

The Mecca of Ski-ing

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THE MECCA OF SKI-ING.

The Ski Runs of Switzerland.

The popularity of ski-ing is on the increase. True, the sport is not one of those that attracts large crowds of non-players in the way football, tennis and competitive athletics do. It is in fact a sport in which the number of participants is far greater than that of spectators; with the exception of the Olympic games few people go out of their way to watch it. Yet it is a fascinating sport for both the performer and the onlooker. The thrill of seemingly effortless speed and controlled balance, and the stimulating effect of the conditions in which it can be practised — bracing air, snow, sunshine — make it one of the most satisfying and pleasurable of all bodily exercises.

The literature on ski-ing, if less extensive than the literature on mountaineering, is mostly of a high order. The latest addition is James Riddell's remarkable handbook, *The Ski Runs of Switzerland*, just published by Michael Joseph Ltd., price 35 shillings net. It runs to 360 pages, is richly illustrated and contains 28 sketch maps specially drawn under the supervision of the author. An appendix includes four pages of "Ski Tips", a Glossary and an Index.

The author is a distinguished writer of travel and children's books and an enthusiastic expert at ski running with a long experience of the game. In his view ski-ing is the finest of all sports and "once you have tried it and taken to it, there isn't any other game to compare with it in all the world". Although it is practised in many other countries, most skiers look on Switzerland as the Mecca of the sport, since it offers, more than any other country, immense possibilities and scope for the addict to discover and enjoy.

By way of preparation for the writing of his book Mr. Riddell spent four continuous months exploring and surveying most of the ski runs Switzerland has to offer. The result is extreme accuracy of description. This accuracy, based to some extent on the latest Federal survey maps, with the heights given in both metres and feet, has aroused the admiration of Sir Arnold Lunn, whose preface is one of unstinted praise.

The book is well planned. It is divided into chapters according to the cantons in which the ski runs are situated: Grisons, St. Gallen, Glarus, Unterwalden, Uri, Bernese Oberland, Vaud, Valais. Every ski run is minutely described: position, height, hotel and chalet accommodation, language spoken, predominant religion, how to get there; little if anything of interest or value to the tourist is omitted. Thus, the reader is taken in turn from one ski centre to another, from fashionable and exclusive St. Moritz, which caters for 7,000 guests, to lesser-known resorts such as, for instance, the tiny village of Braunwald in Glarus which, with its 350 inhabitants, provides for the visitors 1,000 beds, a "Baby Ski Lift", a "Funitbahn" and the inevitable Ski School established on most of the Swiss nursery slopes.

The easy, chatty style in which the book is written and the valuable practical information it conveys on every page make it, in the words of Sir Arnold Lunn, not only a most useful vade-mecum for experts and beginners alike, but also one readable from cover to cover.

J.J.F.S.

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