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Autumn in Switzerland

Very attractive are the fresh, bright, colourful autumn days in Switzerland. Now the bustle of the tourist traffic and the boisterousness of young folk out on a holiday have passed by, how pleasant to leave the fogs behind one, and to enjoy a restful fortnight or more in a land where the sky is wont to shine the brightest blue and the exhilarating air is untainted by dust or germ.

For now the woods of larch and beech, of oak and chestnut, light up the mountain sides with tints of bronze and red and ochre amid the ever green of pines and fir. Now shines out the Alpine glow, less often seen in summer. Stand towards sunset on some point of vantage, say the Gurten above Berne, and watch the sun's rays slant upward across the mountains. With what a delicate flush they tint the whole horizon, colouring the rocky steeps a soft, shimmering mauve, and the expanse of snow a brilliant shell-pink, while the atmosphere forms a background of sunlit gold. Mark how certain shadows fall on the snowy skirt of the Jungfrau and blazon there a broad and well nigh perfect Cross, kindling a sense of awe in tourist as well as peasant.

By September the grapes are ripe. The vintage in Switzerland is all and even more than the harvest is in England, for the vines need unremitting care throughout their growth. Many dangers threaten the tender grapes,—a late frost, a hail-storm, hordes of devastating insect pests. It is said that no gambler runs a greater hazard than the vine grower! Hence the exuberant joy of the vintage. Throughout the long hours of labour, laughter and song resound. Uphill to the vineyards the long lines of grape-gatherers stream at earliest dawn. First come the girls, with gay kerchiefs knotted round their heads. They will fill their pails with grapes. The men follow, bearing on their backs great crates into which the pails are emptied. A forfeit awaits the careless picker, for the lass must pay with a kiss for each bunch she has failed to gather. It is the universal rule.

Vineyards clothe the hills along the northern shores of the lakes of Geneva, Neuchatel and Bienne, and flourish on many a fertile and sunny slope throughout the Cantons of Vaud, the Valais and the Tessin. They are mostly owned by small landed proprietors.

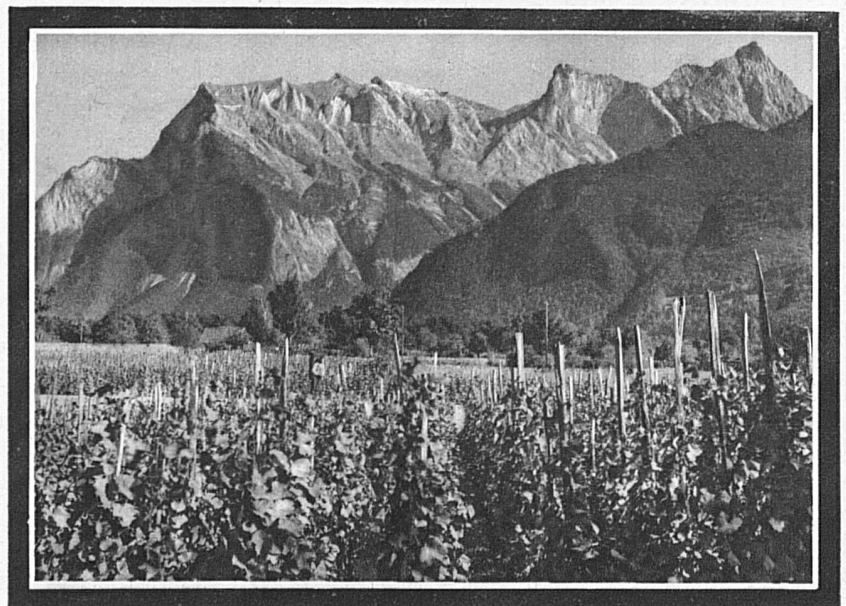
Nor are all the grapes pressed into wine. What food is more nutritious than the juicy, white grape of Switzerland? It is besides an antidote to gout and many kindred ills. Try a grape cure! Why not? Wash them well, then eat them skins and pips and all! An autumn visit to Switzerland may well save you a doctor's bill.—
A. B. Winter.



Vintage at Turmgut, near Erlenbach, on the Lake of Zurich



Sion, in the Valais



Vineyards at Maienfeld; the Falknis in the background