

# Miscellaneous advertisements

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dark, velvet-soft enticement lay the lake, blithe, but elusive. And almost indistinguishable, like some playful siren on mischief bent. A few greedy seconds, and the scene vanished as suddenly as it had appeared.

Ten o'clock, and—"Lugan-no" shouted a porter. We jumped on to the railway line at a clean, bright-as-a-new-pin railway station, and glancing beyond the station, the magic scene spread before our eyes caused me to deliberate seriously with myself as to whether I was really awake or not.

Having decided that I was not indulging in a dream of almost blinding vividness, I rubbed my eyes well and ventured another look. The station apparently lay on the hillside above the little town which stretched down to the edge of the lake, and the entrancing whole—town and lake and mountains—sparkled and danced under a soft flood of light which lit up so bewitching a scene that one began to speculate furiously as to the exact whereabouts of Aladdin's lamp!

To the left some public gardens, themselves in darkness, were edged by a row of lights that hung over the water with apparently no other object than to add to the gaiety of the picture. The mountains on the opposite side of the lake stood out clearly, yet gaily and not too massively. Monte Bré sportively flourished a line of soft red lights that marked the path of its "funicular." Salvatore replied with another line of pale yellow.

They brought us glasses filled with crimson, dancing liquid—the only possible sort of nectar under the circumstances, surely—and we sat on a balcony overlooking the lake to drink in scene and port wine in alternate quaffs.

The end of the town in which we were quartered is called "Paradiso," and one can picture the triumphant smile of those responsible for the name when they burst upon the world with a challenge so unanswerable. I had no difficulty in believing I had dropped into Paradise.

Lugano by day has no disillusionments to offer. Such a quaint little town it is, virginally, miraculously clean as most of these lakeside towns seem to be. And in this matter there is, apparently, great rivalry between town and lake, for I have never seen water more transparently clear either in its deep blueness or the milky-blue of the sunny, early morning.

We boarded the white steamer in the afternoon under a sun that shone with uncompromising splendour, and the steamer picked her dainty way along—in order, I suppose, not to sully any more than she could help a lake like a piece of rare jewellery.

Each old-world, picturesque village nestling among the hills on either side shone in the sun like some bright gem in an emerald setting, and in the centre of it all lay the broad band of deep, sapphire-blue on which we journeyed.

#### The Psychology of Mountaineering Accidents.

Nothing is less painless nor more comforting than to go to one's last home via an unexplored Swiss alpine crevasse—these are the conclusions of a Genevese writer whose book is reviewed in the *Morning Post* (Sept. 14th). So this is a new tip for those who prematurely wish to retire from the surface of our disreputable planet, and I shall not be surprised to hear of some enterprising touring agency arranging special parties with reduced return fares for the actors and spectators in this new craze.

Robert Sans-Terre, of Geneva, a climber of reputation and the victim of an unusual number of mountain accidents, has written an interesting little volume, "A Travers les Périls de l'Alpe," in which he discusses the psychology of such accidents with an authority due to his personal experiences. The sub-title of his volume is, "Les sensations extraordinaires." It is thoroughly justified. The author's adventures and escapes, in what he calls the Kingdom of the Vertical, are sufficiently hair-raising, and are better not read, as I read them, the night before starting on a climbing expedition.

M. Sans-Terre has an appropriate name, for he seems more at home falling through space than standing securely on terra firma. The gods of the mountains are evidently his friends. "I have had the misfortune," he says, "to be the victim of many accidents, due mostly to my own imprudence, and the rare good luck to have come through them with no mental anguish, and with but insignificant wounds." He has fallen down precipices, been caught by avalanches, passed a night in a crevasse, hung over an abyss from his ice-axe, been exposed to falling stones, and has broken through a cornice on an arête where only a miracle saved his life. And the most interesting part of his book is what he has to tell about the thoughts, emotions, feelings of a man in these positions, and his positive assertion that no physical pain attends an actual fall.

On hearing an account of a mountain accident, he writes, the first impression, after those of pity and terror, is that of curiosity. How did the guide, wounded by fallen ice which has

swept away his companions, manage to cross the glacier alone in search of help? What were the feelings of the man who passed hours in a crevasse, uncertain whether help would ever come? What terrors are felt by the unfortunate man who falls over a precipice, and what kind of suffering is experienced by a party roped together when swept headlong down the couloir by an avalanche? Usually, he says truly, the newspaper accounts are brief, the accounts of the victims who escape still more brief. The psychology of the situation is not touched upon. The author hastens to make good the omission so far as his own accidents are concerned, and his firm assurance that no pain accompanies a fall is certainly a comforting one. There is doubtless mental anguish, he thinks, though of very brief duration, just before a fall—when a man feels he is going to slip—but any accident of this kind that is sudden, unexpected, and which one has had no time to foresee, is painless.

To someone whose friend had fallen to his death down a couloir the author quotes a letter he sent by way of comfort: "You ask me," he writes, "what in my opinion were the sensations of the poor young man as he crashed down the couloir, dashed from side to side on his way to the edge of the abyss . . . I can assure you that your friend, as indeed all who have met their death by such a fall, experienced no physical pain at all. Even though it lasted several minutes, and resulted in broken limbs and terrible wounds to the head, such an accident, because of the stupefaction and shock experienced, is accompanied by no physical pain, and by a mental pain of only the briefest duration." Nature, he holds, provides an anodyne in such a case; he quotes the well-known story of Livingstone and the lion, and mentions that soldiers in the heat of battle are too excited to suffer at the moment. "I would go so far as to say," he adds, "that where mountain accidents, falls from heights, are concerned, these far from being painful, have quite another effect: that, in fact, each shock against the rock produces a sort of 'électrisation du corps assez agréable,' and that this renders the body insensible to pain, and counteracts both psychological and physiological tension."

His comparative analysis of the various kinds of mountain accident is also interesting to any climber. Which, for instance, is the most terrible? Which involves most mental torture? Is death by cold a painful one? Lying in the depths of a crevasse, bruised, wounded, waiting for problematical help, is this more dreadful than the blows and smothering due to being caught in an avalanche? Having spent a night on a glacier himself, he says that he only began to suffer physical pain when, with rescue, the blood returned to the extremities of his body. The victim of an avalanche, again, if quickly stunned by a blow from some huge lump, or if suffocated by the terrific mass of snow, have no time, obviously, for physical suffering. The worst fate, in such cases, is to be buried just below the surface, unable to move, unable to pierce the walls of what may prove a living tomb. There may be air to breathe, even space enough round the face for the voice to cry out to those who can be heard digging and searching overhead, but not enough for the voice to carry beyond the immediate hole. An avalanche of powder-snow, of course, means instant suffocation; the lungs are choked in a moment; there is no time even for realisation.

This reminds me of a little paragraph which during the last few days has been found in some of the English papers and which, I believe, was culled from an over-zealous French paper. It is to the effect that in the bedrooms of a certain Swiss hotel a notice is placarded to the effect that "visitors undertaking high-mountain climbing expeditions are requested to pay their bills before they start." Nobody, of course, could blame that particular hotel proprietor for his commercial prudence and foresight, but I fancy this refers to the ordinary notice about leaving which an ingenious mind has somewhat maliciously interpreted.

#### Vintage Time.

The following is from the *Glasgow Herald* (Sept. 11th):—

While we are busy in this country with our

harvest homes, the inhabitants of Switzerland are making merry over the "Vendange." High up on the terraced slopes of Lac Léman, on whose "flots d'azur" white-sailed barges move like giant butterflies, dotted here and there are tiny farms, in front of which creepers hang like blood-dyed curtains. To those whose acquaintance with the vine has so far been confined to the graceful twining plants of the greenhouse or to the spirals of the Hampton Court giant, these rows of stumpy rasp-like plants come at first as something of a disappointment. But when vintage time arrives and everyone is pressed into the service of gathering in the harvest, these same colourless patches present an animated scene. From early morning till sunset the pickers (mostly women) are hard at work gathering the "grappes," which the farmer collects in an elongated basket or "panier" slung on to his back. By the retaining wall there are generally to be seen two patient cream-coloured oxen yoked to a wooden carreau or elongated cart waiting to receive the sea-green or purple fruit, as the case may be, which is then taken to the winery, where the juice is squeezed out either by means of machinery or by tramping it with bare feet. It is then put into large tubs or "cuves" and left to ferment, when it is drawn off into casks and bottles and stored away in the "cave" or cellar.

The toil, however, is tempered by much merriment, and on a clear day, when "The sun with a golden mouth still blows blue bubbles of grapes down the vineyard rows," the workers in their coloured smocks give a gay and happy impression. It is the duty of Jean, the foreman, to examine the plants after they have been picked to see that no fruit has been overlooked by some careless worker, and custom has decreed that Jean may claim a kiss from the offender (from

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