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It seems that Canton Valais is making a bid to become the ice-skating centre of Switzerland. This is not merely restricted to its double garland of winter resorts stretching in the south from Saas-Fee to Champéry and in the north from Montana-Vermala to Crans but extends above all to the towns with their southern charm situated in the apricot orchards of the Rhone Valley. Following after Martigny and the capital, Sion, Visp, a little town of 3,000 inhabitants, and also the gateway to Zermatt, has now acquired a modern artificial ice-rink with a surface area of 19,375 sq.ft.

* * *

It is now possible to make the trip up the Rhine from the North Sea to Switzerland with all the comfort of an ocean voyage by travelling in the modern Swiss motor-ship "Basilea" which is the Italian name for Bale, its home port. The ship is powered by three 450 h.p. motors and can carry 55 passengers, accommodated in 27 double cabins and one single cabin. Further comforts on board include elegantly furnished Social Rooms and several promenade decks.

THE CIVILISED OASIS.

Mr. George Bilainkin, the British author, who has recently visited his old friends in Berne, St. Moritz and Evolene, and been entertained in Zurich and Geneva, writes in a Devon-paper (which he once edited), the following:

... Last, but not least, I come to the civilised oasis in Europe, Berne, capital of the efficient, advanced, and superbly clean Switzerland.

I feel I am in another continent when Swiss customs gentlemen approach me. I see here spotless table cloths. I listen to polite and dignified exchanges. I step into strictly correct tramcars, trains, taxicabs. There is no "doing" anyone. The bread is the best in Europe. (I have now reduced my taste in brown from 20 varieties available in most big Berne shops to three favourites.) Services for the housewife make me wonder how long crushed and decadent women elsewhere will tolerate needless serfdom.

Everybody says "thank you", cordially, when you make a purchase; the slightest and the largest article is carefully wrapped in spotless paper.

I salute this wonder city of hope.

SWISSAIR'S OPERATIONS IN 1956.

Swissair carried 773,956 passengers in 1956, an increase of 23 per cent over the 1955 figure of 630,719. Thus more passengers travelled on Swissair services in 1956 than in the four years 1948 to 1951.

Offered capacity expanded by 16 per cent to 75,618,430 short ton-miles from 65,201,052 in 1955. The number of miles flown was 13,716,620, compared with 11,873,156.

The volume of air freight carried rose by 23 per cent to 10,421 metric tons from 8,487 tons. Air mail recorded an increase of nine per cent to 3,608 tons from 3,317.

The overall load factor on the scheduled services improved to 66.5 per cent from 64.8 per cent.

Operating revenue for 1956 amounted to 153 million Swiss francs, an increase of 17 per cent over the 1955 total of 130 million.

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