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*F*ein ist heute das Reisen. Man kommt sich  
*E*her als König, denn als ein Bettler vor.  
*B*ei Spiel: die neuen Zweiklasse-Wagen  
*R*uhn auf den Schienen – man möchte fast sagen –:  
*U*nendlich zärtlich, als ob sie dort schliefen.  
*A*ber man tritt doch aus schummrigen Tiefen  
*R*echtzeitig abends vors häusliche Tor.

*F*ern sind die Zeiten  
*E*inst marternder Bänke.  
*B*itte: gepolstert sind Rückwand und Sitz.  
*R*eicht Platz und Frist, ist uns Schlaf wohl zu gönnen,  
*U*nd Thermostaten, die luft-zaubern können,  
*A*chten aufs Klima. Ist's  
*R*auh? Warm wird's – potz Blitz!

*F*uhr man nicht  
*E*hemals frierend mit schmerzenden Knochen?  
*B*einahe jetzt fliegt man. So kommt es mir vor.  
*R*uhig und wohnlich. Sind's Tage? Sind's Wochen?  
*U*nduldsam-eilig. Und doch zeit-vergessen.  
*A*ber am Abend tritt jeder zum Essen  
*R*eisefroh heiter durchs freundliche Tor.

ALBERT EHRLSMANN

\* Was ist ein Akrostichon? In meinem Lexikon (1964) heisst es: Gedicht, dessen Anfangsbuchstaben, -silben oder -worte der einzelnen Verse (von oben nach unten gelesen) ein Wort, einen Namen oder einen Vers bilden. Akrostichon (griechisch) = Versanfang

We have heard a great deal about the loneliness of the long-distance runner, so perhaps it is time to say a few words about the loneliness of another long-suffering figure: the inexpert skier. The inexpert skier is admittedly becoming rarer every day. Now that the sadistic procedures that once went by the name of skiing instruction are being replaced by more humane and reasonable methods, such as the use of shorter skis, the road from utter incapacity to comparative mastery has become shorter. All the same, inexpert skiers still form a minority that has a right to our sympathetic consideration, especially since there are some among them who, as a result of inequalities in the distribution of natural talent, are likely to remain inexpert for a long time to come. It is to these unfortunate victims of fate's injustice that the following paragraphs are dedicated.

In any skiing population, the two great categories of the expert and the inexpert can be distinguished with ease even by the unskilled observer, especially if he takes up his position at the top of the run. The expert stands for a few minutes on the mountain top, throned like an eagle, and waits for the public eye to be turned on him. When he feels that he is basking in the admiring or challenging glances of his fellows, he breaks into sudden action, shoots off down the slope and sweeps gracefully round break-neck bends. There is no sign whatever of effort on his face. While his skis rattle in vicious vibration over the hard escarpment, he stares dreamily into the valley, swings with perfect elegance on to the crest of an abrupt incline and disappears valleyward in a last flurry of nonchalant snow.

Not every figure, however, that stands silhouetted against the skyline is your expert. It may equally well be your novice, waiting, in this case, till the public eye is turned elsewhere, or in other words until the coast is clear.

The essential difference between the expert and the inexpert may be summarized as follows. The expert, in the absence of any lift, takes an hour to get up, and three minutes to ski down. If he were a thinking man, he would perhaps wonder if it is all worthwhile. But a thinking man rarely becomes an expert; and for the rest, *noblesse oblige*. The inexpert takes an hour and a half to get up, and an hour and a half to come down. Once he is up, indeed, he usually wishes he need not come down at all. But mountain-tops are inhospitable; and the fear of dishonour spurs him on. And after all, what a pity it would be to waste so much potential energy.

The principle applied in coming down a slope on skis is really very simple. Gravity ensures the initial down-hill motion in a straight line. The velocity of this motion can be reduced by turning the skis at an angle to the line of descent and tilting them so that their bottom edge meets with the resistance of the snow. This simple principle can be employed in a variety of ways.

The inexpert skier, however, seems from the first to be deserted by even the most elementary conceptions of applied dynamics. He is only aware of being shod with twice six foot of treachery on a quicksilver surface. The potential energy he thought it a pity to waste now turns out to be a perverse, ruthless and malicious force directed towards his undoing. It lies in wait for him as he slithers cautiously through the deeper snow; and as soon as he emerges on to the smooth-shaven surface of the *piste* it seizes him gleefully and impels him at rapidly rising speed towards his perdition.