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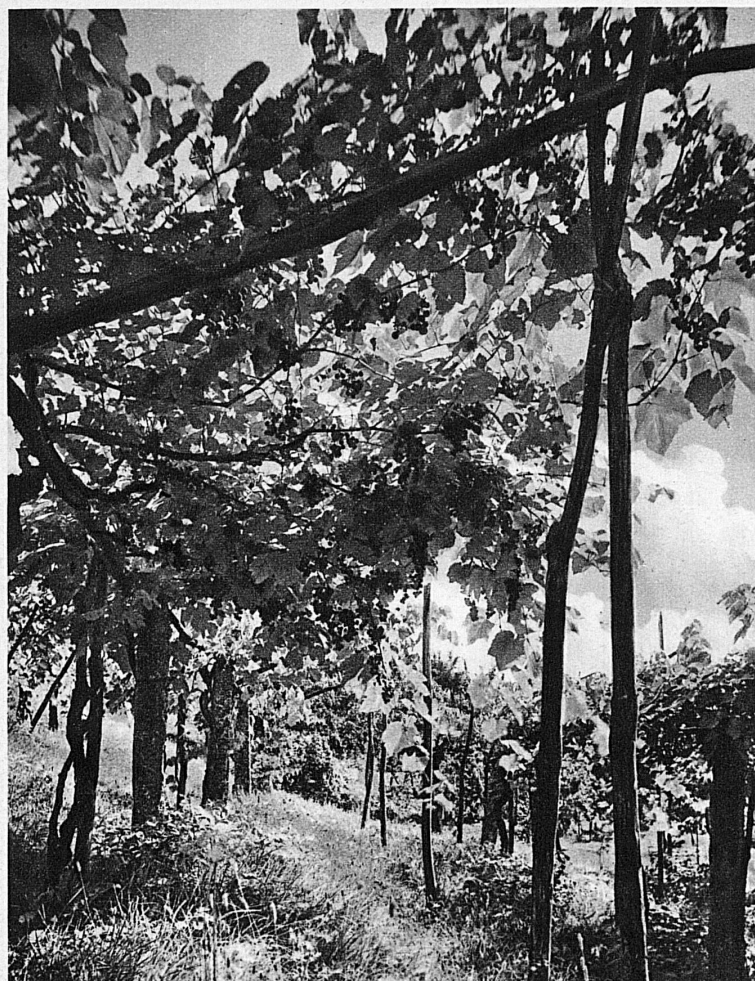
Autumn in Switzerland

L'automne en Suisse



Right: The Rhone Valley near Sion -
Rechts: Das Rhonetel bei Sitten -
A droite: La vallée du Rhône près de
Sion - A destra: La valle del Rodano
presso Sione

Left: Vintage at Maienfeld (Grisons) -
Links: Weinernte in Maienfeld (Grau-
bünden) - A gauche: Vendanges à
Maienfeld (Grisons) - A sinistra:
Vendemmia a Maienfeld (Grigioni)



Vineyard in the Ticino - Tessiner Reben - Vignes du Tessin - Vigna nel Ticino

«A bit fresh this morning! Surely the weather isn't going to break?» — How often one hears these words spoken by some late-summer visitor to the higher Alpine altitudes, as the first chill nip in the air makes him believe that summer has begun to think of taking its leave. While down below, in the Ticino or by the Lake of Geneva, summer frocks and beach pyjamas still hold sway, and summer warmth seems as if it is there for good and all. Those warmer garments, brought along «just in case», remain unpacked.

A day or two later, and the situation is reversed. Up in the mountains the sun forgets its own warning and smiles serenely on skins that have meanwhile grown brown as berries, while by the lake-side it may be a case of «Just as well I brought my warm things after all».

These two examples are of course extremes. It is impossible to generalise about autumn in Switzerland, for though the sun is just as loath to depart as the other guests, the season has as many aspects as the country itself. There are regions of cool, starry nights and hot, sunny days when distant views are thrown into bold relief of colour and detail by the clear air; there are others where the earth is replete and breathes the fullness of late summer sunshine, warm and mellow with ripeness; again others where the distance is swathed in blue pastel shades and only the foreground has life and depth. It all depends how high up one is and into which of the varied climatic zones one has penetrated.

Down in the southern valleys of the Grisons — Puschlav, Bergell, Misox — and in the Ticino by the Lago Maggiore and the Lake of Lugano, autumn comes with the full, mellow richness of the Mediterranean. True, the names Lugano, Locarno, Brissago, Ascona, Tesserete and the others form a Paradise more widely known in springtime. But it is only when the heavy purple grapes are hanging in clusters from the vines, when golden yellow garlands of ripe maize adorn every farmhouse, when a ceaseless rain of chestnuts thuds to earth in the woods and luscious figs are everywhere, that

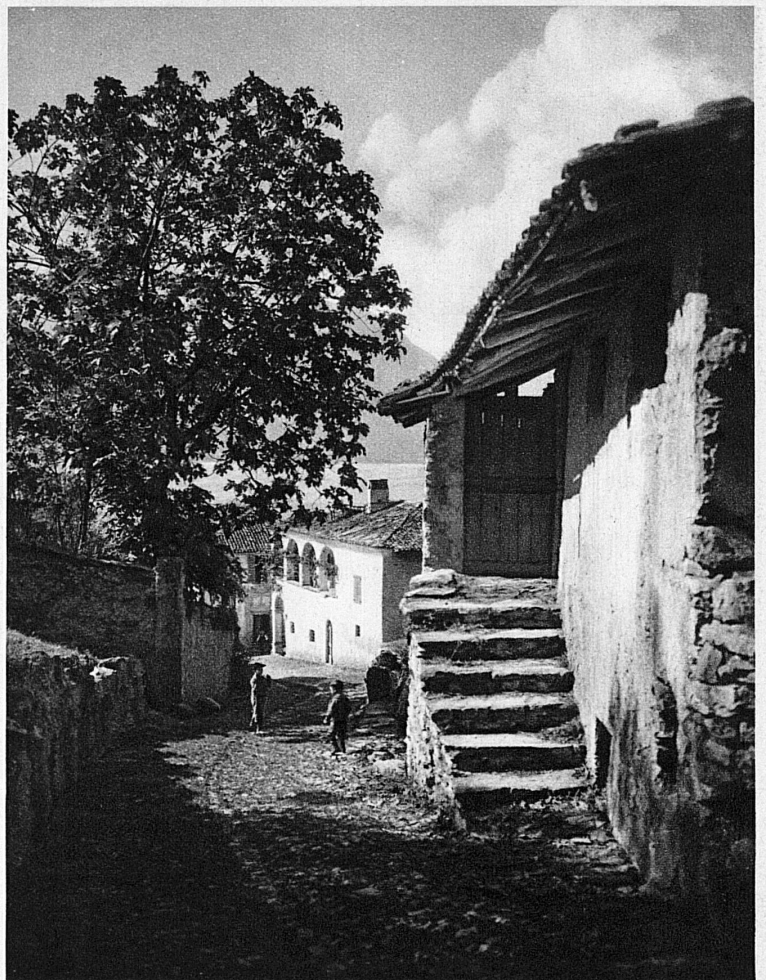


this region south of the Alps really comes into its own. Short, sharp autumn showers serve but to sweep away the dust of summer and transform the meadows into magic carpets of October flowers. And then the sun comes again.

North of the Alps autumn is what the altitude makes it. As the days grow shorter the lowlands slowly pale beneath a light blue haze that hovers high above the valleys, dividing, as it were, an upper and a lower world. Seen from above, it becomes that most fantastic of all natural phenomena, the «Nebelmeer» — a sea of cloud, not wispy or clammy, but solid and steady, with waves and troughs and crests; and through it, around it, the craggy peaks rise up like reefs, through a mother-of-pearl sea.

With the exception of the Lake of Geneva between Montreux and Lausanne, this «Nebelmeer» may be seen from almost any elevation or hill between the Jura and the Alps proper. In Heiden and Walzenhausen, on the Uetliberg and the Pfannenstiel, the Gurten, Hasenmatt and Weissenstein in the Jura, at Macolin near Bienne, on the Chaumont — everywhere it is possible to rise above the surface of the fog, to stand in clear morning sunshine and witness the unique spectacle. As the sun grows warmer the solid waves dissolve into diaphanous clouds and tiny wisps that slowly vanish to reveal the peaceful landscape of the valleys smiling in afternoon light. The «Nebelmeer» never reaches the higher Alps, it is essentially a peculiarity of the lowlands.

But it is not only south of the Alps that autumn is warm and mellow. The whole of the Swiss lake district is a garden laden with autumn fruit and radiant with autumn flowers. There are 1800 square kilometres of lakes, with vineyards and orchards on their shores, safely sheltered from nocturnal frosts and chill winds, lazily ripening. Lake Constance, the Rhine banks from Rheineck to Schaffhouse, the Walensee and Lake of Zurich, the Lakes of Lucerne and Zug, at Bienne and Yverdon, the lower Lake of Thoune, Murten, the Lake of Geneva — the Swiss Riviera — here



Dasio in the Solda Valley (Ticino) — Dasio im Val Solda (Tessin) — Dasio dans la vallée de Solda (Tessin) — Dasio nel Val Solda (Ticino)



Vineyards on the shores of Lake Geneva — Rebenlandschaft am Genfersee — Vignoble de Lavaux au bord du Léman — Vigneti sul Lago di Ginevra



Rivaz — Lake of Geneva — Genfersee — Lac Léman — Lago di Ginevra



Vintage at Auvernier (Neuchâtel) — Weinernte in Auvernier bei Neuenburg — Vendanges à Auvernier (canton de Neuchâtel) — Vendemmia a Auvernier (Neuchâtel)



Teufen (Zürich)

we find autumn at its best. The lakes hold the warmth, reflect the sun; the mountains shelter the countryside.

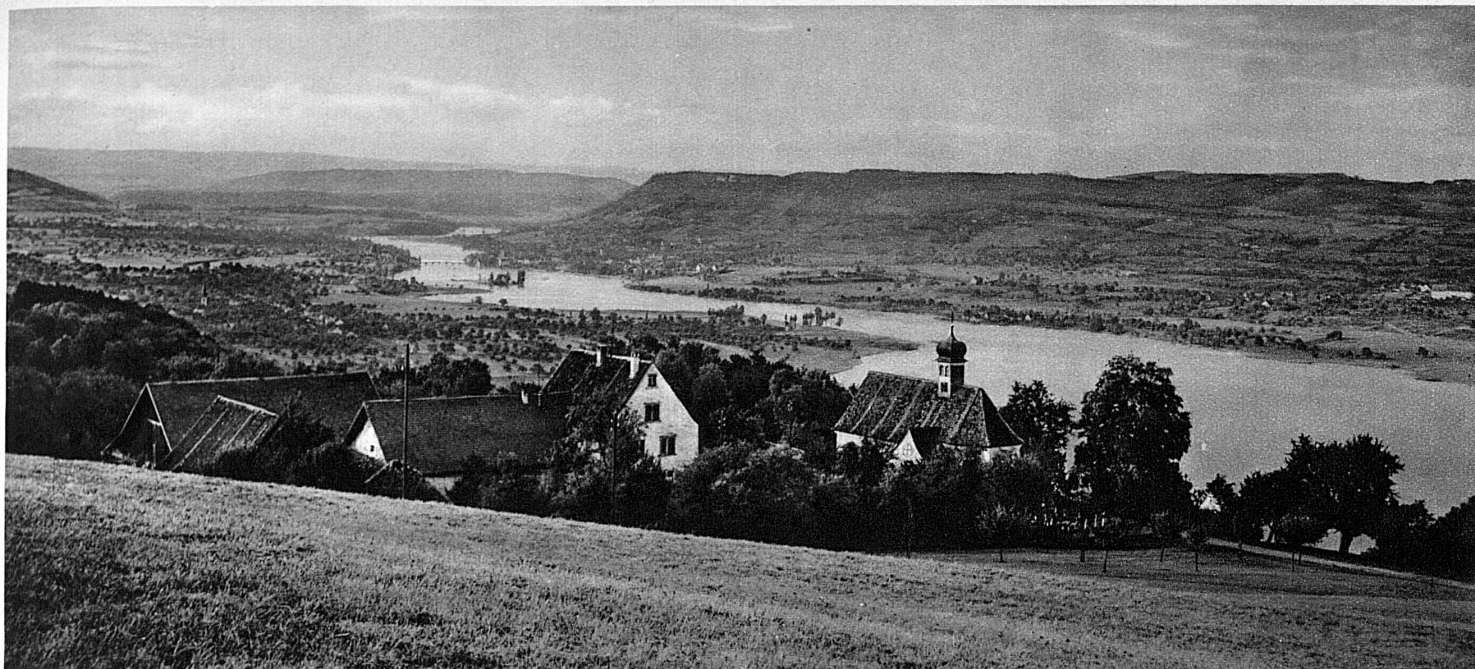
And then the mornings, when the «Föhn», the warm south wind is blowing. It scours the sky of haze and polishes its blue; round about the mountains stand out sharp cut, clear silhouettes in the translucent air. There is no heavy languor in its warmth as in the first clear days of spring, but a mellow sweetness that is filled with the urge to wander, explore and enjoy. October days in Switzerland!

The warmth and clearness of the air are really astonishing in an Alpine country. In the higher altitudes this very clearness naturally brings early frosts, and the intensity of the sun's rays and the dryness of the atmosphere make for great differences between the temperatures of night and day. Braunwald, Beatenberg, Grindelwald, Montana: these are names — a few among many that enjoy the full blessedness of sub-alpine autumn.

Yes, it will not do to generalise. There are a few especially privileged districts in the Alps that position and altitude make ideal. They are sheltered on all sides, dry in summer and perhaps a little hot; and in autumn they become orchards, vineyards, gardens set amid the charms of the romantic and ancient. A few lovely spots of this kind are the «Herrschaft», in the Upper Rhine Valley, the Domleschg, with its old Rhaetian villages and glorious castles, and above all the Rhone Valley between Brigue and Martigny. Between Sierre and Sion is a district that might have been transported from a southern valley of the Pyrenees: vine-clad chalk hills, flat-roofed houses, inhabitants of southern appearance, placid and yet with a certain gaiety that seems to have come to them from the peaceful abundance of their land.

But however numerous are the aspects of autumn in Switzerland, one thing they all have in common: nowhere is the season grey or bleak. And even if, for once, autumn does not fulfil its promise, the towns are not far away, throbbing and alive in the full vigour of their new-born artistic and intellectual season.

H. v. B.-V.



Untersee and Rhine region near Klingenzell – Untersee und Rheinlandschaft bei Klingenzell – Paysage rhénan près de Klingenzell (Thurgovie) – Paesaggio tipico della Svizzera orientale presso Klingenzell (Thurgovia)

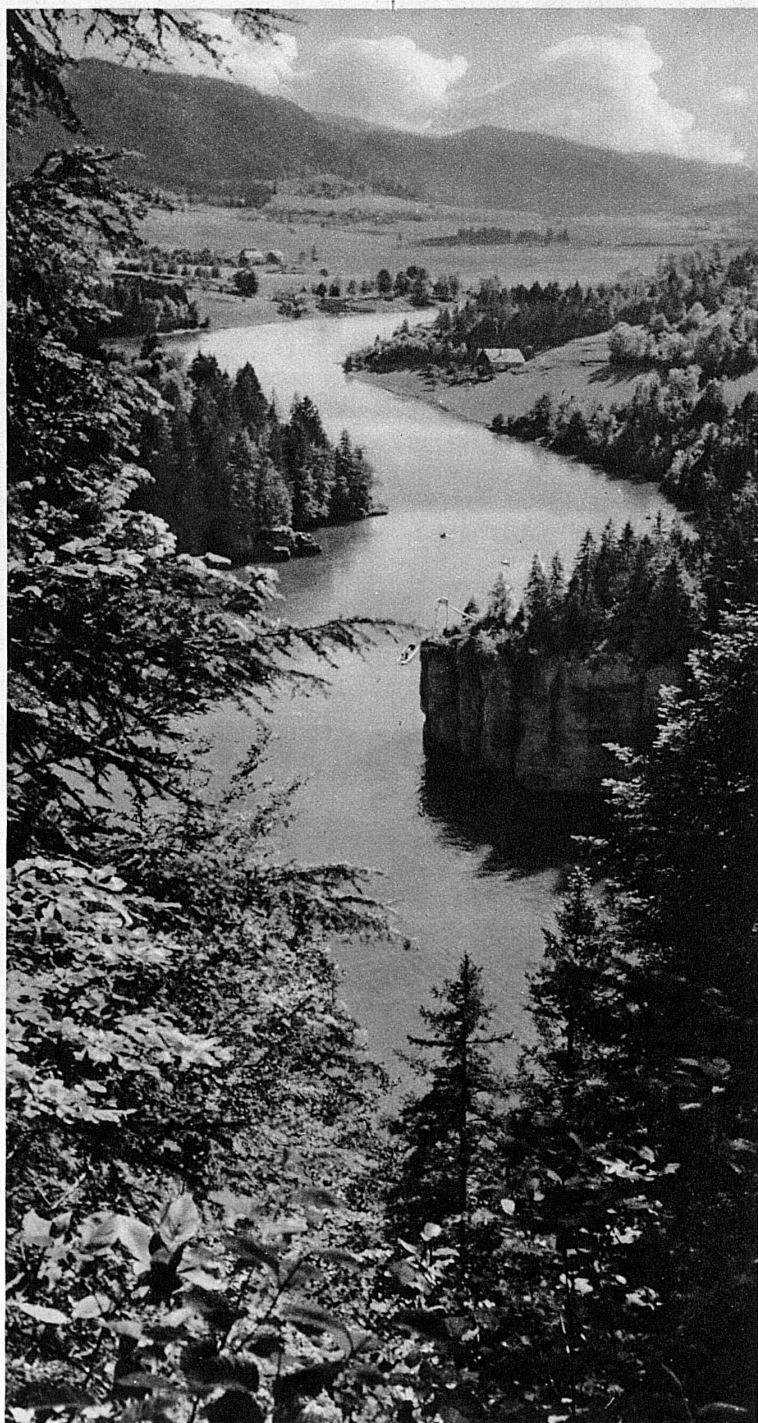
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Thoune, Bernese Oberland – Thun, Berner Oberland – Thoune, Oberland bernois – Thun, Oberland bernese



At Gléresse (Lake of Bienna) – Im Winzerdorf Ligerz am Bielersee – A Gléresse, Lac de Bienna – A Gleresse, Lago di Bienna



The Doubs and Lake of Brenets (Jura) – Der Doubs und der Lac des Brenets (Jura) – Le Doubs et le Lac des Brenets – Il Doubs e il Lago di Brenets (Jura)