

NEW ALPLAND FOR CANADA

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By ROBERT AYRE

HOW would you like to come out here in winter?" asked Joe Weiss. We were cutting across Maligne Lake in Curly Phillips' power boat, and, while the lake was cold and swept with gusts of cold rain, it rolled so liquidly from the prow and fell back in such spinning circles of rich purple that it seemed impossible that it could ever congeal into ice and lie dead and frozen under a pall of snow. And yet, when I looked at the mountains burdened forever with snow and ice, I knew that winter never left Maligne. It simply bided its time on the high steeps and in the remote chasms and in its proper month marched down into the valleys and across the lake and subdued all before it. It lay waste, but with beauty, for I could fancy a whiter, deeper snow on the mountain tops and a new contour on the lower slopes, and the green of the pines and fir trees sharpened to a keener edge of green; and I could see the great lake overdrifted with leagues of the purest white, under the sun dazzling and shot with blue shadows.

Thinking of all these things, I did not answer Joe. He kept his hand on the engine and peered ahead at the Opal Hills that always reminded me of Lord Dunsany and his "crumpled rose-leaf mountains."

I reflected on the hosts which fell upon Jasper every summer to seize for themselves its beauty. They came as early as May, some of them, when the ice was breaking up in Maligne and the snow was spread far down the hills; and some of them stayed as late as October, when the valleys were drenched with yellow and scarlet and maroon; but few of them knew the full beauty of Jasper, the passing of all the seasons. Some knew spring, and some knew summer, and some knew fall; and some were so fortunate as to know all of them but not many knew winter.

"Why not?" I began to wonder. True, the lodge is shut up and the greens and fairways of the golf course are crossed only by meandering elk; the tennis courts are forsaken; and the canoes that float on the shining lake are high and dry under the empty swimming tank; but there are hotels in the village and the mountains remain.

"I never knew such a country for ski-ing," said Joe Weiss. I listened while he went on to dilate on what he called "that royal sport."

"Ski-ing grows more popular every year," I agreed.

"Every year," said Joe, "hundreds of tourists from Canada and the United States visit Switzerland for the ski-ing. Not knowing," he added impressively, as he shut off the motor and let the boat's momentum carry it into the dock, "not knowing that we have within our own boundary a Switzerland."

"Ah! you should know, Joe," said I.

"It's quite true," he repeated as we walked up the hill to the chalet together.

Who should know better than Joe Weiss, himself a Swiss, who has climbed the Alps, and who has now, as a guide, philosopher, and friend adopted the Rockies in and out of Jasper Park for his own; who has hiked and climbed miles in the mountains about Maligne Lake to discover new Alplands and to get those beautiful photographs of his; and who, on skis, has discovered the Rockies in winter.

As we sat in the cosy chalet, contemplating the incomparable lake and the snowy mountain masses now sinking under the night, Joe told me of his ski trips in the Maligne and Brazeau countries. He illustrated with his bundle of photographs and with his own restless enthusiasm, an enthusiasm that was enough to excite anyone to go and do likewise.

"Four of us," said Joe, "made up a party and went out to have a few days' pow wow on skis at Maligne Lake. You may start out from Jasper, you know, and reach Maligne Lake chalet the same day. There you can rest in comfort for the night and proceed to Maligne Lake chalet in the morning."

"If winter sports are to be developed in Jasper, this is the logical place," I put in.

"The hills and lake would make a most ideal winter sports place," said Weiss, enthusiastically. "Everything necessary is here—slopes for toboggan and bob-sleigh runs, and we can leave the lake for the hockey player. The ski-runner is not confined to rinks, or toboggan slides—his skis are the keys to the winter Alps."

"With his feet he opens the doors," I thought, but I said nothing, for Joe was going full tilt.

"The smooth slopes, the grazing grounds of mountain sheep, goats and caribou in summer are ideally adapted to skiing."



MALIGNE LAKE, JASPER PARK

Not being a skier—yet—although I thought I could feel skis sprouting from my feet as the tempter went on—I questioned my own ability to follow mountain goats and caribou.

Joe flattered me by referring to that dizzy pinnacle behind The Thumb. As I thought how we had skidded down the shale steps and chased the nine goats below us, I began to catch some of Joe's excitement for sliding down the slopes in the snow. Yes, surely, skis were sprouting out of my feet.

Joe had no need to enlarge on the majesty of these mountains more ancient than the Alps. Here we were, in the midst of them; at our elbow, so to speak, lay the double humps of Charlton and Unwin; farther down the lake, Sampson, The Thumb, Warren and glacier-armored peaks innumerable and unnamed. He had no need to say anything about the comfort of the chalet for the hours of relaxation and rest for the gathering of new strength to approach the hills. Reading, playing cards, talking, whatever you like; or simply resting and gazing out of the window down the length of the lake of snow and ice.

"Surely it would be difficult to find a more wonderful outlook," said Joe, with a sort of reverence.

Two members of the party, Vernon and Douglas Jeffrey, had to leave for Jasper at the end of the week, but Joe Weiss and Ernie Niederer pushed on to explore toward Brazeau Lake.

"On March the eighth, a fine morning, the two of us start out, heavily loaded, for the adventure in the mountains," Joe continued. "Our course is to follow the shores of Maligne Lake up to the Narrows. Although we've made but twelve miles, we decide to hunt for a suitable camping place.

"It is not difficult to find good shelter; sufficient wood for the night is cut and a simple meal prepared. But there is no fear of getting sleep, for all the comfort is at the chalet. Our talk turns from one thing to another, till our eyelids are feeling heavy. Finally, we come to talk about huts and what comfort they offer to an explorer in the European Alps."

"This doesn't sound so much like temptation," I muttered.

"Oh, the huts will come here, too, in time," Joe was quick in defense of his beloved Maligne. "But I am speaking of exploring. The chalet here would be the centre of the winter sports. The visitors could ski all they wanted and come back to the chalet for warmth and rest every night."

"Morning arrives—?" I prompted.

"Morning arrives," the narrator agreed, "and at dawn we are busily engaged in preparing breakfast. Knowing what—or better, not knowing what—is ahead of us, we make an early start.

"We were going where no one had ever been before. Somewhere in the timber on the other side of Harry McLeod Glacier lay our goal. There was no such thing as information. We just went.

"The going was very good and from the head of the lake the river bed—at times as smooth as a white, paved road—was our course. We reached timberline at three o'clock in the afternoon. You can imagine what we saw. We had a full view of McLeod Glacier, and behind us lay a magnificent chain of mountain peaks, covered with snow and eternal ice, towering above our heads. How I prayed for a hut in that remote spot, so that the beauty could more readily belong to many others."

"But to think of the sensation of being there before the throngs," I suggested by way of comfort.

Joe smiled. "If there had been camp accommodations there," he said, "I would have spent days on that glacier. We continued our journey toward the summit and after three hours' steady climb, we reached the pass, approximately 9,300 feet. So perfect were terrain and snow conditions that I was tempted to have a run down it. It would have been a matter of a few minutes."

"The panoramic view from that pass," said Weiss, the alpinist and the photographer, "was such as is known only to mountaineers. The declining sun poured its beautifying light over the tops of the mountains, laving the peaks in gold and purple, and the two skiers sat there, alone in the great quietness, gazing at the sunset.

"The descent on the south side was a swift one. But night with its dark shadows was swifter yet, and we had to slacken our speed and make camp in the first batch of timber. We built a good fire and slept in our eiderdowns, sleeping and watching by turns."

Weiss looked me intently in the eyes. "If I had taken the advice of several people," he said, "I never would have known what opportunity the McLeod Glacier offered to the ski-runner. Ski-ing appeals to me and to all who enjoy exploration and wandering and the adventure of the hills. My advice to the many friends of winter sports is to see their own country first!"

"By that you mean, Ja—"

"Jasper, of course," he smiled.

"Next day, we proceeded in the direction of Brazeau Lake. It certainly was delightful to see, through the heavy forest, a cabin."

"The chimney sent forth a cheering smoke," recalled Joe, "for it was bread-baking, and surely no kettle ever boiled more quickly than that which was set

over the fire as two weary men sloughed off their packs and unfastened their skis. I know from my own experience of the trail—and that in the warm weather—how this tea tasted to Joe Weiss and Ernie Niederer. I know that the gods, idling all day in their insipid heaven, must find their nectar flat by comparison.

"Thanks to the warden at Brazeau, we were able to extend our stay for a full week," Joe went on. "In spite of park regulations, I went out for a hunt. I did not use my rifle, but my camera. Luck was on my side for, after a short climb, I discovered a flock of mountain sheep. Those hills are crowded with game; sheep, goats, moose, caribou and elk can be seen almost everywhere, and the pretty ptarmigan leave their prints in the snow.

"From here, I made a side-trip to Nigel Pass. There are no difficulties in the way of going right up to the icefields, for Nigel Pass is only a few miles from them. An approaching snowstorm drove me back to the cabin."

On March 18, the ski-runners bade good-bye to their kind host, Warden



BOW LAKE, CANADIAN ROCKIES

Matheson, and followed the trail through forest deep in snow, up to the sunny slopes of Poboktan Pass, 7,200 feet. Here again Joe Weiss waxed enthusiastic over the splendor of the mountain country, sunlit valleys, shadowed foothills and high peaks.

"Poboktan Pass," said he, "belongs to the arena of the four winds, for I saw the most peculiar snow drifts near the summit. Below the pass, toward the Waterfalls cabin, were huge walls of snow piled up by a fierce wind and fantastically carved."

With the intention of pushing on to the upper Sunwapta cabin, 10 miles beyond Waterfalls, the adventurers stopped at Waterfalls cabin only long enough to get a hurried meal. The trail between the two cabins was full of variety; all shapes of hills had to be conquered, as it plunged into the depths of the forest. Night came all too suddenly for them. It fell upon them when they were still miles from the Sunwapta cabin, and they forged ahead with even greater energy. To their delight, the moon came out of the clouds. "The

evening star," said Joe, who is, in his own way, a poet, "hung above the amber after-glow so soft, so brilliant that she seemed to bathe in her own silver light." But moon and star and after-glow were not enough to guide them to the cabin, which, as they afterwards discovered, lay hidden in the bush. However, knowing that there was another cabin, another ten miles on, they pressed forward, weary, but making the most of the moonlight in the snow.

Twenty-eight hours of steady going, day and night, made Warden Bowlin's cabin at Sunwapta doubly a haven. "And I cannot remember a better meal in my life!" said Joe. "The advice of our host to take a day's rest was obeyed, and it was there—in the Sunwapta cabin—that I made the acquaintance of Elinor Glyn."

After a side trip down the Sunwapta River and up the Athabaska to the branch of the Chaba, where they gazed on more marvellous pictures of what Joe had no hesitation in calling "God's masterwork, the mountains," they turned back to the cabin, rested, and pushed out on their skis to do the final lap of the strenuous journey.

"Athabaska Falls cabin was to be our next stop. Either the Athabaska River itself or the telephone line was our guide. The sun was still good for several views of supreme splendor at the Falls, so I decided to take advantage and expose what was left of my film material.

"Athabaska Falls cabin was equipped with a radio set, and it was a fascinating experience to be away up there in the snowy mountains listening to an orchestra in Nebraska, or a band in Seattle. Everything could be heard as clearly as if I was sitting at the elbows of the players. It may have taken days for Ernie Niederer and I to conquer the strongholds of the mountains in winter, but how easily that music leapt over the earth!

"We reached Jasper on the twenty-fourth of March—having left Maligne Lake chalet on the eighth. We enjoyed fine weather on the rest of the way, but for the last three miles, there was no snow at all. The skis had to be carried on our shoulders. Strange to be on skis for 200 to 250 miles and not to be able to finish the last lap on them!"

"Well, Joe, all I can say is, I envy you," said I, as I studied a photograph of the snowy trail leading off through the heavy-laden white woods to the distant high passes that looked down over miles of tossed and gleaming mountains.

"Any average ski-runner would be able to undertake such a tour," Joe replied. "Ski-ing," he said, as he gathered up his photographs, "is simple and subtle. It is simple, because the movement owes nothing to machinery; between the ski-runner and the hillside there is nothing but the sensitive ash, which responds to every change of rhythm in the slope. It is subtle, because the snow is subtle; the hills are never the same, and the snow is never the same. Every run is a new discovery, every snowfall a new creation."

OUR LADY SKI RUNNERS OF THE WEST

AN APPRECIATION by RUDOLPH J. VERNE

THE many ski clubs all over the vast western territory are indeed justly proud over the splendid response of the fair sex when the ski clarion echoes down from the snow-covered mountains. In several clubs the ladies are numerically on even terms with the men and they show as keen an interest in the sport. Way up north near the Yukon-Alaska border at beautiful Burns Lake, we got some great thrills when watching the splendid performances of Gertie Wahman, the pride of the Omineca Ski Club, who won both the jumping and the racing events in great style at the local ski club British Columbia championship carnival. Isabel Marshal, Ella Sorli, Jean Linton, Irene Smith, Marjorie Stanyer, Myrtle Gerow, 12 to 15 years' youngsters, were all proud prize winners of the Club members, showing great talent, thanks to the able coaching of their popular club captain and Western title holder, Pete Sandnes.