Italians) have written condemning most strongly the proposed outrage on the majestic Matterhorn. Just a year ago a general meeting of the International Alpine Association was held at Milan, where 15 nations representing 500,000 members, categorically condemned the project. So let us hope that the same sentiments against the "sale" of Europe's most noble mountain will prevail.