

## Women Skiers at Zakopane

By Marion Miller

TEN YEARS ago the first FIS races were held at Zakopane. Then there were no separate events for women, but two English girls, by racing with the men and beating more than two score of the stronger sex, first "put racing on the map for women," to quote an American writer. This year's World Championship, held also at Zakopane in February, thus commemorated not only the tenth anniversary of FIS races but also the true beginning of women's ski-racing.

During the last ten years women have taken their place more and more firmly in international ski-ing. Some are now able to put up performances consistently on a par with men, but not all. Because of these few we have slightly shorter downhill courses, starting a few hundred feet lower than the men, and slightly modified slalom courses. An easier test is supposedly our perquisite but it would never do for a woman to finish say tenth among the men in a World Championship. There is also a school of thought advocating entirely different race courses for women than those assigned to men and many factors favourable to such an adjustment of the international racing rules. This year in final recognition of the place women have made for themselves in this field Kini Maillart, of exploring and writing fame, took her seat on the international committee to represent our interests.

So, instead of another pen writing another description of another World's Championship, I would rather tell, that you may know them better, of some of the women skiers who came to Zakopane in the year nineteen hundred and thirty-nine. Various countries were represented, various walks of life, but all had one thing in common—ski-ing, a very stable base for friendship!

The Germans as a whole, and Cristel Cranz as an individual, should rank first today whenever women skiers are mentioned. The only way to describe her running is to say that she skis like a man and must have legs made of cast iron. But behind all her successes are years, and months of each year, of hard, intensive training, also the original schooling of that high priest of modern technique, Seelos. She is occasionally beaten in downhill but never in the combined results and, with all her medals, has remained essentially simple and unspoilt. Of how many in her place could the same be said! In the last year or so she has acquired excellent English which I learnt only after laboriously stumbling through a German greeting. Kate Grassegger is a more fluid and elegant

runner than Cristel. The first time I saw her race it was with long plaits as thick as your wrist swinging well below her waist (vorlager wasn't quite so extreme then!) By now, instead of winning laurels in the sporting field, she will have assumed the duty of bearing sturdy sons for the fatherland. Then two former Austrian racers, Helga Goedl and Hilda Walter, joined German ranks this year winning their just places in the team along with Lisa Resch. Teuton superiority on the slalom slope is due to the fact that all their turns are so perfectly executed and placed that even if they slip it is to fall through the flags, losing a minimum of seconds, while the less efficient fall outside, sliding well below the doors, which entails heavier consequences.

Two Norwegians—Elisabeth Spockeli and Laila Schou-Nilson. Perhaps the only woman deserving the title athlete, Laila excels in any sport she attempts, from speed-skating to tennis (she played at Wimbledon last summer). In 1936 the Norwegian team brought her to Middle Europe with them for training. She surpassed expectations, won her place on the Olympic team and the downhill race at Garmisch to boot. She has a throaty, almost unfeminine voice, is perhaps the hardest to know of all ski-ing women, but she's a grand person.

Of the Swiss came Erna Steuri, usually seen in spotless knife-creased white trousers. Erna, a person of few words, is a Grindelwalder and, as such, rates a particularly soft spot in my heart. She never seems to need to train in order to accustom herself to high speeds, can teach her class of small children for a week then go off and win, or nearly win, a big race. She had a wonderful trip to America last spring. Elvira Osirnig wore "vorlagers" years before other women. She has the distinction of looking and feeling completely at home on the glassiest of ice, maybe due to the famous St. Moritz sun. Nini von Arx, David Zogg's sister, is the one person who goes on becoming better each year. She has a charming personality. Switzerland's pocket edition first class skier, Gritli Schaad, has everyone's affection. Her determination and skill have gone far already.

The English girls came in pale blue hooded and beflagged jackets. Incongruously enough the Union Jack drew no recognition from the Polish crowds, while the passing of a Maple Leaf brought gratifying shrieks of "Kanada." Maybe as it is the one country whose name remains the same in all languages! Helen Blane, their keen and competent captain, can tour or mountain climb in the guise of a tousle-headed

ragamuffin and turn into the smartest of Londoners overnight. Diminutive "Pip" (Phillipa Harison) is the owner of minute skis that have forced their way with sheer grit to lots of victories. "Nigs," of Palmer-Tompkinson family fame, was bred on Parsenn ground, takes the straightest line every time and what's more holds it. "Saus" Roe brought new hope to British ski-ing when, as a newcomer, (one of "Bill's" finds), she came tenth in an FIS and fifth in her first AK.

L'Equipe de France: Nicole Vilan, Françoise Matussiere, Crik de la Frésange and Louis Agnel's sister, Cecile—such decorative young sprites for all their twittering that it is indeed hard to realise that they rank among our best racers. Wait 'till you see them ski: it is grace balanced by perfect precision. Much of the credit is due René Laforgue.

Mai Nielson, under the blue and yellow Swedish flag, is a real elf of the woods, a glint of reddish gold curls and the tiniest of freckled noses peeping out 'neath a pointed cap, and the

happiest giggle you have ever heard. According to many who should know, Mai has one of the very next World Championships in her pocket. She evolved first from the Arlberg school.

Last, but certainly not least, our Polish hostesses, wiry children of the mountains with a fighting gleam in their eyes and enviable competence in dealing with "polish ice." One of them, the gentle sixteen-year-old Djulka, is an equally good runner but perhaps lacks some of the fire and fight of the Tatras born girls. What is to be the fate of these Polish friends we may never see again?

Names and names, not all the best women skiers of today, but many more than came to Zakopane in 1929. When, ten years hence, some of these names will recall to mind individual achievements and others merely women skiers I feel that Doreen Elliot and Durel Sale-Barker will still be remembered as the first great women ski racers and perhaps the World Championships of 1939 will have gone down in ski-ing history as the "Battle of Zakopane."

## The Habitant learns to Ski

By Louis Baxter in the "St. Sauveur Year Book"

W'en I was young boy on de ferme  
Dat's many year ago,  
I wear racquettes on bot' my feets  
For walk upon de snow.  
Dat's mos' bes' way for travel roun'  
On montagne an' prairie  
For hunt de rabbit on de hill  
Or visit les amies.

But now, de whole beezness is change,  
De snowshoe she's partie,  
An' everyone on mv village  
Was travel on de ski.  
De leetle boy, jus' four year ole  
An' same, de ole grand père,  
I see dem slide on mountain side  
For danger, dey don' care!

De ski, dat's funny kin' of 'ting,  
Two piece of board, voila!  
You feex dat on de feets an' push  
Wit' bamboo pole, comme ça.  
Dat's moche more faster dan racquette  
For walk on top de snow,  
An' w'en you're passin' on de hill  
Sapré tonnerre, you go!

I try for ski firse tam las' year,  
I'm tak de lesson too  
An' I can tole you dees ma fren'  
De ski, she can fool you!  
Dey start for teach me snow plow turn,  
I try de bes' I know,  
An' everybody laugh lak H—  
For see me eat de snow.

I am surprise w'en I fin' out  
How moche dere is for learn,  
Swing de shoulder an' change de weight  
For do de Christie turn,  
An' all de 'tings dats happen w'en  
You do not bend de knee,  
Its tak a lot of what you got  
For learnin' how to ski.

But purty soon, I am improve  
Not scare for go too fas'  
De body-swing, dat's funny 'ting,  
She's come to me at las'.  
So affer dat, I'm leffer go  
Dey pu t me in de race,  
An' sapristi, now w'at you 'tink  
I finish on firse place.

An' all de fellow on ma Club  
Was very moche excite,  
Dey pay de treat so many tam  
I very near come tight.  
W'en I go home my wife she say:  
"You look lak sapré fou  
"Firse 'ting you know, you crazy mans  
"Tu vas le casser l'cou."

I say to her: "Ecoute chérie,  
"An' try for onnerstan,  
"Your husbum, he jus' win ski race  
"An' now he's famous man."  
So now, ma fren', I say to you,  
I'm ole man, sapristi,  
An' dat bagosh, she's prove for sure  
You're not too ole for ski!