

Swiss vice-consul in Birmingham

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SWISS WINE CONSUMPTION and PRODUCTION.

Contributed by Dr. A. Schellenberg to the "*Wine and Spirit Trade Review*," October 11th, from which it is reprinted:

"The consumption of wine per head of the population in Switzerland is still 10 gallons per annum. It was at one time much larger for from 1901 to 1910 it reached a level of over 16 gallons per person. It seems apparent then that the consumption of wine in Switzerland is rapidly on the wane. This arises partly from a diminution of the superficial area now devoted to vine-growing. There are to-day, 32,500 acres of vinelands, as compared with 90,000 acres in the 'eighties' of the last century. The average wine yield in Switzerland amounts to 12,100,000 gallons whilst the wines imported into the country reach 24,500,000 gallons, or more than double of the home production.

The largest vinelands are found in the west of the country, where quality cépages predominate. In the Ticino Canton and in the east of Switzerland an increasing effort is being made to produce good red wines; in western Switzerland this same tendency is also revealing itself but it has not yet had time to make itself fully felt. The Swiss production thus remains four-fifths white and only one-fifth red wines.

Eighty-five per cent of the beverages which Switzerland imports are red wines and for these Italy takes first place as the furnisher. The other normally larger suppliers are Spain, France, the Danubian countries and Greece. The war has upset the situation in some degree, but between 1931 and 1939 the oversea countries were delivering an average of more than 750,000 gallons and were revealing themselves as powerful competitors with the old exporting countries. The importation of white wine into Switzerland varies very largely. It is always very important in the years when the home harvest is poor in quantity or the crop inferior in quality. But all the imported wines have to be cheap and to be able to pass muster as good ordinary wines or as wines fit for immediate, or 'courante,' consumption. France supplies large quantities of superior quality wines and similar imports from Valtellina and the Tyrol are appreciable.

Swiss wine-lovers are coming more and more to prefer red wines, which means an ever growing difficulty in 'placing' the crop of Swiss-produced white wines. But if the Swiss viticulturist is tempted to devote himself more and more to the production of red wines, it is a relief to record that in the east of Switzerland only is the Black Pinot being cultivated, whilst an active propaganda in favour of the whites is making possible a disposal of those whose quality is steadily improving and whose carefully studied prices make them attractive.

The sale of wine presents many large variations and modifications. It is indubitable that the consumption of wine is relatively larger within the home circle than formerly, whilst it is certainly much smaller in the taverns, auberges, restaurants and hotels. (The families purchase retail but they also buy the high quality wines in bottle either direct from the merchants or from the producing co-operative caves.) In the restaurants and taverns, one is served more and more from the litre or half litre bottle, or even from a three decilitre green-coloured standard measure glass flacon. Many of the restaurant proprietors no longer

purchase their wines in hogsheads or barrels, but in bottles. Buying from the producer in this way is becoming progressively rarer.

In the range of Swiss wines, notably the reds, there have been offered to the public certain natural piquant wines, that is to say, products possessing a natural carbonic acid which renders them tart and biting, and these have been fairly generally accepted despite this drawback. However, it is now to be hoped that in the interests of the viticulturist as well as the consumer, the public taste is going to change in favour of the more perfect wines that Switzerland is now increasingly producing." O.W.

SWISS VICE-CONSUL IN BIRMINGHAM.

Vice-Consul Mr. E. Scharer arrived here from Liverpool on October 31st, to hand over Switzerland's gift of furniture to Birmingham's ex-Servicemen.

He was met at the Station by members of the W.V.S. and escorted to their Headquarters. There he handed over Cards to 15 young couples entitling them to the furniture. The Council House later entertained him to lunch.

In the evening the Swiss Club held a small dinner in his honour. We were all very happy to have this opportunity to welcome our new Vice-Consul and to wish him luck in his new post.

Like so many of us here in England, he is looking for a house. We hope he won't have to wait too long and that very soon his wife and family will be able to join him in Liverpool.



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