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# Winter, the ideal holiday season

Comparisons are idle, superfluous things. How can we decide whether the mountains are more beautiful under the crisp radiance of winter sunshine than on a mild June morning, when a thousand springs gush forth between the rocks and a myriad multi-coloured flowers transform the Alps into a garden of Fairyland? Mountain lakes in summer setting, breathed upon by zephyrs that have played with fragrant hay-stalks, nearby glaciers softly mirrored in their lucid waters — how can we compare them with the clear, cool stillness of many-tinted autumn evenings upon some lonely height? And what shall we say of winter high up among the Alps?

If winter is the ideal season for holidays, its supremacy does not consist in scenic beauty alone: the landscape is in this case the frame, not the picture itself. The purpose of holidays varies with our needs, our desires, our individual taste. Peace, rest, change, health, pleasure — these are some of the many reasons which inspire our choice of



Villars-Chesières-Arveyes. Dents du Midi

Phot.: Froebel, Kunz, Mittelholzer

place and season. And the origin of these reasons lies in the state of our mind and body, and in the character of our everyday life. But at no other season of the year are we in greater need of change and regeneration; at no other season is our everyday life in the towns less to our liking. The dreary ugliness of mist and fog depresses us more and more as day succeeds day; melting snow and ashgrey slush make us long to flee from it all. Spring, even in an overcrowded city, is a relief and a promise; summer can be exploited to a certain extent if there is a river, a swimming pool or a tennis-court at hand; and even autumn has its compensations in the bitter-sweet wistfulness of soft decay.

But in winter Nature has nothing to offer the city-dweller. There remains but the make-believe of artificial lights and artificial pleasures — poor substitutes for the sunny purity of snow-covered mountains. Comparisons are idle, but contrasts speak for themselves. In winter, when city life is at its worst, then it is that the Alps come into their own! Free, open heights, wide valleys, peaks and slopes emerging from the mist of the lowlands like symbols of sublimity. What a contrast, when the upper surface of the fog spreads out like a sea below one, blotting out the ugly winter of the plains! Here above there is sunshine, brightness, clarity — new life for soul and body.

It is on this canvas that the winter holiday-maker paints his own picture of enjoyment and health-giving sport. Ski-ing, skating, tobogganing fill the short, cloudless days — days of joyous exercise that leave the body pleasantly tired when sunset shuts off the light. But the day is not yet ended: we shake the snow from our clothes, sip a steaming tea by the fireside, relax our muscles in a warm bath, and finally don fresh garments in readiness for an evening's entertainment in pleasant company. Wherever we look we behold radiant, joyous eyes, natural, healthy good spirits, tanned faces, graceful, well-trained bodies. There is nothing artificial, nothing restless or



A direct service operates between London and Zürich (—St. Moritz) — Winterflugbetrieb: Berlin—Stuttgart (Frankfurt—Amsterdam) Zürich. Stuttgart—Genève — Lignes aériennes directes d'hiver: Londres—Paris—Lyon—Genève. Barcelona—Marseille—Genève. Stuttgart—Genève

hectic about this company, for these qualities belong to the cities and have no place in the sunny warmth and natural freedom of Alpine winter. Natural, spontaneous laughter and jollity, the enjoyment of sport and the joy of life — these are infallible symbols of good company in pleasant surroundings, of young people brought together by chance and united for a while by a common bond of comradeship.

Summer holidays are mainly spent in the open, and until late in the evening indoor comforts and amenities are of secondary importance. Sociability has but little chance to develop under these circumstances. But in winter, when an icy wind sweeps down from the frozen heights, a comfortable room, well heated and lighted, has a charm all its own. Lunch was probably eaten from a rucksack during a ski-ing tour, and the sunshine was the warmest thing about it: a more substantial evening meal, well served and garnished with the refinements of a good cuisine, is welcomed with double appreciation. The foundations for social contract have been laid.

Many are the sun-lovers who, when summer comes, rave of returning to Nature. They go so far as to spend most of their time in bathing costumes, and camp under canvas in some remote nook. But these, too, when summer is past, are glad to remind themselves that the whole of life is not so primitive — that Switzerland, besides possessing the finest ski-ing grounds, also has the most comfortable and best-run winter-sport hotels for their use.

E. C. Sch.



Saenen near Gstaad (Bernese Oberland) — Saenen-Gstaad (Berner Oberland) — Gessenay près de Gstaad (Oberland bernois) — Saenen presso Gstaad (Oberland bernese)

*Es gibt in den Schweizer Alpen **Abfahrten** von einer wilden Steilheit, Abfahrten mit überwältigenden Tiefblicken, Abfahrten für alle und Abfahrten für Auserwählte*

*Les sports d'hiver sont une cure de jeunesse*

*Lo sport, questo elemento vitale dell' uomo moderno, quello che dà il vero svago; e lo sport invernale è lo sport per tutti*

*La grande attraction: la descente*

*The number of great downhill ski runs in Switzerland is little short of astonishing*