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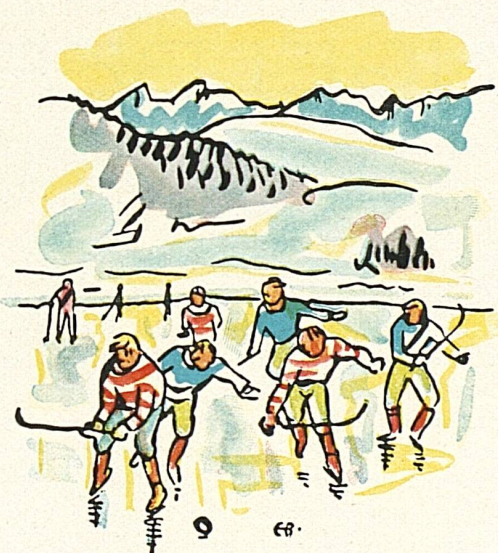
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JOHN GOES TO SWITZERLAND

If we grown-ups can get so much keen pleasure out of a Swiss Winter Sport holiday, imagine what it must be like to a child; and with a child's capacity for enjoyment what an unforgettable impression it must make.

"No parties these holidays", said John's father, "no plays, no pantomimes, no treats, no tips".

"Oh, Father! Why ever not?" asked John with falling face.

"No colds, no coughs, no doctor's bills, no pale faced boy", Father continued.

"But why, why, why?" John insisted.

"Because you are going to Switzerland with us", was the answer, and John's long face grew round again, for there was little John did not know about Switzerland — or so he thought! — What a lot he had heard about it when Father and Mother had come back other years. There was the ski-ing, they had told him of their trips right up into the mountains; and he knew all about the skating rink, where a band played and people actually danced on skates. Besides, his cousins had been to Switzerland last winter and gave themselves intolerable airs over it. Richard, not much older than John, had won the children's toboggan race, and Diana, his small girl cousin, shouted "Achtung" when she slid down the balusters. John knew that Switzerland was the land of delights and now actually he was going. "Oh, Father!" was all he said outloud, but his face expressed a lot more and Father understood.

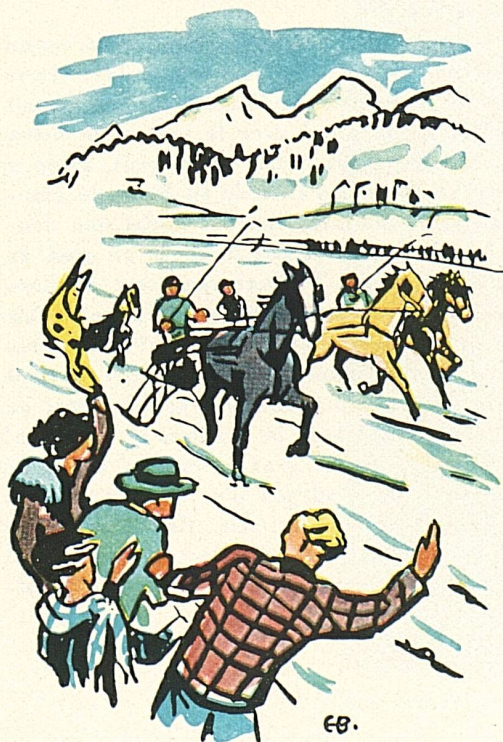
The funny thing was, that although John thought he knew all about Switzerland, he found it had no end of surprises up its sleeve for him. First there was the sun.

"Mother, I am simply boiling", said John on the skating rink, "I can't bear my coat", and to his surprise Mother helped him off with it. It seemed so odd to be without a coat in winter and almost too hot in the thinnest sweater.

Another surprise was the snow. John had seen Father's photographs and he knew everything looked white, but who would have imagined snow as high as a fence, and to think of looking down at a dark thing on the ground and being told it was the top of a gate.

Then there was the surprise about Adrian. Here was a boy who looked just like any of John's school-fellows. He was very attractive looking and John risked a snub by speaking first. "What's your school?" he asked. And the boy couldn't understand! He looked just like John and yet he didn't know what John was talking about! It turned out: Adrian was Dutch.

There were several other children: Swiss and English, and another surprise was how much better the Swiss were at





all kinds of things. Some could talk English, all could sing and even little Madeleine could race him on a toboggan.

John was not a greedy boy, but he couldn't help enjoying the pleasant surprises that came up from the kitchen. It was certainly a treat to get ice pudding so often, and what a clever man the cook must be to make a cake like the skating rink, with tiny figures skating on it and snow all round.

But nothing came up to ski-ing. Mother refused to let Father give John his first lesson; she took him out herself and gave him a very gentle first turn. They scarcely saw a slope but just walked about. Of course, it didn't do to say so, but John was very glad when he could go with Father. He didn't mind a fall or two.

One day John will never forget: when he went his first ski-ing trip with a grown-up party. They took their lunch (John carried his in his own rucksack, though Father took his ski for him, just at the start) and ate it at a restaurant high up on the shoulder of a mountain. Everything was a dream of delight that day. Even coming in late for tea, when the lounge was full of people, was fun, and several of them noticed him and asked where he had been.

Another day to remember was that of the Ice Gymkhana. That glorious race round the rink when Adrian won, and the shovel race when John and little Madeleine carried off the prize. What a dash it was up the rink and back again on skates, first pushing the wooded shovel with his partner sitting on it, then Madeleine hopping up while he sat down, and pushing him. What a sporting little thing she was and how the people clapped!

Then there was the evening of the bob races when John was allowed to be one of Father's crew. How the bob slithered down the frozen run, how it jumped the bumps and how rhythmically they all leaned outwards at the corners. That was a sport if you like.

Even the day it snowed was fun. They played «Up Jenkins» and rehearsed some charades — he and Adrian had to pretend to be Rink men — and in the afternoon, when it

cleared, everyone went out with shovels to help clear the snow off the rink. He and Adrian — they could understand each other by now — got hold of a big scraper and thoroughly enjoyed themselves.

All were nice days except the last.

A child's impressions are vivid and lasting. These bright Swiss winter days will be one of John's happiest recollections, constituting a cheerful glimmer in his memory that will help to lighten any dark days that may come.

A sun-burnt and robust John went back to school with Father and Mother's promise that Switzerland should see him again next winter.

Carine Cadby.

Aquarelle von Eduard Braun, Linden-Verlag, München

