

# Roundabout Switzerland

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# ROUNDAABOUT SWITZERLAND

by Derek Meakin

**OCTOBER** to me means only one thing — the grape harvest. And I can think of no better subject to introduce this monthly column which aims at highlighting forthcoming events in Switzerland.

It's got everything — colour, romance, gaiety. And a history too. Did you know that people in this part of Europe were collecting grapes and making them into wine back in the Bronze Age? Or that centurions of the Roman Legion got their men to lend a hand in the vineyards?

Now, as then, the most important grape-growing region is along the northern shore of the lake of Geneva. But for personal choice give me the wild Canton of the Valais for the most unusual wines in all Switzerland. There is the white *Fendant* with its



What would fondue be like without the wine?

marvellous bouquet, and *Dôle*, a choice wine that lights up your glass so that it gives the impression of a flame dancing in a purple robe. One of the most honoured of them all is called "Glacier" wine, and in the cellars of many Valaisan farmers are bottles that have been stored for very many years waiting for some auspicious occasion. The Valais has the highest vineyards in Europe — if not in the world. Travellers to Zermatt, the village that lies at the foot of the Matterhorn, can see them extending from a

height of 2,200 ft to 4,000 ft above sea level. The product of these lofty vines has a reputation far from its native hills.

A number of festivals to celebrate the harvest

are being held in the main vine-growing regions at the beginning of October. Lugano, for instance, is not only content with a giant procession on Sunday, October 3rd, in which eight bands are taking part, but has planned a ten-day grape market as well, October 2nd and 3rd will also be great days for Morges and Neuchâtel, where special processions, the result of months of secret preparations, will be delighting the crowds.

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| Sonata in F. sharp major, Op. 78                | Beethoven |
| Toccata in C major, Op 7                        | Schumann  |
| Etude No. 7 in C sharp minor<br>(Lento), Op. 25 | Chopin    |
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