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around them, instruments of noise and symbols of fertility rolled into one. Their most spectacular feature, however, is their headdress. Above masks in the likeness of friendly but vacant girls' faces rise gigantic structures, miniature stages upon which lovingly carved and turned figurines enact scenes from the countryman's daily round, cheese-making or the ascent of the herds to the Alpine pastures. These are reminders of the past year, but they are also wishful thinking—a hope that deep winter will soon relax its grip, and that summer will return to the earth.

The ugly and the beautiful go drifting or galumphing around in groups of six, vying with each other in their decorative display, singing and playing pranks. The New Year's revels in Urnasch have already ceased to be merely a local event, they draw visitors from near and far who think their performance worth a winter journey. And those who come are repaid by a unique spectacle that seems to be resurrected each year out of the remote and mysterious past.

--Niklaus Wyss

### Laugh a Little

The doctor asks: "Wouldn't you like to make a donation to our new alcoholics centre." The lady answers: "Yes, certainly, you can have my husband."

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