

# Swiss gymnastic festival

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the extension and density of Swiss banking. The figure of the total balance of the Swiss banks at the end of 1950 was 27.4 milliard francs.

#### Swiss Who Make Careers Abroad.

It is well known that numerous Swiss have made brilliant careers in the hotel trade abroad. The generation of today is also following this tradition. Mr. Arthur Elmiger, from Lucerne, has been nominated by the most important hotel organisation in America, as Director-General of the "Caribe Hilton" Hotel in San Juan (Porto Rico), considered as the most modern hotel in the world.

#### The "Gluckschette" and the Inundations in Italy.

The radio studio Lausanne has already taken many praiseworthy initiatives, as for instance, the benevolent activity of the "Gluckschette" which has met with very good response in many countries. Stirred by the damage caused in the Po Valley, Italy, through the recent inundations, the directors of Studio Lausanne, sent one of their best reporters, Mr. Zbinden, to Italy, who, accompanied by Mr. Viridis, of the technical department, brought back a touching sound wave documentary. This running commentary was broadcast by the Station of Sottens, a few minutes before the appeal by Roger Nordmann, founder of the "Gluckschette," was made in favour of the victims of the inundations in Italy, and was transmitted to stations in France, Belgium, Luxembourg, Monaco, Germany, Austria and Italy. The results were really exceptional. Twenty-four hours after the appeal on Tuesday night, clothes, foodstuffs and money-orders started to flow in. The appeal was sponsored by Mr. Aleardo Pini, President of the National and State Councils, who expressed himself in a touching way in the three national languages.

#### A Monk From St. Bernard Was Victim of an Avalanche.

On November 19th, 1951, a group of persons from the valley of Aoste, in Italy, wanted to pass over to Switzerland in the region of the Great San Bernard. The monk, Lucien Droz, 27 years old, who worked in the Hospice of the Great San Bernard, and who was a certified guide, offered to take them over the mountain. As the weather was bad he preceded the group in order to scrutinise the grounds, and while doing so had the misfortune to be caught by an avalanche. Five hours after the accident his comrades were able to free his body. He had been dead for some time.

#### The Duke of Kent in Lausanne.

The young Duke of Kent, nephew of King George VI. of England, who studies in the Institute "Le Rosey" in Rolle, Canton Vaud, visited the town of Lausanne. He went there to take part in the traditional ceremony of the Anniversary of the Armistice of 1918, and of the "Day of Remembrance" for the Allied soldiers killed in the two World Wars.

#### Great Numbers of Foreign Workers in Switzerland.

The high industrial activity has compelled Switzerland to appeal for great numbers of foreign workers. At the beginning of the year there were 95,000 foreigners, of which 35,000 were working in industry; the others were employed as domestic help, hotel personnel and farmers. Over half of them are of Italian origin. Germany and Austria have sent 16,000 persons, France 6,000, and other countries 4,000.

## NEWS OF THE COLONY

No news has been received from the members of the Swiss Colony, which is regrettable.

## SWISS GYMNASTIC FESTIVAL

(By E. Merz, Auckland.)

Many of our readers will doubtless remember the impressive spectacle of the Federal gymnastic festivals held every four years, each time in a different town. Some of you may even have actively participated as "Turner," as I did myself.

Thirty thousand men and fifteen thousand women athletes congregated in Lausanne last July for this traditional occasion. Some Swiss magazines depicting a few striking pictures, revived such vivid memories, that I could see myself participating as one of the thousands of virile young men. I can again see it all as if it happened yesterday, and I feel that a short description may be of interest to some of you.

First let me say that today there are approximately 2,500 separate associations with some 250,000 members. Excepting during a few winter months, all these men are intensively trained under expert leadership, and a healthy, disciplined manhood is thus created. In the spring and early summer provincial and Cantonal competitions take place all over the country in preparation of the great national festival.

High anticipation to succeed well and the mood of adventure got hold of the younger of our sizeable "Verein," as the day of departure drew nearer. We were all sure to bring home a laurel. On arrival at the capital we lined up for the long procession which was always part and parcel of the occasion. To the accompaniment of many brass bands the endless column took two hours to pass, and you all remember well the marching men in white gymnast's dress, carrying their coats and each wearing diagonally across his chest a red and white ribbon covered with silver souvenir badges of all the gymnastic festivals in which he had taken part in previous years. Some of the societies were small and modest, others numerous and proud of their impressive group. Each "Verein" is preceded by a banner-carrier, who wears a large ostrich feather on his hat, huge white gauntlets and a wide silk sash over his shoulder and across the chest. On either side of the carrier marches a handsome gymnast with a large curved horn filled with flowers slung around his neck. Some student associations, which are also gymnastic societies, look specially picturesque in their traditional costumes of white breeches, velvet jackets and black riding boots. And each of them carries a rapier. The spectators are always liberal in applause and many pretty girls watching the fine procession throw flowers.

Strenuous and serious work soon commenced at the sports arena to the delight of thousands of eager watchers. The competitions are mainly divided in three groups: The National Turner, the Kunst Turner, and the Light Athletes. The first absolve their programme in teamwork on the horizontal, the parallel bars, etc.; the second work individually as really outstanding artists and masters of precision, accuracy and bodily discipline; the third sprint, race, jump or pole vault, etc. For the onlookers it is a treat to watch the marvellous team or individual work performed. The competitions usually last three days or more, depending on the number of participants.

The high-light of the festival is the mass display, the "Freiuebungen." To see 20,000 or 30,000 perform simultaneously, is an impressive spectacle. After each association marches to the appointed spot on the great field, the music starts with a rousing march and all the banner-carriers run to the back of the field. This multitude of coloured flags flutters behind the thousands of white figures—so many that all seems as a snow-white sheet. Then the men perform a complicated set of well-drilled exercises to a march composed especially for the occasion. For about 20 minutes the white figures move in rhythm to the sound of brass bands, while the large crowd watches spellbound.

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.