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Can't Make British Quit by Bombing Old Buildings-Iron Fences Disappearing

Written specially for The Liberal
 By Margaret Butcher
 Reading, England — So the Enemy is taking a new line with us now: Baedeker Bombing. How futile it is! Somebody's psychology has gone wrong over there, I'm thinking. We love our old buildings, but I can't imagine us calling 'Halt!' just in order to retain a certain established arrangement of stones and bricks and timber, can you? We may be a sentimental people on the quiet, but we aren't insanely sentimental, I hope. And—somehow, in my more fanciful moments, I can almost hear them saying — Exeter Cathedral, and the Roman Baths and York Minster — "Look here, people, don't mind us. You go ahead. We never expected to stand for ever, you know. And there will be chunks of us left, no matter what they do."

Yet it gives one a queer, unhappy stab this kind of news, quite apart from worry about friends. It all seems too outrageously improbable. I know York; I've lived near Exeter, and I spent my growing up years in Bath. Who could have dreamed of such things happening? Bath: prim, demure and comfortable, lying there in that green cup of the hills.

It's queer: there is no place I can think of as 'home'. I was trying to do so the other night, but that place doesn't exist. Perhaps it never will, though I'm still hoping! But Bath, perhaps, comes a little near it, for I was a student there. We were happy and miserable in turns; we worked and played hard; We began to form our ideas there; our arguments, our points of view. We made all sorts of pictures in our minds about the future...but never a picture like Bath today, with its air scars. Nobody ever thought of that. So how pleased I was to learn that Bath, like those other bombed towns, could 'take it' and as well as any! A trace of civic pride there, I think, don't you?

Old Days in Bath
 Bath folk must have rubbed their eyes sometimes in the old days, I'm sure. For instance, when we were to be seen, early on a chilly morning, running in a batch through the beautiful little park, training for our forthcoming paperchase — with me, not to be outdone, panting along beside the six-footers. I expect they thought we were all mad. Then they were forever coming upon us crouched on sketching-tools, our earnest faces smudged with paint or charcoal, perpetuating those old monuments. We were so untidy, too, I remember. There wasn't much time or chance to be very tidy, what with working twelve hours a day, struggling feverishly for scholarships,

and getting through the prolonged agony of examinations — and feeling just a little ill for weeks at a time, in our anxiety. But it was fun. In Bath — in a famous old building that is now largely rubble I hear — I went to my first real grown-up ball. Into the room I swept (I trust) in my first real ball gown with a fish-tail; secretly terrified of tripping over the thing, despite hours of secret practice! Life seemed to open up that night, and I wondered what was ahead. Well, I know now...some of it. And it's been a great game. No Enemy can take that away, at least. There were lots of parties and dances after that; for one learned how to get clean and behave like everybody else, under pressure. Maybe Bath, when it shakes down again, will be as correct as ever. I can't doubt it. There are things in Bath even more monumental than the monuments, believe me.

Real England

Then Exeter: real England, that town. I wonder how my friends have fared, poor dears? We so often wonder that, these past two years. But so often they are all right, and we take comfort from that.

Exeter has romantic associations. There was a certain young man... Ah well! He must be a middle-aged old dear by now; and I must confess that, till this happened, I had not thought of him in a long while.

Yes, think of the most peaceful place you know, and then imagine it torn by horrors in the night. Then you will have some idea of the bewilderment one feels in remembering these old scenes, these quiet squares and gentle green parks and primrose-spattered lanes. I said we were sentimental, didn't I? But not too sentimental to put first things first.

We shall build monuments of our own when this is over; and in a few hundred years' time, maybe, humans will stare up at them and think of us in this most strenuous age of ours. As far as that goes, we could even rebuild some of the old ones, for we have this great advantage over the past — we have our photographs. Nobody knows quite what a Saxon village looked like, and we are worse than vague about what stood on the site of St. Paul's Cathedral, centuries ago; but, if we wished, we could copy most of the things we've treasured up to now. Yet I hope we shall first of all think of building things typical of our own age; why not? For this is history made — and appreciated.

A relative of mine, living near Bath, writes and tells me that she is sheltering three homeless people. She doesn't moan about it, or even make any comment. She simply states the fact, and finishes: 'Must stop now. In great haste. Very busy, naturally.' I am quite sure that she, in her quiet country seclusion, with her nice house and placid garden, never imagined that her life would take such a turn; but she's risen to it grandly, bless her.

Now, with the coming of spring, there come the 'Alerts'. Once again, at bedtime, one puts out the thick coat, the gas-mask, the ready-packed suit-case, near at hand; and those who have shelters have made them all ready. And those shelters are no longer ugly bumps of sand and earth and stones, for flowers are growing on them. People feel that if they must see humps in the garden they may as well be decorative. And why not? Sometimes there are noises and vibrations; sometimes the searchlights, swinging round, pierce the blackout and make the room almost as light as day; but with all these disquieting things there are lovely things as well. At last there is sunshine and warmth — and one had almost forgotten what the cosiness of bodily warmth was like. During the day the blackbirds sing: a couple of sturdy lads, tree-top high, shouting defiance to each other across the gardens. And today 'Gran' called me down to the garden, where we had tea on the lawn, with the sheep-dog whinnying with pleasure. At the end of a day like this one's last bedtime thought is, Well, if it's the last day I ever have it's been a good one. And can one feel more than that? I hardly think so.

The Allotment is awake again, with things pushing through the crusty earth. The biting northeast wind has fallen — at last — and the Gardening Partner, in an aura of furious grumbling, is enjoying

himself hugely. All the little gardens down the avenue are beginning to shine with flowers — and — best of all — the iron railings have disappeared. One can bless the munitions-law for that, at least. They always depressed me, those nasty little iron barriers and squeaking little gates. Maybe their removal has a deep significance, after all! I am hoping so.

It is one thing to say that an Englishman's home is his castle, but it's another (and surely ridiculous?) thing to barricade the place. People with evil intentions, I fancy, are not to be kept out by paltry four-foot-high spikes; so what is the great thought behind these erections? I suspect that it is a relic of that curious, old-fashioned, small-home notion of 'keeping myself to myself,' so long a cherished ideal. Personally, I've never been able to see much more in it than a tacit disparagement of one's neighbours, with a flavoring of personal conceit. Anyway, the railings have gone, and with them a lot of that dreadful, hideous smugness of the last century. The roads look wider, the houses humanised. True, the laurel and privet hedges remain, but there is something far more friendly about a hedge. It is a living thing, and not a bristling array of half-rusty bars.

Yes, I suspect that the disappearance of those railings is a portent; and it's taken a world war to bring it about. But it would! Here's to the tearing down of more railings, the violation of more smugness. We don't mind, now that it's happened; and anybody who knows our little Island well will agree that here is a revolution of no mean order. There are no railings round the London parks now, and how well one remembers the time when they prickled with railings; not only on the boundaries but in every spot where citizens had the temerity to walk across the grass! Yet I am told (though I admit I don't know how true it is!) that the ceremony of locking the gates at night still persists.

It is a diverting thought.

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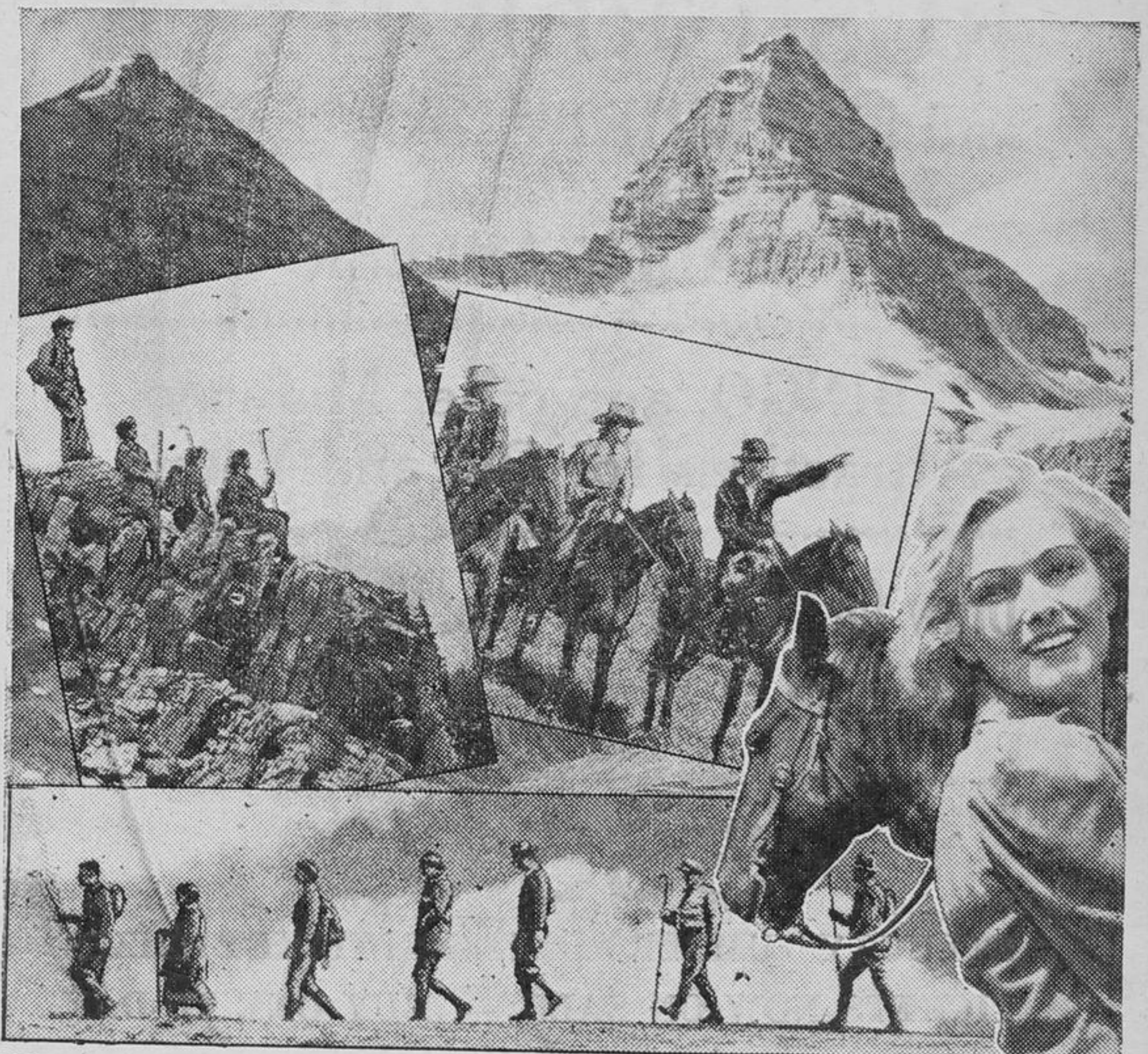
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Hikers and Riders Invade Eagle's Domain



There are many ways of enjoying the scenic wonders of the Rocky Mountains, but none more intimate or soul-satisfying than following the less-frequented trails and byways, on horseback or on foot, under the friendly guidance of two of Canada's leading alpine societies . . . the Sky Line Trail Hikers and the Trail Riders of the Canadian Rockies.

Both groups have set the date and planned colorful itineraries for their annual outings which this year will cover some of the Rockies' major scenic highlights in the vicinity of Banff, Alta. The Trail Riders will set out from Banff Springs Hotel July 24, and will enjoy five days in the saddle,

as well as the joys of camp life en route. Their main camp will be located at lovely Egypt Lake about half-way on the trail.

The Sky Line Trail Hikers, whose members rely on their own legs rather than horse-power, have their annual "safari" scheduled for July 31 to August 3. They too will start out from Banff, and armed with camera and alpenstock, will explore the district around Simpson Pass and nearby Sunshine Valley where their main camp will be located.

Foundry by J. Murray Gibbon, general publicity agent for the Canadian Pacific Railway, both organizations have world-wide memberships, and continue to enroll new members every year. Each year they take to the trail, the Sky Line Hikers on foot, and the Trail Riders mounted on sure-footed mountain-bred horses.

The riders and hikers proceed leisurely, stopping at frequent intervals to fish for trout in the glacial waters of Rocky Mountain streams, "shoot" big game with their cameras, study interesting species of alpine flora, and marvel at the breath-taking panorama. And when day is done, they gather around friendly campfires for hearty meals, sing-songs and later sleep in tee-pees or under the stars.

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