

TYROLEAN JOURNAL

TYROLEAN JOURNAL is the day-to-day record of a year spent in the remote mountain village of Ehrwald in the Austrian Tyrol. The author lived with the villagers, sharing their work and play, their fun and anxieties, and so is able to

give a picture of life in that "land of mountains" as it really is, rather than as the tourist sees it.

For five months the village lay buried under snow; but snow for the ski-er is one thing and for the mountain peasant-farmer it is quite another. Yet if, during the long, white, winter months, the Tyrolean peasants' lot was a hard one, the author discovered that they knew well enough how to relieve it by plenty of gaiety: some of the happiest entries in this Journal tell of the various festivals for which the country is famous, including the great Nassereith carnival of *Schellenlaufen*, with its grotesque wooden masks and glittering dresses, its enormous bells and all-day dancing in the snow.

Ehrwald is three thousand feet up, and almost its only crops are hay and potatoes, its only wealth the numerous cows and oxen. A mechanised agriculture is out of the question in such a village; and so the hay-harvest—the peak activity of the year—has to be done entirely by hand. Some of the slopes are so steep that the mowers have to wear crampons on their boots and the hay has to be carried in wicker panniers on their backs.

The Tyrol has always been especially renowned for its lavish display of alpine flowers in the spring; from the crocuses that bloom under the melting snow to the gentians that crowd over the thin turf on the heights; and the author has much to say of these and of his adventures in tracking down some of the rarer kinds. But the peasant, the author found, is only interested in those flowers that involve danger in the picking, for he is never happier than when he is trying out his skill on the mountains.

Here, then, is the high Tyrol as the author saw it through the four seasons—a portrait of one of the loveliest regions in mid-Europe and of a people as courteous as they are tough, as humorous as they are hard-living. The skill in wood-carving, the love of singing and dancing and play-acting, the zest in traditional customs and rituals, the native songs and the native dishes—all are here in this colourful Tyrolean story as told by a writer well-known for his faithful recordings of the country scene.

By C. Henry
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