

# Swiss ribbon industry

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on the bob-sleigh, and gave the fifth place to one who could manipulate the steel brakes.

Obliging Swiss helped to strap the circular steel discs over my elbows, knees and hands. A leather crash helmet was pulled over my head. Then I was led to the infernal red bob-sleigh on which I and four others were to hurtle and swirl down the ice-slope. In the quietude of these preparations I visualised again that crash at Sunny Corner and the five figures flung against the ice wall.

"The record speed so far is 31 seconds," said an onlooker to the steerer. "You'll have to go some to beat that."

The steerer nodded, a grim expression on his face. Stretching myself out on the bob-sleigh with the others, I took a final glance at the snow-covered mountains towering above, the trees powdered in white, and the stark blue sky swimming in sunshine.

"Are you ready?" someone shouted.

The steerer, stretched head foremost grasped the wheel. The rest of us, sprawled behind, held ourselves tense. I felt my hands clutching the rail of cold steel with the tightness of terror.

"Go!"

Slowly we slithered forward. We gently bumped down a snow slope. The next moment there was a whirl of steel against ice, and we were on the run proper. I heard a bell clang loudly, and realised that we had gone past the starting post.

The whirl had now risen to a roar. By just raising my head and peering across the back of the man sprawled before me I could see the terrifying slope down which we were hurtling.

"Right!" yelled the steerer.

Mechanically we all swung our bodies to the right and were round a curve before I had realised it.

"Straight!" yelled the steerer.

The five bodies swung back again. Now we were slithering down at break-neck speed to that awe-inspiring Sunny Corner. Would we get round it? The ice banks flashed past. There came a long-drawn-out howl of a Swiss boy perched on the snow slopes above, giving a warning that a bob-sleigh was travelling.

"Right!" yelled the steerer.

We just heard his voice above the roar of steel on the ice slopes and swung our bodies to the command.

I glimpsed that ice wall above my head and the spectators dotted like dolls. Up—up—climbed the sleigh. Now we were sixteen feet high on that wall of ice, hanging like flies. The steerer twisted the wheel viciously. We were falling—falling—and with a roar slithered down the narrow slope towards the next bend. We had got through.

In a few seconds we were swirling round Horse Shoe Bend. Powdered ice and snow smothered my back, and flakes of ice tore against the hands gripping the sleigh. We were hurtling along at over forty miles an hour, and the sleigh was rocking dangerously.

"Brakes!" yelled the steerer, but it was too late. I felt a jerk at my waist, I was nearly torn off the sleigh, and my nailed boots were cutting the ice. One swift glance over my shoulder and I realised that the man behind had been flung off.

I clung on all the more desperately. My eyes were streaming tears with the cold wind, and I was smothered in snow. Then a bell clanged again, and with a sigh of relief I realised we had passed the winning-post. The sleigh slithered to a standstill.

"Thirty-five point seven seconds," growled the steerer despondently. "At least five seconds too many."

And I felt his eye upon me.

A telephone message came through that our number five had been picked up unhurt but blaspheming. The thrill was over. We were hitched to a horse-drawn sleigh and dragged up the long hill. I dozed with the others in the sunshine. It was the finest half-minute thrill I have ever experienced.

Then we will turn to the *Morning Post*, 18th Jan., in which Marthe Baylis writes of

#### Facing the Puck at St. Moritz:

Jingling bells round the corner—four hefty horses gay with plumes.

The sleigh waits for us at the door. Lazy members of the party settle themselves amongst the fur rugs. Energetic ones take to the tailing seat trailing on the uneven length of a rope.

There are cheers and jeers as we bump and skid along the worn-out and frozen snow of the village street, with more than occasional spills.

In a flurry of snow and jokes we wend our way to St. Moritz, knowing full well that our sleigh is loaded with provisions and good beer from Hell—the perfectly genuine name of the village where it appears to be manufactured.

All these are essential ingredients to the

perfect enjoyment of an ice hockey match, at least from the onlooker's point of view, for we arrive ripe with emotion and exertion.

We picnic in the Stadium, alive with bright flags flicked about by the keen breeze, and as our feast progresses we look with growing disdain upon the Palace de Luxe growing to disgorge an over-fed and sleepy public.

The first spectators trickle along in a galaxy of fat and fur coats. Herr Berlin wears the inevitable Tyrolean feather. Frau's taste in colour is comprehensive and obvious. Russians rub elbows with Italians; Scandinavians mingle "ya's" with Austrians; there is a Japanese here and there, and an outstanding sprinkling of "Says," "Guesses," and "Yeps."

Pretty women bring hot water bottles to keep their hands warm beneath multiple rugs, much to the indignation of real hockey fans, who know that clapping gives a sting to the most manicured fingers.

A sudden silence. The challenging team takes the ice first. Players try their form with an odd shot at goal. Here comes the other team in the brightest of rigs and with the best looking defence in the world, chewing for dear life.

The referee is not quite so magnificent, already tinged with the insignificance of a man who is doomed to appear in everybody's way.

The puck is faced, the game starts. The two forwards and the centre chase it up the rink in a series of passes. Then it is lost, checked, carried back by the other team.

"Skate, man, skate," shouts a Canadian.

"Check him early," shouts another supporter, and we all join in a roar, swelling and dying as the puck travels.

Players crash along the boards or dart forward at lightning speed, jumping a stick, wiping fifteen yards of the rink with one fall, for ever pressing an attack or skating backwards at full speed to defend their endangered side.

Excitement become tense. Spectators stand. The clock rings first half-time. Many sigh with relief, and others get rid of their suppressed feelings in an inter-party fight between opposing supporters.

The referee's whistle restores comparative calm, but we have all singled out our favourite players, and, as they handle the puck, we shout encouragement to their deaf ears:

"Come on, Campbell" . . . "Buck up, Earl!"

We all try to surpass one another by volume of voice until Young Bimp, who resents having his swamped (he is such a refined connoisseur that he only delivers technical orations) vents his disgust at our behaviour by treacherously slipping snow down his sister's back.

This procures a brief interlude. However, a promising defence takes the puck up in dangerous style: a lightning flick . . . the padded giant of a goalkeeper sprawls on the ice, hits it away . . . "Well saved. . . Well saved, goalie!"

Half-time again. Slices of lemon and hot punch for the teams. They skate stiffly to the pavilion, perspiration dripping from foreheads, exhaustion heaving between tight ribs, breathless, anaesthetised to physical pain.

Pale sunshine crawls away from our side of the Stadium. The gigantic cold breath of the mountain blows upon us. Feet stamp, hands clap. The last period of the game is a test of endurance even for spectators.

The teams change sides. Blinded by the sinking sun, the goalkeeper misses the puck. . . Goal. . . Goal. . . Delirious enthusiasm. Come on, boys. . .

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## SWISS RIBBON INDUSTRY

Basle possesses the most ancient branch of the Swiss textile industry: silk ribbon weaving.

In 1570 a group of refugees, whom religious persecution had driven from their country, settled down in Basle and started to weave ribbons. To-day Basle is still the business center of the principal ribbon manufacturers. Weaving is done in factories and at home. This applies to the simplest smooth ribbon as well as to the richest brocade ribbon. This industry in the home was created in the 17th century and is at present restricted to the valleys of the Canton of Basle. It enjoyed formerly a far greater extension and occupied the inhabitants of the Cantons of Solothurn and Aargau as well; now there remain but very few looms in the latter districts. The inhabitants of the valleys of the Canton of Basle, however, are still strongly attached to ribbon weaving. For generations they have inherited a liking for this industry, as well as great technical skill, to which may be attributed the high grade quality and handsome finish of their articles.

The principal ribbon manufacturers are in Basle itself and in various towns of the Canton. The first concentration of the ribbon industry began towards 1830 and was brought about by the invention of steam looms and machinery. This tendency decreased later owing to the introduction of electricity throughout the country-side which, together with other technical improvements, made it possible to run the looms with electric engines. The looms throughout the Canton of Basle belong to the Basle ribbon manufacturers. These factories remain in constant contact with the weavers of the Basle country-side and deliveries are promptly made by means of an extremely well organized transport service.

At the beginning of our century ribbon weaving gave employment to 15,000 workers and was one of the most important branches of the Swiss textile industry. But in later years this trade was destined to suffer severe blows. Being directly dependent on the fluctuations of the fashion, ribbon manufacturers often found themselves obliged to curtail their production. To-day this industry is undergoing a serious crisis, beginning in 1920 and the end of which cannot yet be predicted. This crisis may be attributed to two determining factors: the extreme simplicity of ladies' clothes and underwear, the small felt hats the stylishness of which resides in the cut and line, and short hair have reduced the use of ribbon to a minimum. It is encouraging to note, however, that the new fashion advocates longer and more elaborate frocks, tasteful and elegant in line, which are frequently trimmed with large bows and broad insertions.

The second factor to which the present crisis may be attributed is the increasing vogue of artificial silk, which has strongly affected the whole textile industry. The handsome pure silk ribbon is now replaced by artificial silk ribbon. The demand of the clientele of to-day is for cheap artificial silk goods, so that the average value of Switzerland's ribbon exports, attaining formerly 10,000 frs. per q. dropped in the course of the last few years to 2,500 to 3,000.—frs. The Basle ribbon industry has undergone a complete transformation and is able to fulfil all the requirements of its clientele. Manufacturers are now making high grade artificial silk ribbon and they have acquired a wide experience in the working and treatment of artificial silks.

Still another unfavourable factor is the wholesale trade which, being in a bad position in a great many countries, is therefore unable to undertake or maintain a publicity campaign in favour of the ribbon industry.

Although ribbons enjoy but little vogue to-day, they are not entirely forgotten, and they serve many purposes independently of fashion. Nothing can replace them to make an artistic bow tied around a gift, be it on a bouquet, a small package or a dainty box of sweets. Sofa cushions are often trimmed with ribbon, and many hand-made objects cannot do without them, such as lamp-shades, handbags, artificial flowers, garters, slippers, socks, baby clothes, etc. Silk bows and hair ribbon are again being worn in spite of the prevailing fashion of short hair.

The Basle ribbon industry is doing its best to satisfy its clientele. Manufacturers endeavour to adapt design and colour combinations to the taste of a most elegant clientele; the great variety of their articles enables them to please all their customers, and as regards prices, they can successfully compete with foreign concerns. S.I.T.

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