

A TYROLEAN FESTIVAL.

How "Race of Phantoms" is Annually Celebrated in Remote Region.

The Passion Play at Oberammergau has become world famous, and tourists from three continents now journey to that remote Bavarian village to witness the solemn drama there performed; but less than fifty miles away, beyond the curtain of mountains and across the Austrian frontier, there survives yet another ancient celebration, less solemn, but no less traditional than that of Oberammergau. Here in the little mountain hamlet of Imst, as yet



A SQUIRTER.

undiscovered by the tourist. Tyrolean mountaineers observe Shrove Tuesday with ceremonies that recall Mardi Gras and the Carnival at Rome. "Schemenlaufen," the "Race of Phantoms," they name this weird old ceremony, many of the features of which are half a thousand years old. Far below in the fertile Innthal, the railroad, binding Switzerland, France and Austria together, typifies twentieth century activity, but above in Imst, sitting on



A PRETTY MILK MAIDEN.

the shoulder of the Lech Alps, for at least one day in the year, life is mediæval and legend rather than a daily newspaper rules supreme.

With the same breathless anticipation with which the American boy looks forward to the Fourth of July the youth and the age of Imst alike await the coming of "Schemenlaufen." For many a week before the holiday arrives there is busy preparation. Ancient masks, the heirlooms of uncounted generations, are brought forth. Costumes that have graced the festival for several hundred years are prepared for still another holiday, while newer costumes are designed for that portion of the ceremony that is modern. Long before dawn on the day of the holiday the trains from Innsbruck, far down the valley, trundle up the eager visitors, and before the sun is fairly above the snow-capped Alps the village is afoot. Of a sudden doors begin to open mysteriously and strangely



THE "ROLLER" AND "SCHELLER," WITH MASK AND HEADRESS.
Photographs by Josef Sonnweber, Imst, Tyrol.

garbed figures, dim and mysterious in the gray of the morning, begin to slip out. Then, without warning, the clear note of reveille sounds forth and goes crashing and booming through the mountain clefts behind.

Even as these dim old world ghosts, stirred by the note of reveille, begin to flit, a herald, splendidly equipped and mounted, riding forth as if from the pages of a romance of the age of chivalry, suddenly clatters down the street, halts, and with a flourish of trumpets announces the arrival of "Schemenlaufen." He describes its glory and its tradition, while the villagers, who have heard the same tale, some of them for threescore years, listen respectfully to this surviving formality. Then, while the herald's voice is still heard in the street, the strange figures suddenly increase, and then a band comes booming round the corner, and with its advent the carnival has come. But as the band passes another hush falls on the crowd, the preliminary ceremony, "Figateer," as they call it, is thus ended and the maskers retire to complete their preparations for the coming of the real celebration.

Not until high noon, certainly an odd time for ghosts to walk, does the strange topsy turvy world actually assert itself. In the mean time masked figures, with due solemnity, appear before the village officials, remove their masks and submit to registration. Johann may be fetch-

ingly adorned to play the part of a devil or sorcerer, but he must meekly submit to unmasking and allowing the authorities to record his identification. The carnival committee is responsible for the public peace during the next few hours, and it takes no chances. But when the last masker is registered and has paid his fee of two pfennigs, then on the second that the village clock booms out the hour of noon the great procession, in reality stretching back beyond the memory or record of man, forms in the village street. An ancient print of 1650 shows the procession as existing then, and doubtless its history goes back much further into unrecorded mediæval times.

In the modern world the mounted policeman precedes the procession; here, where the fantastic joins with the utilitarian, there is another form of advance guard. Armed with yard long brass squirt guns, which discharge cooling streams of water, dipped from snow fed streams, a dozen athletic youths suddenly charge down the street. The wary citizen, foreseeing their coming, steps out of the throng, but the careless, crowding to see the excitement, suddenly feels a cooling young Niagara coursing down his back and retires to make room for the procession. Other duties also has this carnival policeman, for such he is. Not only must he stop fighting, but he must join in it. He may not decline a challenge, and many a rough and



AN UGLY PAIL MAIDEN AND A "SACKMAN."

tumble combat marks his path. If this knight of the squirt gun should basely betray his trust and avoid a combat, a bed of straw in a not overclean stable would be his reward.

The wild foray of the carnival police is followed by a demonstration of the sackmen, masked like the squires of the squirt guns and arrayed in wonderful traditional costume. These sackmen are supposed to complete the work of clearing a pathway, and are armed with bags, filled with hay, which they bang over the heads of the too curious. As a sort of aide-de-camp these sackmen have chimney sweeps. To belabor feminine heads with bags of hay would be too rough, so the chimney sweep, gently laying a sooty finger on fair pink cheeks and



A BOOKMAN.

then whisking beyond the reach of feminine wrath, manages to clear the obstructions from the pathway. But his work is too brutal, and the Tyrolean, cleanly to a fault, like the Dutch, must send pail maidens, armed with rags and water, to wash the stains of the chimney sweep from fair cheeks, amid the laughter of the crowds. Pail maidens, like the women of the Elizabethan play, are, of course, masculine, despite their flaxen locks and blond masks.



A BAGMAN.

The sackmen and the sweeps pass on, and suddenly, amid wild cheers of the villagers, two fantastic figures burst forth from the crowd and come rollicking down the street to the accompanying jangle of harsh bells. Two mighty floral headdresses, recalling the bearskins of French guardsmen of Napoleonic days, crown their heads; these are the "Roller" and "Scheller," as important to "Schemenlaufen" as King Rex to Mardi Gras. The former is the type of all the beautiful maidens of legend, in stories, who flee from wicked monsters; the latter the personification of all the goblins and genii of evil memory which through romance have pursued helpless beauty. The costumes of this couple are as odd as the beings they represent. The "Roller" wears short black breeches, white stockings and low cut shoes, adorned with red bows, her white jacket boasts sleeves bedecked with red ribbons, while across her right shoulder she carries a jaunty sash, gleaming with many

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