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Meeting Place Ticino

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THE SUN-TRAP OF SWITZERLAND

It is not without reason that the Canton of Ticino is called the sun-trap of Switzerland. With an annual 2,230 hours of sunshine it compares favourably with Zurich (1,704), Berne (1,708), Basle (1,756) and Geneva (2,047), and deserves that "meteorological title".

When one connects the Ticino with sunshine, one dreams of deep-blue skies framed by tall, thickly wooded mountains, of the smell of the partly tropical plants and, of course, of the sun covering everything in its brilliant light and enhancing every corner of the old brickwork with special magic. Unfortunately, such dreams are often spoiled by the encroachment of technology and environmental pollution.

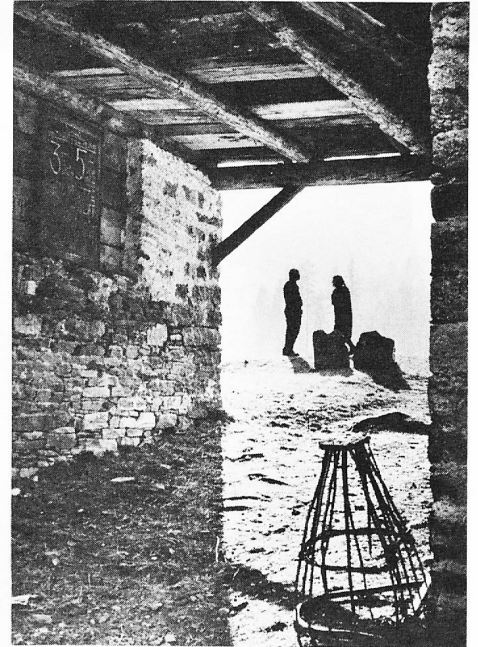
With Wines . . .

Any traveller to the Ticino will realise that vines grow everywhere, in every possible and impossible place, on the plain, at the lakeside, on the sunny slopes of the narrow valleys, along houses and garden-walls. Sometimes, vines are trained on struts to form a covered way, a pergola. Heavy bunches of dark blue grapes hang from these green foliage roofs. It is remarkable that the ground under the pergola roofs are cultivated with vegetables or maize – an aspect of the diversity of the Ticino.

In the Ticino, it is mostly red wine that is grown and drunk: "Barbera" and above all "Nostrano". The old vines of the "Nostrano" have largely died out, and in their place, one plants mainly the heavy, fruity "Americano", though the wine is still called by its old name. At Arzo, Meride and Tremora, one of the rare white wines of the Ticino is grown, the "Vino dei Tre Castelli". Whoever passes through these districts should not miss tasting them.

. . . Maize . . .

On the outside of many farmsteads, golden yellow bunches of corn-cobs are hung up to dry. Maize is cultivated above all in the Magadino Plain and in the Mendrisiotto and supplies the main



A scene in Valle Maggia.

ingredient for one of the best-known Ticino dishes, the "Polenta".

. . . and Tobacco.

Tobacco cultivation is one of the most typical aspects of agriculture in the Ticino. The main districts for it are the Mendrisiotto, the Luganese (Malcantone) and the Magadino Plain. Over 300 large and numerous small producers cultivate more than 9¼ million square metres. The work is done to a large extent by women and young people. The tobacco is planted in May and harvested in August/September. The green leaves are threaded on string, and hung up in sheds or on the outside walls of houses. In the course of winter, the leaves are carefully pressed into bales and prepared for collection by the manufacturers. The tobacco is then fermented as certain properties, such as protein, must be reduced.

Tobacco growing, maize and wine provide the Ticino with characteristics without which one cannot picture the Canton.