

L'irréparable outrage

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The theory is that a man so shod will never be at a loss for a toothpick and can traverse a Swiss snowscape more rapidly than one wearing gumboots or carpet slippers.

Theoretically this may be so; but I suspect that it is somewhat less simple than it sounds, and that the embryo Winter Sportsman would do well to rehearse the motions privily at home before mingling with those who were born, so to speak, with silver skis in their mouths.

Judging by the photographs, a ski-ster who has taken a bad toss bears a strong resemblance to one of those wire puzzles found in Christmas crackers and must be nearly as hard to unravel. In fact, I should say that it is considerably easier for the novice to commit felo-de-se by this method than for a rich man to pass through the eye of a camel.

My own taste, therefore, inclines rather towards tobogganing, which seems to be unskilled labour of the simplest type. At least, I take it that any man weighing more than two stone and having some slight knowledge of the Law of Gravity can lie on his stomach on a wooden tray and slide down a mountain.

But the snag here, no doubt, is that a toboggan is more easily started than stopped. More than one inexperienced solo tobogganist, I expect, has left Switzerland in a hurry and a cloud of snow without paying his hotel bill.

There is another and larger brand of toboggan, I understand, which is usually manned by a representative selection of the aristocracy and travels down a specially prepared track that makes the descent to Avenus look like a one-in-two up-gradient. I gather that there is no more stirring spectacle than one of these toboggans in full cry, shedding here an earl and there a viscountess, jettisoning an occasional knight, flinging a baroness or two into the next cantonment, and eventually bringing the mad frolic to a close by wrapping itself round a tree.

I should imagine that mixed tobogganing of this kind is very stimulating to the gentler emotions and liable to produce repercussions at St. Margarets, Westminster. Even a Modern Girl is apt to feel tender towards a man in whose company she has plunged into a crevasse or impinged against an Alp. And as the man is probably feeling pretty tender, too, the upshot or outcome is almost a foregone conclusion.

Indeed there would seem to be something in the very air of Switzerland that blunts the wits and induces a tendency to wedlock, judging by the number of Society Romances that blossom there every season.

Apart from those that are brought on by toboggan accidents, the majority, I fancy, blossom after dark, because comparatively few girls look their best in voluminous serge trousers and semi-football boots. If Cleopatra had been obliged to wear the uniform of a Winter Sportswoman, she would never have gained more than a purely local reputation.

But at night, when the moon has risen behind the Rölsterhorn and the plaintive yodel of the chamois echoes from crag to crag of the towering Röttenalp; when the guttural yelp of the saxophone blends with the faint cries of those visitors who have just received their bills—then it is that He comes all over sheepish and offers Her a ninety-nine years' lease of the back seat of his toboggan.

And She, bearing her mother's advice in mind, blushes hurriedly and says "Yes" with such rapidity and vehemence that it sounds like a tyre-burst.

Ah (as we oldsters say) me! All this, of course, is pure conjecture on my part, inasmuch as I have never been nearer to the Matterhorn than the seaward end of Worthing Pier.

But when my ship comes in, I intend to pop across to Switzerland and shake an enthusiastic ski, partly because I need the exercise, partly because I have always liked condensed milk, and partly because I long to see my muffer in the weekly papers: "Snapped In The Saddling-Enclosure At St. Moritz. From Left to Right: Sir Hugo Watt-Hoe, Miss Anaesthesia Yammering, Captain 'Bosh' Fotheringhamptonson, Lady Turnham-Greene and . . ."

Not a very unreasonable ambition, I think.

Putting the Blue in Stilton

That the consumption of cheese in Switzerland amounts to about 23 lbs. per head of the population, as well as a few other interesting bits of "cheesy information" are contained in the next article, culled from the *Manchester Evening Chronicle*, 5th December:

There are a good many jokes about cheese, most of which are rather more ancient than the cheese to which they refer. Here are a number of interesting facts about cheese gleaned from a recently-issued report of the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, which you may or may not have heard before.

Did you know that there is a cheese known as the Dunlop, not because of its resilience and hard-wearing properties, but because it is made at the village of Dunlop in Scotland?



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Did you know that the "cannon ball" cheese, the Dutch Edam, is scraped while rotating on a machine, that it is washed in hot water and that it gets its beautiful red polish through being stained and dipped momentarily in hot paraffin wax?

The holes in Gruyere cheese are not made by mice or the tester's knife. They are brought about by bacteriological action during ripening, and the holes in a perfect cheese are about one inch in diameter and one to three inches apart. Gruyere cheese incidentally are about six inches thick, and can be anything up to four feet in diameter or 220lb. in weight.

Gorgonzola is the most popular blue-veined cheese—and the subject of most jokes. The ripening process in its home in Lombardy is carried out by specialist ripeners, who carry off the cheese when it is quite young—as soon as it has assumed its shape. In their retreats in hillside caves, they drysalt it, perforate it to admit air and encourage the growth of the characteristic blue mould.

It takes about three months to train a really good Gorgonzola.

Our English Stilton, the most popular of the home-produced blue-veined cheese, takes about four to six months to ripen fully. For export each cheese is packed in a tin made to measure, as its shape is apt to be a little irregular. Incidentally most cheese are well bandaged in their youth in order to preserve their figure, which, in the case of the best cheese, is slightly more rotund at the waist than at either top or bottom.

But the most curious method of packing cheese is surely that adopted in the Netherlands for Gouda cheese for export to foreign countries, and in Italy with the Provoloni, for here the mature cheese are given a bladder covering, at first sight indistinguishable, which protects the cheese from insects and the like, and imparts no objectionable flavour.

In this country we eat about 9.5lb. of cheese per head of the population. In Switzerland the consumption is about 23lb., and in Canada 3lb.

The English consumption represents about 3,725,000 cwt., but of this 2,868,000 cwt. is imported, or 77 per cent., which is a great pity, for English Cheddar and Cheshire are models for the whole world in cheesemaking, while Lancashire cheese is pre-eminent for its toasting qualities, the ripe cheese melting down very easily into a smooth, custard-like substance, with a rich and appetising appearance.

I think I will leave it at that, because nobody, I think, is particularly interested in any more "food" news just now and I don't know anything else to write about myself, my grey matter still feeling somewhat sluggish!

Also, Guets Nöijaahr!

L'irréparable outrage.

Lili: "Pourquoi mets-tu de la poudre sur ta figure, tante Anna?"

Anna: "Pour me rendre jolie, ma chérie."

Lili: "Et pourquoi n'y arrives-tu pas?"

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