

How Switzerland cultivates her forests

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Hurden and Ufenau, which remained the property of Schwyz.

Because the canton of Schwyz was the leading party in this war the Confederates gradually came to be known as Schwyzers and this later was the foundation of the national name of the "Swiss" which in time gave rise to the universal designation of "Schweizer."

J. J. S.

ME DÄNKT

Me dänkt mäggmol in schtillle Schtunde
An allerhand für Sache
Und losst im Geischt d'Vergangeheit
Parade mache.

Viel Liebs and Guets, viel Schöns und Grosses
Wird läbhaft neu erläbt
Wenns nur in der Erinnerung
Nit an no Schatte gäbt.

Me dänkt wie in de Jugendjohr
D'Zyt fascht no ruckwärts gloffe n'isch
Jetzt mälde sich die erschte graue Hoor
Verby fliegt Wuche, Monet, Johr um Johr.

Me dänkt ans Eltrehuus, and d'Kinderzyt,
Kei Wölkli wyt und breit,
Het alles g'hah, het alles gnoh,
Mit gröschter Sälbschtverständlichkeit.

Me dänkt an d'Lehrzyt, an d'Rekruteschuel,
An all das jungi, schtarki Hoffe,
Wie mänge Traum, wie mänge Plan,
Isch doch im Sand verloffte.

Me dänkt ans erschti Rendez-vous,
Ans warte, hoffe, blange, bange,
Worum nur isch die säl'gi Zyt
So schnäll vergange.

Me dänkt an d'Abfahrt in die wytti Wält,
In Wirklichkeit so glei,
Was hämmer welle, hämmer gsuecht?
Was het is g'fählt deheim?

Me dänkt au oft an d'Heimet zrugg,
So wärschhaft, suber, flyssig, allersyts,
Gott schütz Di hütte, morn und immer,
Du liebi, liebi Schwyz.

—J. P.

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HOW SWITZERLAND CULTIVATES HER FORESTS.

(From "The Swiss-American," June, 1944).

By MARIE WIDMER.

Switzerland, in the year 100 A.D., is described as being covered with swamps and great impenetrable forests and the latter offered indeed tremendous obstacles to colonisation. The necessary land for pastures and agriculture had thus to be taken away from the forests and the history of the colonization is consequently closely connected with that of the forests.

Not much attention was paid to the cultivation or preservation of the forests in those early days when the Alemanni, Burgundians and Franks swept through the land, but in the time of the latter, when Charlemagne was king, a general and remarkable improvement of the conditions took place. History relates that Charlemagne's grandson presented in the year 853 A.D. the now famous Sihl Forest of Zürich to the Convent of Fraumünster in that city, which indicates that the Sihl Forest is actually one of the oldest cultivated forests in Switzerland.

Gradually, as settlers began to scatter all over the country, their attention was drawn to the forestry problem and it is shown that in the 13th century there were already a number of villages which had prohibited the cutting down of certain forests, as the same provided protection against the ever threatening peril from the avalanches. Thus we find Altdorf and Andermatt in the Gotthard route each with their "Bannwald." For some time the great Vaudoise forest of Risoux in the Joux valley was also considered as a "protecting forest," as its presence could facilitate the defence of the frontier towards France, in a case of emergency.

However, only in the 13th century was there voiced a general demand for better cultivation and preservation of the forests and in this respect the cantons of Zürich, Berne and Aargau were the leaders, with the others following after a short interval.

The latest statistics of forestation in Switzerland show that 30% of the entire area of Switzerland is covered with forests; 55.6% is devoted to agriculture and pastures and 22.6% is non-productive soil (rivers, lakes, roads, railways, building sites, rocks, glaciers, etc.).

Statistics further show that about 67% of these forests belong to individual villages and 4.5% only pertain to individual cantons. The ownership by canton, village or private persons shows a remarkable variation in the case of each canton and we thus find that the cantonal governments of Valais, Ticino, Grisons and Uri possess practically no forests. The biggest percentage of forests owned by villages, i.e., 94.3% is, however, found in the Valais and the highest percentage of private-owned forests, i.e., 78.8%, is to be found in the canton of Lucerne.

The most extensive forest conservation is found in the Jura region of Switzerland, i.e., in the cantons of Schaffhausen, Aargau, Basle (Land), Soleure, Berne, Neuchâtel and Vaud, where as much as 60% of the productive soil is devoted to forestation. While the high mountain regions appear thickly wooded at first, their production is poor.

Forests, as previously indicated, are considered a safeguard against natural forces, such as avalanches, landslides and inundations, and as a consequence there are certain laws prohibiting their injudicious cutting

down, and these laws apply to privately owned forests as well as public-owned ones. All the forests in the canton of the Grisons, Appenzell a/Rhoden, Uri, Neuchâtel and Basle (City), are regarded as "protecting" forests, while in the cantons of Schwyz, Unterwalden, Glarus and Appenzell i/Rhoden all public and a part of the private owned forests are declared "protecting" forests. In the other cantons the public and privately owned forests are partly "protecting forests" and partly non-protecting. Of the entire Swiss forest area 75.2% are considered "protecting forests" and 24.8% non-protecting.

These laws safeguard the Swiss forests from untimely destruction, and no matter how much building may be done in a district, the forests have to be duly respected.

In the Jura, for instance, the beech-tree plays a prominent rôle. It can really be considered the foundation of the Jura forest and thanks to its thick foliage it prevents the soil on the sunny slopes from drying up. The protecting presence of the beech-tree enables other more exacting species of trees to grow in their turn, such as the ash-tree, the maple-tree, the fir-tree and the pitch-tree. On all the slopes with a southern exposure the beech-tree is intermingled with red pine.

In the plains we find a good variety of the following: the oak, the elm, the beech, the ash-tree, maple-tree; the linden-tree also occupies an important place in these lower regions.

Approaching the Alps the pitch-tree and fir are more prominent and from 4,500 feet a.s. the former alone remains. In the Central Alps the larch, the cembra-pine and the so-called mountain-pine are in particular evidence. In certain regions of the Bernese Oberland, in the canton of Unterwalden, around the Lake of Lucerne and in the Rhine Valley the beech-tree is also well represented.

Finally, in the southern part of the Canton of Ticino, in Italian Switzerland, the chestnut-tree grows in profusion.

While it was formerly the forester's principal task to dispose of the timber, to be a fairly good shot and to keep general order on his domain, the public has since the middle of the last century begun to wake up and with the realization of the immense value of the forests came a general demand for a more thorough and scientific instruction of the foresters.

A forestry school exists in Switzerland since 1855, being part of the Federal Polytechnic at Zürich. From 1855 to 1872 the duration of the course was two years, from 1872 to 1882 it was two-and-a-half years, from 1882 to 1909 it was raised to three years and since October 1909 it has been prolonged to three-and-a-half years. This theoretical course has yet to be completed by an obligatory practical course of one-and-a-half years. The duration of the entire course in the science of forestry consequently amounts to five years.

In 1936 the public forests in Switzerland provided thirty million cubic feet of timber. Average annual exports amount to about three million Fr., but there is

still an annual importation of lumber for about thirty million Fr. This somewhat surprisingly high import is explained by a continually increased demand for wood by the paper industry, also by a much developed building activity.

The statistics available concerning the average increase of the Swiss forest cultivation do not yet suffice by far for an approximate valuation of the respective financial returns. However, in all those cases, where it has been possible to investigate the question, the proposition has proven itself a paying one.

Thus it is shown, for instance, that the municipal forests of Aarau produce an average gross profit of \$14.00 per acre, those of Zürich, Winterthur and Morat \$12.00 per acre and the most recent statistics in the case of Winterthur indicate a revenue of \$14.90 per acre. Admitting that these are somewhat exceptional circumstances, we nevertheless find that the general results of the cantonal forests of Aargau und Zürich reach a gross profit of \$8.00 per acre, while the richest state forests in Germany scarcely ever surpass a revenue of \$5.60 per acre. The returns in the Jura and the Alps, where the soil is naturally inferior, amount to \$3.25 to \$4.80 per acre.

This steady and ever increasing revenue yielded by the forests helps to reduce taxation in Switzerland.

The climatic and hygienic value of forests must also be taken into consideration. No place becomes oppressive from the summer's heat, or unpleasant through the winter's cold, if it is situated in a forest region. It is an established fact that all the renowned Swiss health resorts are in closest vicinity to woods and forests whose purifying presence and wholesome fragrance acts like a tonic on the human system.

Forestation is a crop which requires much patience at first, as it takes so long to mature, but the results obtained in Switzerland will undoubtedly induce other countries in time to adopt a similar system, which makes the best possible use of land not suitable for agriculture and which at the same time has all the climatic and hygienic advantages pointed out above, not to mention even the natural charm and soothing effect of a stretch of dark-green, silent forest.

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