

hillside white with fresh snow where young people are ski-ing is a buoyant sight. Pleasant even is the young girl whose buxomness fills her swathes of scarfs, sweaters, and leggings with abundant curves, and who, when she makes an ingenuous tumble, strikes the earth with a rich corporeal thump.

When he has learned to maintain himself in the face of earth, sky, and onlookers, what pleasure even a duffer may derive from ski-ing! It brings him into touch with those primal realities for which our senses are so often starved: velocity, for example. Ten times as much speed mechanically bought in a motor car is not worth half his intimate acquaintance with it as he plunges down what seems an insanely steep slope. Then he feels motion in its elemental reality gathering under his feet and beating at his temples. He is alone with the goddess of speed, no artificial mechanism thrust between them. Peril comes and salutes him in her own person, threatening him with a good primitive tumble; and sweet is that danger! A dozen times in his whizzing descent he gives up all for lost as balance takes wing and flies away; and a dozen times he recovers and finds himself still miraculously on his feet. And if, finally, he manages a turn and brings himself to a well-calculated halt, he has won kingdoms and conquered provinces!

Presently the duffer must expect to be invited by an attractive hostess to bring his skis along on a week-end party; and then let him beware. She seems, perhaps, an unassuming, guileless, friendly young woman, obviously soft and fragile in figure; it is impossible to picture her roughing it on skis. She disclaims all ability, and declares that she expects to profit much by the example and teaching of her guests.

And so, on a dazzlingly bright afternoon early in the new year, the duffer finds himself trudging through a foot of new snow in company with a dozen gayly clad figures who seem alarmingly expert. And he notices that his hostess, although her figure is as soft and shrinking as ever, moves with enviable litheness and speed through the wood lot and toward the open pasture that drops like a cliff to another wood lot below. Her costume particularly detains his eye: it is as

bright and jaunty as she is herself. He wonders if there is a glint of amusement in her gaze as she looks about and sees him shuffling along in the rear of the party.

At last they all reach the top of the hill. It looks staggeringly long and steep, and it stops abruptly at a stone wall at the bottom. No room to come comfortably to a halt by the simple means of running down like a clock. Like a flock of bright birds the members of the party begin to float down the slope. He sees his hostess perform a particularly difficult turn in mid-flight with a grace which is nothing less than sinful. There is nothing to do but follow. It is no time to show the white feather. He is off. Below—far, far below—his eye discerns with horrid fixity a neat pile of cordwood directly in his path. How murderously steep is the hill! What speed! Faces, pale behind a fine blowing spray of snow, gaze at him in some astonishment as he hurtles past. The wood-pile expands with the speed of an approaching meteor. He sees with preternatural acuteness of vision the fine tracery of wormholes where the bark has peeled from the logs. Something must be done on the instant to avert the breaking of every bone in his body. Something—but what? He tries to think of just how it was that he extended one foot and threw his weight on it to make a beautifully successful turn and stop. But he is moving at much too fast a clip even to contemplate such reckless experiments now.

Then suddenly it is all over. He need not have worried. The forces that have so often brought him unexpectedly to earth intend to reserve him for further sport. They will not lightly allow his neck to be broken. His right ski strikes a spot swept bare by the wind, and slows abruptly; his left ski seems to shoot ahead with redoubled speed. For an instant earth, sky, woods, and snowy pasture whirl together in a maelstrom which annihilates every reality except pure speed. Then he is deep, fathoms deep, in a cold white sea that pierces every crevice of his clothing and springs ingeniously into his ears, eyes, and hair. But this is normal; this is expected. It may be embarrassing, but he can endure it. He has put up with it many times before; it is just being a duffer on skis.

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An interesting ski race has recently been instituted in Norway as an annual event. The "Birkebeiner" Loipe, from Hamar to Trondjhem, in memory of the "Birkebeiner"

who saved King Sverre's son, Haakonson, in 1205, by carrying the Prince over that distance on skis, 58 kilometres. The winner was presented with a silver cup 200 years old.