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it looks and feels as if the skates which were so hurriedly imported from Switzerland last week might soon justify their existence. Therefore, this being Christmas week, I need not write about tariffs, foreign policy and suchlike controversial questions, and, to produce that local atmosphere at a time when our thoughts travel to the homeland more often than usual perhaps, the following article from *The Spectator* of 28th Nov. is quite appropriate:—

The first fact about Switzerland in the winter which breathes its peculiar spell on us is that you find a climate there which allows you to bask in the sun with twenty degrees of frost asserting themselves around. Undeniable frost! Genial sparkling sunshine! I remember hearing how some lusty young fellow at one of these pleasure-resorts was sitting in the sun after a bout of lawn-tennis, and remembered that he had secreted a tumbler of water under his chair; and thinking he would have a drink he picked it up and found inside it a solid block of ice! The tumbler had been placed in the shade, and that sort of thing teaches you in that region the difference between sun and shadow.

That reminiscence suggests a question very pertinent to those who may be contemplating a winter visit to Mürren or Pontresina. Does father Sol always shine? Supposing he sulks for a day or two; would young men be seen sitting on chairs, talking amiabilities with a fair fellow-gamster in their shirt-sleeves? Not they. They would be seen involved in a thick sweater and fur-coat to boot, tramping or more likely trotting up and down the road, trying to keep warm; and not infrequently failing; that is, if there is any wind moving while the sun hides his face. For when this occurs the nip of the wind playing upon the extremity of the nose or ear is far from being a joke. Indeed, I have walked as fast as I could against a light breeze at Pontresina, clad in a huge fur-coat, and felt that for purposes of warmth the effort was abortive.

The fact is that the advice uttered by our admirable Foreign Secretary on his departure for Locarno is very much to the point: "Don't expect too much." Human beings are perpetually being taught by sharp experience that there is no such thing as an earthly Paradise; and yet we go on planning, toiling, saving, risking in order to find the locality of our dreams. To hear some people talk you would suppose it is the simplest thing in the world to pack up your traps and land yourself into perpetual golden sunshine, 6,000 feet up in the dead of winter. It may come off. I remember some thirteen years ago revelling in nine hours of such sunshine daily for seventeen days. Subsequent ventures have revealed the sinister element of gambling which, as a rule, attaches itself as a warning to all optimistic hopes. Not infrequently a delightful mild spell of weather reigns from Christmas to about January 10th; delicious for the septuagenarian visitor who can add to his curling some most pleasant walks, made possible by the absence of snow. But the last fact spells tragedy for the youths and maidens who yearn to ski. The expression round the mouths of some young men is not to be forgotten. The poor fellows had come all the way out laden with skis, ski-boots, ski-sticks, and bubbling with anticipation. After four days of grumbling at the sun—for the merriment of the venerable curlers was no compensation for them—they succumbed to a pretty sharp attack of flu, lay in bed for ten days and decamped homewards with their heavy paraphernalia diminished and brought low. For this plunge into pleasure they had to pay a not inconsiderable bill.

And so on. That is the most tragic event of which I have any knowledge. The moral is, be prepared for the best-laid plans going "aft agley." If they don't there is no time like it for learning the use of a new faculty in a joyous company. The motions of the party get to be more and more untrammelled as their skill in coping with slopes increases; and though they dance to an almost insane degree, they may return to their native shores considerably "bucked up," as the elegant phrase goes, in general health.

By way of providing against untoward happenings it would be well to acquire beforehand a taste for reading good books. Nothing really tragic can overtake anyone who can browse on such sobering leisurely novels as de Morgan's, or Mrs. Gaskell's. To be of any use against too much or too little frost the novel I maintain should be long and interesting, without being too exciting. Some are so exciting that you can't put them down, and then you may be late for your ski-ing expedition or for the whist-drive, or even—just fancy!—for dinner; and I much doubt the staying powers of the modern detective story, useful though it be for a temporary emergency. There must be something wrong with narratives one forgets wholly in a fortnight.

There are aspects of human life revealed to those who keep their eyes and ears open, as is the case in a minor degree in most hotels. But on these I may not descant further.

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Now, dear readers, "Kiburg" thought he would not perpetrate a similar error. That is why I have given you first of all a nice homely picture, meant to produce a bit of Christmasy feeling in your bosom. Secondly, I skilfully led your thoughts away again, made you think of our dear homeland and Keller's beautiful song which always brings a lump into the exile's throat . . . and only now, when I hope you are sufficiently prepared, do I remind you that

*The Swiss Churches in London have issued a United Appeal for Christmas Gifts. Old Clothes, Old Toys, etc., etc., to be sent to 79, Endell Street, London, W.C.2.*

Dear reader, I am not asking for cigars, whiskeys, liqueurs, etc., to be sent to me, as a token of the many hours of more or less pleasant reading it has been my privilege to provide you with. *But I do ask you*, if my story at the beginning has any meaning at all for you at this festive time of the year, if you are one of the fortunate ones who can look back on a happy childhood, full of sweet memories, if you have kiddies of your own and are able to treat them to a beautiful Christmas, if you can manage it, even if doing so means a sacrifice, please send something to the Swiss Churches NOW, so that as many as possible may know that the Spirit of Christmas—le bon père Noël's Christ-Child—is still about!

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