

DAVOS IN THE WINTER

One of the centers of winter sports in Switzerland, near which is the famous two-mile toboggan slide known as the Schatzalp Run

SWITZERLAND, THE HOME OF WINTER SPORTS

WHERE THE OUTDOOR ENTHUSIAST FINDS PERFECT CONDITIONS FOR TOBOGGANING, SKATING, CURLING AND SKIING—THE LURE OF SLEIGHBELLS ON ALPINE ROADS—WINTER CARNIVALS

CHARLES LEROY



COMPARISON between winter in New York City and the same season in Switzerland would, as Shakespeare, or someone else, has it, be odious; so, as I am determined on no account to be odious I shall refrain from making it. Besides, the comparison would be entirely lacking in force, and would reflect no credit on a Swiss winter.

The bright sunshine, broad plains of glistening snow, dry air that, bottled, would deservedly sell for more than dry champagne, and a mountain country in most natural dress—these are a few of the things Switzerland offers in the winter. The terms "bracing"

and "invigorating" are weak and inefficient when used in connection with the climate. As for adjectives that will adequately describe the scenic side of the country, there are none. The English language doesn't seem to fit the case at all.

Switzerland is primarily a land of winter sports. There one learns the true utility of skates and skis, of the toboggan and bob-sled. The Scotchman's curling stone is also a familiar implement of amusement. People from all quarters of the globe flock to the vicinities of Davos, St. Moritz and various other places which are the centers of winter sports, all having emotions quite different from those of the summer tourists who visit Switzerland.

The brilliancy of the sun and the keen, clear

atmosphere are matters of surprise to those who have thought of a Swiss winter as something bleak and uninviting. I noticed at once that the air, though the mercury was below the zero point, had a peculiarly vitalizing quality. It dispersed all feeling of heaviness and I wanted to take any sporting implement or vehicle near at hand and start out at once to prove my powers. The snow was spread deep upon the earth and the sun blazed down upon it with marvelously beautiful effect. The towering mountains seemed as though cut out of great sheets of cardboard, so sharply were they silhouetted against the blue sky. The scene on the great Davos ice-rink was brilliant beyond anything I had imagined. In the midst of a massy realm, clothed in a man-



FOR THE GOLD CUP

Negotiating a turn on the Schatzalp Run with the customary crew of pilot and three passengers

tle of spotless white it resembled a gallery of marble sculptured into many delicate and fantastic shapes—the trees, all thickly draped in snow, forming avenues as of marble church-spires. And amidst all this lavishness of nature the Ice King held court daily and nightly in constant levee and carnival. The joyous word to the waiting participants went forth to vie with each other for the honors awaiting them. The pageantry was ever varied, and the sightly spectacle was one we could witness without tiring; for the activity of the moving figures was truly infectious. Think of a great sheet of glistening ice, thirty-one thousand square feet in area, alive with a constant rhythmic whirl and swing! I realized when I saw this what "the poetry of motion" meant. While speed skating has often startled the spectators here—this rink holds most of the world's records for this sport—the sight of figure skating and waltzing on the ice is hardly less attractive. Davos has another large skating place known as the English Rink, where hockey and curling may be enjoyed without interference from the ordinary skaters.

Ski-ing had always taken a strong hold on my fancy. I could understand why many people considered it the king of winter sports, for to be able to skim and skip over the otherwise tiring snow



An awkward landing made by a ski-jumper. Such an accident is not usually attended with injury, for the force of the fall is broken by the soft snow



A THRILLING LEAP

The ski-runner comes down the slide at tremendous speed and with skis crossed, arms outstretched, and body erect, hurls himself out into the air

with bird-like rapidity seemed in itself to be a wonderful accomplishment. It was not long, however, before journeys of considerable length over the snowy slope on skis had become an easy matter; and it was an added opportunity to indulge my fondness for wonderful scenic effects. Skis, as almost everyone knows, are constructed of long strips of hard wood from six to eight feet long, made so they can be securely attached to the feet in a manner very similar to snow shoes. I had a good deal of fun in learning how to "handle" these queer affairs, but when I learned the peculiar gliding movement necessary, I could go quite swiftly over the snow. The long glides over the country are enjoyable enough, but they are not a circumstance to the delights of ski-coasting. A suitable hill having a long, clear, open stretch is found, and the skier poises himself near some steep descent. Leaning forward, he launches himself forth. The swift coast downward seems almost like flying; the feet seem hardly to touch the ground; and the landscape whirls by in a blur.

After the level is reached the search for other and longer hills goes on until a considerable distance has been covered. There are especially constructed ski-slides at most of the resorts, but the new scenes and adventures encountered in cross-country skiing make them less desirable except for speed contests. In these a long slide terminates abruptly in a slight rise and is there sharply cut off. The ski-runner comes down the slide at tremendous speed and hurls himself out into the air, skis crossed, arms out-stretched, and body erect. When he lands, he skilfully turns his feet so that they come down evenly, and sails on to the end of the course without disturbing his balance. This agility and skill appears to be marvelous at first, but one soon acquires a certain

degree of it and begins to make reasonable jumps. Some contestants have jumped a distance of over one hundred feet. Another form of sport is ski-joring, the meaning of which is horse ski-ing. A steady but speedy nag is hitched as simply as possible to a man on skis and away they go. When both the driver and the horse are well trained, very high speeds are attainable.

Bob-sleighing is the more social form of sledging. A bob is built for crews of from four to six persons. It is said to have been introduced from Britain, but it looks like a light, graceful

form of the bob-sled used by farmers in New England. The crew consists of a pilot, who sits forward with his feet resting securely in front of him, and of the "bobbies" sitting at the rear between him and the brake. The people in the center are an important part of the crew, for it is chiefly by their good judgment in swaying correctly from side to side, as the corners are negotiated, that the bob keeps its equilibrium—they are "equilibrators," so to speak. As they sway from side to side, they chant in unison, "Bob, bob, bob," and it is from this fact that the vehicle has got its name. To an American boy the bob, as it appears on the runs here, is more like the toboggan. It differs from its nominal prototype, the Canadian toboggan of Indian origin. The toboggan here was indeed built on speed, or rather, American lines. It is, like a sulky, made for one. The tobogganer seizes his machine by the side bars, flops down on it and is off! It is apparently the speediest form of laziness imaginable, for a start is all that is needed to bear on the wings of the wind the laziest individual that ever lived, could he be induced to attempt it. But a lazy man has a poor chance on one of these runs, for the rider has to be quick-witted, full of nerve and resource, and having both quick judgment and clear vision.

The Schatzalp Run, which has the reputation of being the best artificial toboggan and bob-sleigh run in the world, is the most extraordinary piece of snow engineering. It is two miles long, and begins at the Schatzalp Station, one thousand feet above the famous promenade. From there it winds its way in and out of the pine forests, in Z fashion, appearing here and there in the open like a brilliant silver thread. It has a general gradient of nine feet in one hundred; and there are two great elbows and fifty-one corners that one might well call "sporty." By the gradual evolution of years of skilled labor, it has been altered from time to time until it has about reached perfection. After the second main turn has been negotiated the course is comparatively straight, the finish being midway between the "Platz" and the "Dorf." The funicular railway ascends directly from the lively promenade which is on the level with the finish, to the station above, where the start is made.

The great sled event known as the "German Emperor's Cup" took place in January with sixteen men at the start.



A TURN AT TOP SPEED

From which it can be seen that there is a real necessity for well banked runs and a cool head



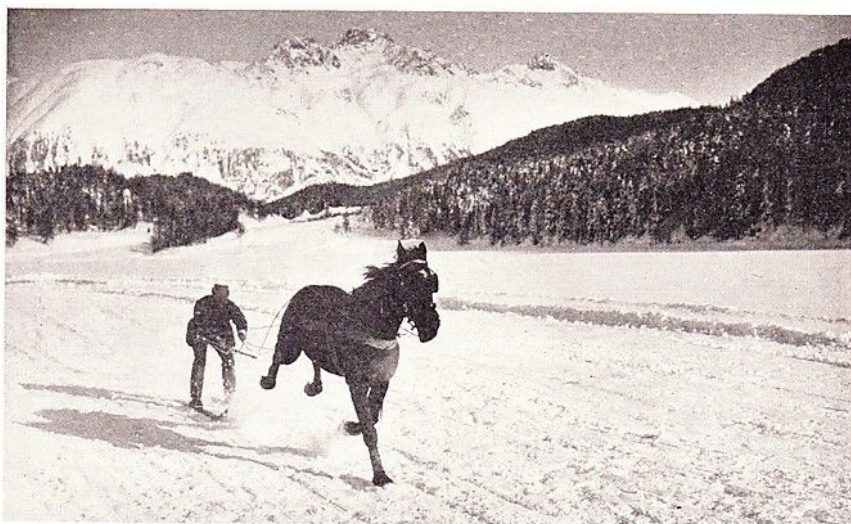
A bob-sleigh run two and one-half miles in length, at Klosters, Switzerland, where several interesting contests for speed supremacy are held every winter

The time made was marvelously fast, and no less than eleven bobs beat the old record. The reports previous to the race had been that the run was so fast that even the intrepid man who proved to be the winner was very dubious about starting. He overcame his doubts, however, and went in and won after a breathless and hair-raising race. On the bob that came in third there were two women passengers. The pace must have at times been close on to forty miles an hour, and one of its most amazing features was that there were no accidents. The winning bob had come in just four-fifths of a second ahead of the next one, which meant a distance of about twenty yards.

Wonderful as this race was, however, it was entirely put in the shade only three days later by the bob, "yellow peril," which had been the eighth in the race for the Emperor's Cup. This bob, steered by an Englishman and with two chaplains as the other members of the crew, made the sensational performance of knocking off four more seconds from the previous record.

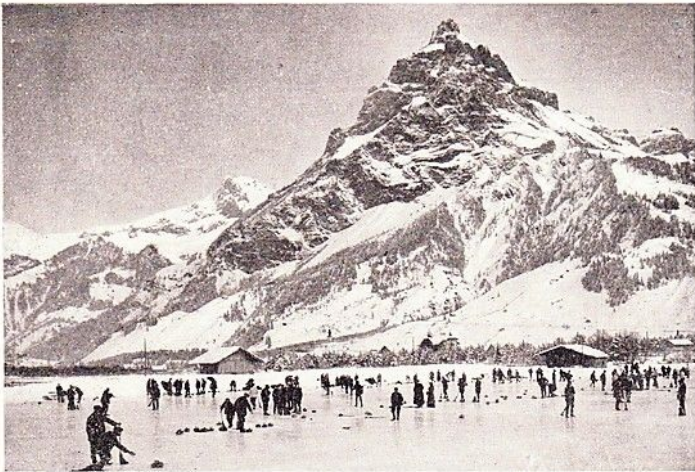
I had been keeping well posted on the events of St. Moritz, and the reports had indicated that the "Brighton of the Engadine" was in the midst of a glorious round of excitement. I began to look forward to the pleasure of witnessing the Grand National Race on the Cresta.

The Cresta Run,



SKI-JORING AT ST. MORITZ

High speeds are obtainable in "ski-joring," or horse-ski-ing, when both horse and driver are well trained. It is exhilarating, even to the passive onlooker



A CURLING MATCH

An international meet at Kandersteg. The game is exotic, but conditions are perfect



SPEED SKATING

On the Davos Rink, which holds most of the world's records for this sport

which lies in the valley between St. Moritz and the valley of Cresta, is another wonder. It is built of solid ice and its high banked sides and corners are the admiration of the toboggan world. When racing is going on, it is flooded every evening and gone over carefully to remove all unevenness, and in the morning it is as smooth as polished steel. There are different gradients in its various sections, and it includes two famous leaps, the Church and the Cresta, two great high-banked turns, and the straight-away part of the course. The length of the course is about three-quarters of a mile and the running track has a width of six feet. From start to finish the total fall is five hundred and fourteen feet and the grade averages about one foot in eight. The narrowest radius of curvature of the sharpest banks—known as the "Battle-dore" and "Shuttlecock"—makes the toboggans turn, what are to all intents and purposes, right angles. This run, which is constructed in sections, is not allowed to be used until a minimum depth of six feet of snow has fallen. This precaution is taken so as to break the force of any fall off the course.

The Grand National, the blue ribbon of ice tobogganing, is competed for every March over this course, and contestants from all countries vie with each other for its honors. The thrill of a run down the Cresta at a mile-a-minute rate is an experience which, as I can



SKI-ING AT ZWEISIMMEN

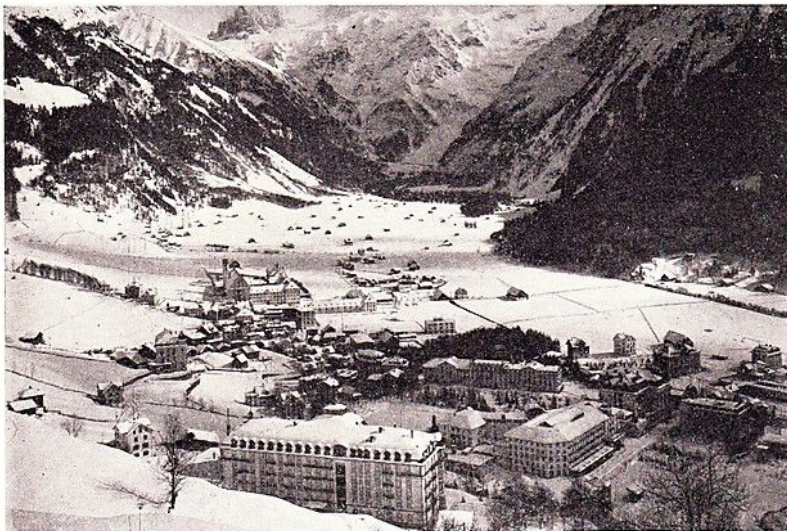
Skis provide one with an added opportunity for viewing the wonderful scenic effects of the country

testify, will never be forgotten. The Crown Prince of Germany, as well as the Princess, have been present at the gaieties of the Cresta and participated in its sensations.

Ninety miles an hour has been attained on the ice over the course, and it was appalling to me at first when I looked down on its flashing surface, winding in and out, with its awkward corners and its ugly-looking high-banked elbows.

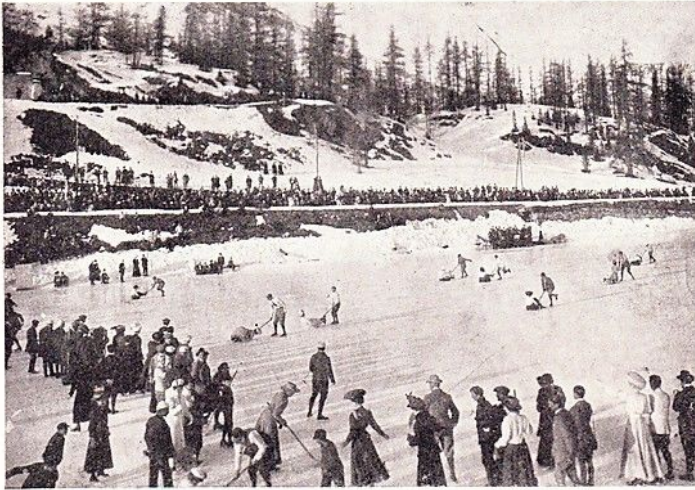
The American method of riding—head on and face down—was the style in vogue. Steering is now accomplished by the feet; the old cumbersome spiked or toothed "ruddering" gear having been discarded. The famous "Amerika" was the first toboggan to win the Grand National and was ridden in this fashion by one "Skeets" Martin, skipper of the first crew to try out the new run. The sharp corners and elbows were not all banked up when he made the adventurous descent, but he steered his party down the course without accident and his time has since only been equaled, but never beaten.

In the Canton of Grisons there is another winter resort known as Klosters. In summer it is frequented by seekers after health, but when the snow flies in the little valley in which it is located, it is thronged with devotees of ski-ing, tobogganing, skating, hockey and curling. Among the trophies presented here by followers of tobogganing are those given by the cele-



ENGELBERG

Hemmed in by lofty mountains, this little town is protected from the biting winter winds



GYMKHANA AT ST. MORITZ

Gymkhanas are burlesque affairs sandwiched in between the regular sports



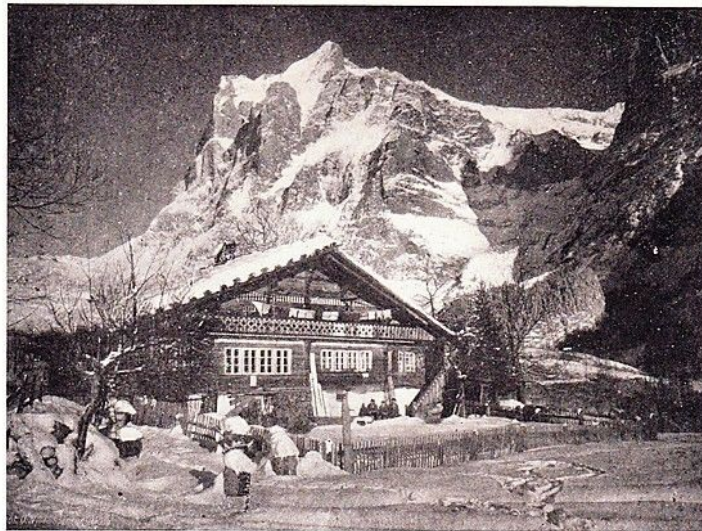
THE BOTTLE RACE

Preparing for a "bottle race"—a diverting gymkhana event on the Villars rink

brated English author, John Addington Symonds.

I also saw curling, the sport of Scotland, with its veteran enthusiasts. It appeared to be a sport that was severely sedate and full of superlatively dry humor—if one could only fathom where it came in. It was a sport not to be trifled with; its devotees had to give their whole soul to it and if a mistake were made, it might prove fatal to their reputation. Ice hockey or bandy was a much more sprightly diversion and a game in which both men and women participated. It was strenuous enough, too, for the young and vigorous. There were, besides, gymkhanas—obstacle or perplexity races on the ice—real burlesque affairs, full of frolic, and very agreeably sandwiched in between the regular sports.

For those who do not indulge in sports as strenuous as these I have mentioned, there is still much of interest in milder forms of amusement. Sleigh-riding, for instance, has a throng of devotees. The fine roads that run out from St. Moritz toward Pontresina and, southward, toward the sunnier land of Italy disclose many and varied scenic charms. For long distances the snow-covered cliffs which border the road are so close together that it appears as though one were driving beneath overhanging crags. Occasionally a sharp turn will bring to view a level stretch, with here and there a half-buried chalet. Still further on there will be a ruined castle, now snow-



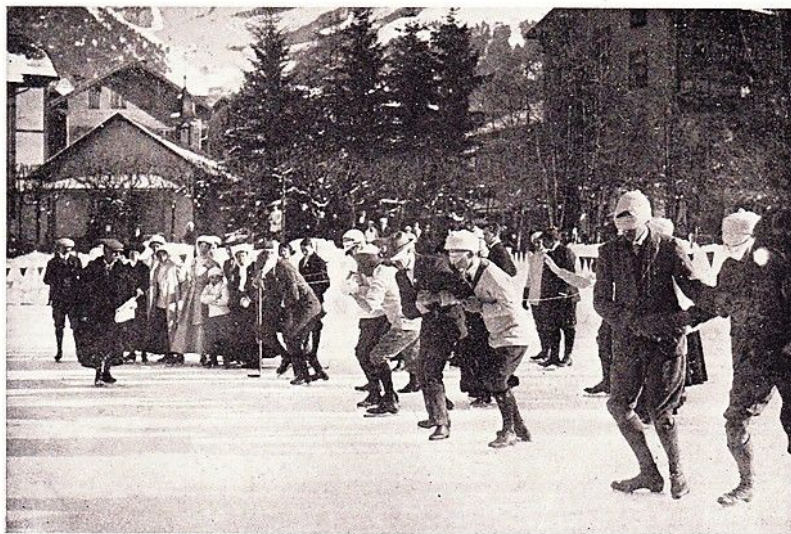
A TYPICAL SWISS HOMESTEAD

The architecture of few lands can compare in picturesqueness with these mountain-sheltered chalets

repaired, smiling bleakly down from an ice mountain. Through white-clad forest and across smooth-spread snow desert, past crowds of jovial snowshoers and ski enthusiasts one whisks with a shout and a jingle. The breeze in your face blows away all your cares, fills your lungs with the freshest air that ever blessed the world, and clears your mind of the cobwebs grown by too close contact with a workaday life. Enchanted valleys, weird grottos and strange snow-beings are brought to view in every bend in the road, and the magic melody of the sleighbells make even the most prosaic feel that he is in the land of St. Nicholas.

Nor does night blot out all these wonders, for the vigorous carnival throng pursues fun at all hours. The splendor of the sun on the brilliant snow seems almost to have a rival in the every charm of the thousand torches, Chinese lanterns and bizarre lights reflected in the surface of the snow and ice. Fancy-dress parties are held on the skating rinks, and one might almost believe, on seeing the varied figures skimming over the ice, that a magician had worked some marvelous spell.

The holiday pleasure in these winter resorts goes the round until one believes that he is in a veritable fairyland, where fun and beauty hold sovereign sway. Here winter brings no dread of cold or fear of illness, but a charm which makes one look toward summer as dull and tame in comparison.



BLINDFOLD SKATING

An amusing diversion, known as the "blind horse" race, on the big rink at Engelberg