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MOUNTAIN SCENE.

Basel railway station at eight o'clock on a December morning may not sound particularly exciting to anyone who has not yet experienced the joy of arriving in Switzerland after a wearisome journey from England; but it was exciting for the twelve of us who were on our way for a fortnight's skiing in the mountains. No one ever forgets the superb breakfast of rolls, cherry jam and coffee partaken off a snow-white table cloth, in an atmosphere of friendliness and courtesy — the first glimpse of life in Switzerland, so normal, so tidy and everywhere so clean !

Our welcome was completed by whirling snow-flakes seen from the carriage window as we gazed at patches of snow on the distant mountains on the last part of our journey.

The yellow bus which sped us up to the mountain village brought us to a real fairyland of sparkling snow, with white sprinkled fir trees and doll-like wooden chalets.

Our chalet was a forty minutes' walk above the village, nestling cosily on the mountain side. It was a weary walk up the snowy mountain track but what a splendid welcome awaited us on our arrival — warmth, light, a good supper and a very genuine welcome as only those who have always lived in the mountains know how to express.

The simple life in the mountains and the friendliness of the Swiss are very real pleasures and experiences which none of us will ever forget. I shall always remember the first morning, waking up and gazing through the open window across the valley to the snow-covered mountains on the opposite side. The bell chiming for Mass rose in the morning stillness from the village church below, giving one a feeling of unreality and remoteness.

Within a week most of us had sufficiently mastered the art of ski-ing to be able to enjoy simple downhill runs. Each morning and afternoon saw us busily toiling uphill with the reward of hot coffee at one of the numerous mountain cafés, or speeding downhill which usually ended in a fall for most of us ! Unable to keep up with the increasing speed of our skis we usually found ourselves leaning backwards which resulted in a sudden descent into the snow !

Some days we would go high up the mountain side, being taken rapidly up on a ski-lift, and then enjoy a glorious run-down interspersed with much fun and laughter as various people toppled over into the snow

in an undignified manner ! Ski-ing through a pine forest is sheer beauty. Through the white-laden branches one sees a brilliant blue sky, from which the hot sun shines down making intriguing patterns on the crystal-like snow beneath. The stillness of the air and the clear sharpness make one feel as though one had wings and were almost immortal !

If the days were packed with enjoyment the evenings were no less exhilarating. Inside the chalet amidst warmth and friendly company the Swiss and English sang songs, played games in various languages and danced to Swiss tunes played on a gramophone. On some nights we would walk down to the village and dance the night away in the most modern hotel, returning in the early hours of the morning beneath a dark-blue, velvety sky studded with large, bright stars, or perhaps in brilliant moonlight which seemed to flood the valley with its silver beauty.

Life was so gay, so simple and so infinitely satisfying. The peace and tranquility which was all pervasive was like a tonic. Here was a country that had not experienced the ravages of war, and so her people were not frustrated. In a land of comparatively few privations and shortages we found all the small pleasures of life, so soon forgotten in other countries. Shops were well stocked and clothes unrationed; there was room for all in trains and restaurants provided bright surroundings and cheerful service. Of course food was strictly rationed but there were not the same shortages as prevail elsewhere in Europe to-day. Here there was a slowness and calmness about life which has to be seen to be believed !

All too soon we were once again packed into the shining yellow bus which took us down the valley on the first stage of our homeward journey. The snow was falling in little whirling flakes and the mountain tops hid themselves in a blanket of cloud as if they, like ourselves, were sad at bidding farewell to the ski-ing, the sunshine and the good people who were our friends for always.

Ph. J.

MRS. EGLI IN A WEST-END LEAD

Readers of the "Swiss Observer" will be interested to hear that Dr. H. W. Egli's actress wife, Selma Vaz Dias, is taking over the leading part in "Dark Summer" at the St. Martin's Theatre from Joan Miller as from next week.

It is a movingly sincere play and a grand part for our one compatriot on the London stage.

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