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passed through the midst of pine and larch woods whose branches held glittering burdens of freshly fallen snow. Frozen rivulets hung in milk-white rigidity from cliffs of iron-grey limestone. The sky above took on a deeper blue; the air they breathed became momentarily keener, drier, and more vitalizing.

"We shan't get near them at this rate," grumbled Meyer, as the cog-wheel forced the sleigh up the zig-zag road with increasing labour and decreasing speed.

"The road is as steep for them as it is for us," retorted Saunders; "when we get to the top of the Madchen Pass we can shut off our engines and coast like the wind."

There was another period of silence, during which the sleigh made fair progress on its lowest gear. Then Meyer voiced his thoughts:

"What's Cyril going to do with Karl?"

"There are more ways than one of killing a cat," was Saunders' grim rejoinder.

"You think——"

"I THINK that if the boy resists or tries to escape he will be done away with. Fortunately he has an old head on young shoulders, and will not attempt the impossible."

"Then his life is safe?" said Meyer.

"As safe as mine was in the 'Persian Vaults' yesterday; as safe as yours would be to-morrow if Cyril were Regent. No, he is in great danger, but the Arch-duke can hardly commit murder under the very eyes of the boy's mother. I think I see the situation. Cyril, who can play the part of the bluff, kindly gentleman, has a story of a plot against the lad's life. The ex-Queen, hysterically emotional, weeping I'll swear, entreats her offspring to trust the maligned Arch-duke. Karl, realizing that if it is necessary to yield it is preferable to do so without any show of resistance, meets them half-way. The flight to Wolfsnaden is commenced. It is our part to see that the journey is never completed."

"If we don't go any faster than this," said Meyer, "our part will be only a pious aspiration."

"That is an hypothesis we need not consider," said Saunders cheerily. "Here we are at the top of the Madchen Pass."

Adolf changed his gear, and the sleigh leaped forward down the smooth incline. Then as the gradient sharpened he shut off the engines, and the car plunged down the favouring track with an exhilarating rush. Adolf applied his brake judiciously and firmly as they neared the sharp bends of the zigzagging descent, releasing it as they swung round to a fresh piece of road, and letting his craft rip down the straight like a wild thing coursing for its life. The experience was thrilling enough for the most jaded nerves. Even Meyer, nervously gripping his seat, his eyes streaming with water, could not remain insensible to the bracing rapture of their jolting flight.

"We must be gaining now," he said.

"There they are!" cried Saunders.

"Where?"

On their right was a wall of almost perpendicular rock, and on their left a sheer snow slope of many hundred feet. At the bottom of this slope ran the highway, bent back parallel to the road they themselves were taking. And on this highway, far below them, was the black dot which had drawn the exclamation from Saunders' lips. General Meyer wiped his streaming eyes, and trained his field-glasses in the direction indicated by his companion's finger.

"It's our friend Cyril all right," he said. "I can see his black beasts galloping like the devil. They are coming this way."

"This way!"

"Yes. We are moving along one arm of a big zig-zag and they are moving along another. In five or ten minutes they will be directly beneath us."

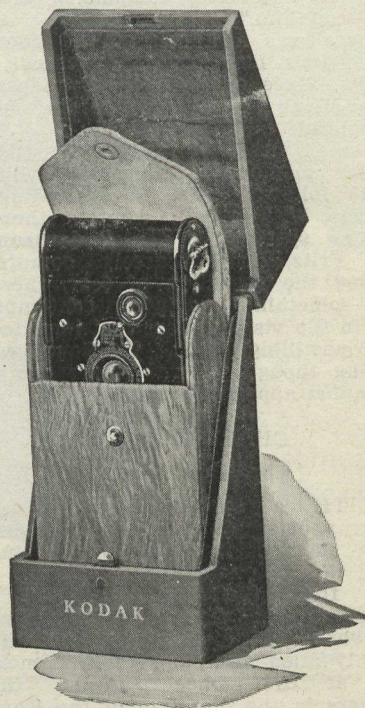
"How long will it take us to catch them up?" asked Saunders.

Meyer shook his head.

"Half an hour—three-quarters more likely," he said. "Anyhow they can get to Zuderns before we can come up with them."

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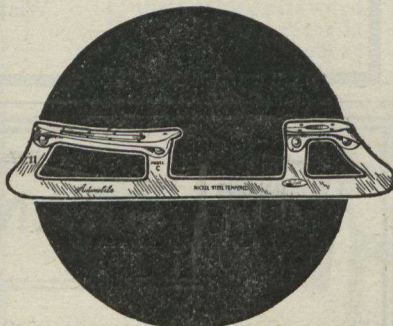
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