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SWISS WINE TASTING IN LONDON.

Not so long ago a good friend of mine invited me to attend a session of "tea tasting"; although not being an expert on this most important English beverage, I nevertheless joined him, if only for curiosity's sake. I must confess that this performance, at least to me, was not a very elevating experience, as the members of the honourable fraternity of "Tea-Tasters", after having taken a sip from the various blends, promptly and without much ceremony spat it out into trays specially provided for this purpose.

On Tuesday, April 10th, through the courtesy of Mr. J. J. Schwarz, Delegate of the "Division de l'agriculture du Département fédéral de l'économie public" in Berne, I had the pleasure of attending a Swiss Wine Tasting, held under the patronage of the Swiss Minister in London, at the Bush House Restaurant, Bush House, W.C.2.

This was, I must admit, more in my line, and I at once noticed the difference from the afore mentioned "tasting". The more experienced "tasters" on this occasion, after a sip or two, emptied their glasses gently into champagne coolers, whilst others, more greedily drank the cup "to the sweeter end".

To protect especially the "amateur tasters" from becoming "tipsy" a most elaborate cold buffet was provided which proved to be most helpful.

Amongst the 1954 vintage wines to be sampled, were: "La Côte", "Mont-sur-Rolle", "Lavaux" of the Vaud region, "Fendant" and "Johannisberg Goutte d'Or" of the Valais region, "Neuchâtel" (Ct. Neuchâtel) and "Mandement" (Ct. Geneva).

As each wine was presented, a short description as to its merit was given, and each member of the company — which numbered nearly a hundred, principally recruited from wine merchants, hoteliers and restaurateurs — received a little illustrated booklet entitled: "Terres Romandes" Wines of the French part of Switzerland, in which the locality where the respective wines are grown was mentioned, with some rather amusing particulars.

So f.i. the Vaudois wines were described as "crisp, playful, a bit naughty, sometimes even daring", whilst the Valaisan wines were mentioned as "velvety, full bodied and generous". The excellent "Dôle" fully deserved the following mentioning, "has a brilliant ruby that reminds one of the glowing sunsets on the Alps".

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The purpose of this "Wine Tasting", which was sponsored by one of our Government Departments in Berne, was to introduce some of our famous vintages to this country. Whilst most of them find a ready market on the Continent, especially in Holland and Belgium, Swiss wines are to the majority of the English public still a novelty. As to quality they can successfully compete with most of the German, French, Italian and Spanish wines, there remains, of course, the question as to price to make them competitive with other foreign wines, but I feel confident that our wine growers at home will study this important question with much care.

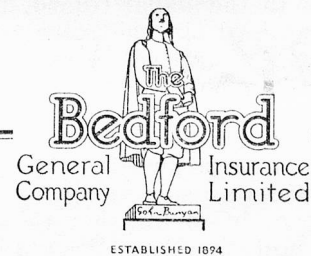
I can but hope that our compatriots living in this hospitable land, will make a practice of "Toasting" in future "La Patrie" with a glass or two of Swiss vintage.

"Sample these wines with respect, treating them as friends, so that their spirit will sing in you, and the sun which is in them will put warmth into your hearts!"

Having thus whetted the appetite of our readers, we wish to acquaint them with an address, where some of these heaven sent beverages can be procured, namely: J. B. Reynier, Ltd., 16/18, Tachbrook Street, London, S.W.1, an old and well established firm.

Some of our compatriots, for one reason or another, may not be able to spend their holiday in our country, but they will have at least this consolation, that they can drown their sorrows in the lovely wines of our homeland.

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