

The Journey to the Snow Line.

A breezy and entertaining account of the method of reaching our main winter sports centre was written some time ago by Dr. Schlink whose facile pen has done nearly as much to entertain us as his exploratory work on ski has accomplished in advancing the sport. We quote from his article which originally appeared in the Sydney University "Medical Journal":—

"As the winter nip in the air is beginning to be felt, enthusiasts meeting all over Australia greet each other with, 'I hear the snow at Kosciusko will be excellent and in abundance this year. I'm simply itching to get there.' They compare notes about gear, commence to buy wind coats, socks, caps, mufflers, and tell lies like fishermen about the only ski of their kind which they have recently imported or got made locally. The day of departure arrives, bedrooms are full of ski boots, rucksacks, gloves, headgear, wind-jackets, goggles, straps, foot-plates, wax, repairing outfits, tinned foods, bandages, stocks and many pairs of ski, and frequently with enough other gear to carry the owner to the South Pole and back. At 8 p.m. taxis discharge their load with their excited owners on the Central Railway Station. The luggage becomes surrounded by a gaping crowd pointing to the ski, and asking whispering questions as to their purpose, a fact which makes even the modest skier swank about and display rucker and other necessities of the sport. So pleased are they with their temporary notoriety that they over-tip the porters who have been grumbling at their excessive loads. The platform outside the Pullman sleeper of the Cooma express is an animated scene—old ski-ing friends from last year meeting again, new recruits being introduced to old sports, all wanting to know the much-talked-of Norwegian runner, up for the first time. Ladies are comparing their new outfits; others are already looking for conquests amongst the men. The bad-tempered man who hates the train journey is there, and the man who has forgotten the keys of his trunk, the slightly and gentlemanly inebriated man who does not care what he has forgotten, and the sport who is quite certain that he knows better than the paid officials how to put their luggage on the train.

Cooma to the Creel.

"At last all are in, and the train is off—excitement for a while is intense; all are looking for their berths. The best tippers have got the best berths, irrespective of booking plans, and this leads to much argument. However, all eventually settle down, some collect their kit, mend ski straps, leave their soft wax to be sat on, usually by the bad-tempered man; some play bridge, others read. Soon all, as happy as



TO KOSCIUSKO'S SUMMIT IN MIDWINTER.

1. On the Trek.
2. View from Charlotte's Pass.
3. A rest before the final climb.

school children, go to bed, and next find themselves shivering with cold on the Cooma Station at 7 a.m. The motor cars which are to meet them at the station do not turn up, and they are compelled to travel by old "rattle-traps" to the various Cooma hotels. (Much angry comment is passed on the Tourist Bureau for allowing the Cooma black hand of cabmen to extract an extra shilling, and swear they would be prepared to pay another 5/- on their motor car ticket if it would only take them from the station to the Creel for breakfast, and leave Cooma out altogether. Mr. Roberts, the Government Tourist representative, who happens to be in the party that morning, looks bored as he has heard all this so often). However, when they find a beautiful blazing log fire at the hotel, and the aroma of eggs and bacon is wafted from the kitchen, they become all smiles again. After breakfast, the old stagers run off to procure billy tea and other extras from the stores before all are packed into Balmain's big cars, and freshers wonder if their luggage is to be left behind; but no, the drivers have a perfect genius for tying the most extraordinary amount of luggage on the side boards and everywhere except where the tourists sit.

"The cars bound off, everybody well wrapped, and in good form. Cooma is now so accustomed to the traffic that no one looks twice at ski nowadays. A fast run along fairly good roads, passing through very cold air but rather monotonous scenery, except for an occasional glimpse of the snow-covered ranges in the distance, brings you in a few hours to the Creel, a Government Rest House on the Thredbo River, used by trout fishers in the summer months. From now on the cars progress more slowly, more often than not on second speed, as the ascent to the snow line has commenced. Every now and again valleys not touched by the sun show a sprinkling of snow. As you mount ever higher and higher you are struck by the quality of the air, clear and invigorating. It is cold, but it is so dry and still that it does not chill.

"At last the cars can go no further, and you are discharged, luggage and all, on some dry patch by the roadside, the car boys wasting no time to get back to the Creel for luncheon. If they have not already arrived, you soon observe, coming down the sloppy and partly snow-covered road, waggonettes which look very frail, drawn by four mountain ponies, and driven by drivers of the Banjo Paterson 'Man from Snowy River' type. All are soon aboard, and slowly but surely you mount ever and ever higher until the snow, which was only a sprinkling down below, grows deep, and as luncheon hour approaches the coaches are with difficulty pulled through the freshly-made cutting in the final snowdrift, and the hotel comes in sight. Everybody—from being silent except for a few exclamations such as: 'Oh, how beautiful the snow; I never imagined it was so deep and

beautiful'—immediately wakes up, and begins to chatter like magpies.

"Soon the hotel door is reached, surrounded by clusters of ski in the midst of which is the smiling manager, and all the guests who happen to be staying in that day, come to quiz the new arrivals. The ladies have almost to be lifted out of the coaches, they are so cold and stiff, but soon everybody has had a wash and luncheon."

Although this article was written some years ago, the conditions of travel to the Hotel Kosciusko have altered very little in the interim. In periods of heavy recent snow fall it is still necessary to transfer from the motor cars at Wilson's Valley to horse-drawn coaches or sleighs, and the article still presents a true picture of the other portions of the excursion. With all its faults the journey to Kosciusko is, particularly for those who make it for the first time, not one of the least enjoyable features of the holiday.

Preparing for a Run.

The arrangements for a day's tour anywhere beyond the 5,500 ft. level do not merely consist of buckling on a pair of ski and pushing off. There are several things to think of and the following few hints are extracted from a description by a well known and extremely capable ski-er of his preparations for a day's run on the main ridge, leaving from Betts's Camp:—

"After a hurried breakfast, we examine our ski-bindings carefully to see that none of the straps are worn and likely to break during the strain of the day. In the high Alps one must be certain of such things, for a ski coming apart from the boot on a steep slope might never be seen again, and to get home on one ski would be difficult if not impossible. We pack our ruck sacks with spare bindings, outfit for mending broken ski, map, compass, and wax to be used in case the snow sticks to the gliding surface of the ski. Then are included wind jackets, mufflers, extra gloves, tabloid strychnine in case of exhaustion, and a light luncheon, consisting mainly of fruit, dates, boiled eggs, a thermos of tea, soup, or chocolate, and cold meat or sausage, with as little bread as possible, because in high altitudes the mouth becomes very dry and mastication does not give rise to sufficient saliva to make the bread easy to swallow. Next we smear our faces with zinc or bismuth paste to guard against sunburn and wind, fasten on yellow sun glasses to avoid snow blindness as we will be above the tree line all day and the glare of the sun and its reflection from the universal whiteness of the snow causes a severe conjunctivitis, with photophobia, unless the eyes are protected. For the same reason we wear large white tennis hats."