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Enduring Beauty of the Swiss Alps

Pictures of the Grisons by Käthe Morell



The passing year has not won for itself a favourable place in the annals of the Swiss Tourist Records. There were a few brilliant days in the early Spring, there were occasional spells of bright sunshine in June and July to justify the reputation of the Swiss lakes and mountains as centres for a summer holiday. But, on the whole, Switzerland this year shared the fate of all western Europe and saw the summer months slip past with little of the summer sun to gild them. Such seasons will occur sometimes in the best of climates.

Then, at last, when the Vintage month came round, and the grapes hung thick and heavy on the vines on all the Southern slopes, the sun appeared in time to

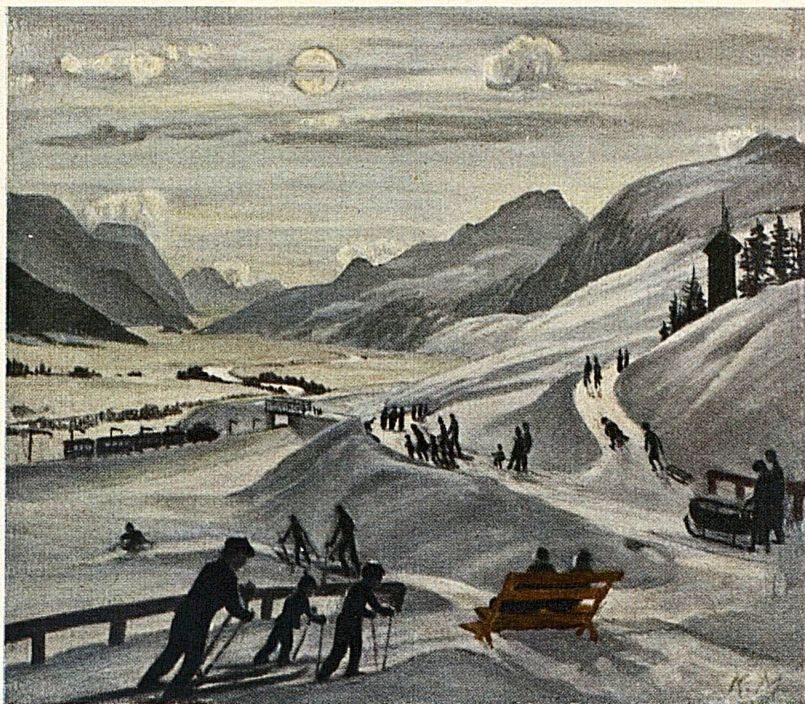
add the desired sweetness which only sunshine can give to the grape. This is the season when the middle lands often look their loveliest. Very exquisite was the beauty of those wooded hills in the sunny atmosphere of an Indian Summer, to use a familiar English term for the spell of fine weather that often occurs in October. Amid the background of the dark green pines there spread a colourful bouquet over all the hills, as the leaves of beech and oak, of chestnut and lime, shaded into varying hues of russet red and yellow and umber.

It is the interlude between the two great tourist seasons. As the cold increases and the frost begins, and the wind strips the lingering leaves from off the bare

boughs, we recognize the approach of winter. And it is the weather conditions of its winters that give Switzerland its world-wide fame. The happy and stirring thoughts of gorgeous days of frosty sunshine and glistening snow, spent on the Swiss Alps above the canopy of cloud that shrouds so large a part of central Europe during the winter, reawaken in the hearts of many a British sportsman and sportswoman a desire for another jolly holiday in the old familiar spot. For most regular visitors have their particular fancy. Each of the score and more of popular sport centres can boast its own circle of enthusiastic adherents. Each can urge its own special appeal.

And normally at this time the tourist and sportsman would be overhauling his kit. Old companions would be looked up and consulted. Plans made, dates fixed.





Perhaps a new centre discussed. And while the tourists in England were making their arrangements, there would be the bustle of preparations going on in all the hotels up in the Alps for the reception of their expected guests. Staffs must be collected. Fresh attractions advertised. The Railways, too, and the Postal Coaches would be arranged to suit the season's plans and time-tables, and so forth.

But no one can pretend that the times are quite normal today. Finances, public and private, are suffering to an extent that has had no parallel in recent years. With incomes falling and the number out of work increasing among the higher paid classes, there is less money available for the luxury of sport. In many cases this year tourists must perforce content themselves with the memories of happy Christmas holidays among the Alps, of friendly contests fought on their snowy expanse, of noisy outings on skis and sleighs. And they will look forward with greater eagerness to a renewal of the old fun and sport in brighter days when the passing clouds have rolled by.

So the Swiss hoteliers are preparing to face the facts with undaunted hearts. Most of the biggest hotels will open their hospitable doors as wide as ever. Business as usual! will be the slogan, though the prospects may be less rosy than of late. The famous winter resorts will not remain empty, though they may not be so brimful as usual with the animation of gay throngs of cheerful and often boisterous visitors.

For the popularity of the Swiss Alps shows no sign of diminution. Indeed, each year its appeal reaches a wider circle, while

the affection of old friends remains real and lasting, as one such friend has lately testified in an interesting letter to *the Times*. The writer was Sir F. Younghusband, a well-known explorer and scientific author. He contradicts a prophecy contained in a cartoon of *Punch* and published a year or so back, when English and German expeditions were penetrating the fastnesses of the Himalayas. It was to the effect that men dazzled by these supreme altitudes would soon be discounting the lesser heights of the Alps.

Writing as one who, born amid the Himalayas, has nine times traversed that area in its entire breadth, both in winter and summer, he declares that, though naturally peaks of 23,000 feet afford a stronger impression of the terrible, especially when the Monsoon is raging, than the Alps can furnish, yet each time he revisits the Alps their beauty seems to him more impressive

than before. «No memories of the Himalaya dwarf the magnificence of the scene from the Gornergrat.» And he goes on to describe the peculiar beauty of the many lakes which repose among the Alps.

There is a charm about these Alpine valleys which invite the tourist to stay and enjoy their hospitality, with the same strength of appeal as the challenge with which the gorges and the glaciers of the topmost peaks provoke the climber. To the native of India, says Sir F. Younghusband, the unapproachable peaks of the Himalaya are the seats of gods. To the European, the Alpine heights are a paradise for winter sports. Yet it is the climber who has come to close grips with the rocky precipices of the Alps, who will best appreciate their beauty. A. B. Winter.

