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Flivver, Canoe, Pram and Taxi Combined in the Luge, Joy of Everybody in Switzerland

Chamby sur Montreux, Switzerland.—The luge is the Swiss flivver. It is also the Swiss canoe, the Swiss horse-and-buggy, the Swiss pram and the Swiss combination riding horse and taxi. Luge is pronounced looge, and is a short, stout sled of hickory built on the pattern of little girls' sleds in Canada.

You realize the omnipotence of the luge when on a bright Sunday you see all of Switzerland, from old grandmothers to street children, coasting solemnly down the steep mountain roads, sitting on these little elevated pancakes with the same tense expression on all their faces. They steer with their feet stuck straight out in front and come down a twelve-mile run at a speed of from twelve to thirty miles an hour.

Swiss railroads run special trains for lugeurs between Montreux, at the edge of Lake Geneva, and the top of Col du Sonloup, a mountain 4,000 feet above sea level. Twelve trains a day are packed on Sunday, with families and their sleds. They put up their lunch, buy an all-day ticket, good for any number of rides on the winding, climbing, Bernese Oberland railway, and then spend the day sliding gloriously down the long, icy mountain road.

Steering a luge takes about as long to learn as riding a bicycle. You get on the sled, lean far back and the luge commences to move down the icy road. If it starts to sheer off to the right, you drop your left leg and if it goes too far to the left, you let your right foot drag. Your feet are sticking straight out before you. That is all there is to steering, but there is a great deal more to keeping your nerve.

You go down a long steep stretch of road flanked by a six-hundred-foot drop-off on the left and bordered by a line of trees on the right. The sled goes fast from the start and soon it is rushing faster than anything you have ever felt. You are sitting absolutely unsupported, only ten inches above the ice, and the road is feeding past you like a movie film. The sled you are sitting on is only just large enough to make a seat and is rushing at motorcar speed toward a sharp curve. If you lean your body away from the curve and drop the right foot, the luge will swing around the curve in a slither of ice and drop shooting down the next slope. If you upset on a turn, you are hurled into a snowbank or go shooting down the road, lugeing along on various plane surfaces of your anatomy.

Additional hazards are provided for the lugeurs by hay sleds and wood sleds. These have long, curved-up runners, and are used to haul the hay down from the mountain meadows where it was cut and cured in the summer, or to bring down great loads of firewood and faggots cut in the forests. They are big, slow-moving sledges and are pulled by their drivers, who haul them by the long curved-up runners and pull themselves up in front of their loads to coast down the steepest slopes.

Because there are many lugeurs, the men with the hay and wood sleds get tired of pulling their loads to one side when they hear a lugeur come shooting down, shouting for the right of

way. A lugeur at thirty miles an hour, with no brakes but his feet, has the option of hitting the sleds ahead of him or shooting off the road. It is considered a very bad omen to hit a wood sled.

There is a British colony at Bellaria, near Vevcy, in the canton of Vaud, on Lake Geneva. The two apartment buildings they live in are at the foot of the mountains and the British are nearly all quite rabid lugeurs. They can leave Bellaria, where there will be no snow and a mild, springlike breeze, and in half an hour by the train be up in the mountain where there are fast, frozen roads and thirty inches of snow on the level. Yet the air is so dry and the sun shines so brightly that while the Bellarians are waiting for a train at Chamby, halfway up the mountain to Sonloup, they have tea out of doors in the afternoon in perfect comfort clad in nothing heavier than sports clothes.

The road from Chamby to Montreux is very steep and fairly dangerous for lugeing. It is, however, one of the favorite runs of the Britons from Bellaria, who take it nightly on their way home to their comfortable apartment buildings just above the lake. This makes some very interesting pictures, as the road is only used by the most daring lugeurs.

One wonderful sight is to see the ex-military governor of Khartoum seated on a sled that looks about the size of a postage stamp, his feet stuck straight out at the sides, his hands in back of him, charging a smother of ice dust down the steep, high-walled road with his muffler straight out behind him in the wind and a cherubic smile on his face while all the street urchins of Montreux spread against the walls and cheer him wildly as he passes.

It is easy to understand how the British have such a great Empire after you have seen them luge.