

# A Summing Up

Percy Hunter

(One time Director of the N.S.W. Govt. Tourist Bureau, and first editor of the Year Book).

**T**WENTY-FIVE years of the Year Book! Well, it is getting on for fifty years since I led my first party into Kiandra on skis. None of us had even seen a pair of skis before and as the snowline came to the Adaminaby side of Sawyer's Hill we had about eight miles to ski with our baggage to reach Kiandra. We made the trip from Cooma to the snow in a four horse coach, stopping the night at Adaminaby. A lot of snow has filled the drifts since those days, and my dream of a line of habitable huts along the main divide from Kiandra to Kosciusko, with a village thrown in here and there, still remains a dream.

But a great deal has been done. The far-seeing vision of Sir Joseph Carruthers, when Premier of N.S.W. in the early 1900's, gave us the Hotel Kosciusko, and the road to the Summit from Jindabyne. Had Sir Joseph Carruthers, who was outstanding in Australian political history as a prudent and capable administrator, remained in office, we would undoubtedly have opened up the main range many years ago, and the dead hand of officialdom would not have stifled all progress as it has done.

Even so the strides that have been made in the improvement in the quality of Australian ski-ing, the establishment of the Chalet, and the slow but sure advance of huts deeper into the high country constitute an improvement which gives us a starting point for bigger things.

We should now set as an objective a real

opening up of the main range along its skiable length right to Kiandra, with accessible routes into the range from various points, including the Upper Murray, a track which has been so advantageously and capably pioneered by Tom Mitchell and his gallant wife.

Looking back over the half century a host of pleasant personalities come to mind. Among the real pioneers were Charles Kerry, who started Sydney people ski-ing at Kiandra before my day; Colonel Vernon, the Government architect, who so cheerfully and courageously backed Sir Joseph Carruthers in his plans; old Lear, the works foreman at the Hotel, with whom we used to camp in the snow in huts from which we went further afield. Then, when we had built the Hotel, came Bertie Schlink, who should, in my opinion, be regarded as the real father of ski-ing as sport in N.S.W. His great ability and drive, his cheerful and vigorous profanity and his tireless industry made him a figure round which rallied a band of workers who made the achievement possible. This band of workers included many who will not be forgotten. There was Arthur Pitt, always ready to do anything for anybody, and particularly ready to do anything Bertie Schlink didn't want done. I can't attempt to name all the men and women who worked so hard in the early days to put the sport on its feet, but the pages of the Year Book contain many references to them. The work of Stewart Jamieson in establishing and so suc-



Modern Technique—Sponar (Czechoslovakia) and Wurth (Switzerland) at Charlotte's Pass.

S.M.H. Photo.

cessfully conducting the Year Book in its early stages should not be forgotten. Old timers will remember George Bell, the photographer, whose pictures of our doings on the snow form a graphic record of the evolution of the sport. George was not a ski-er in the ordinary sense, but he managed to get along on a pair of Kiandra bindings carrying large loads of photographic material and was always ready to go anywhere. Captain Head was another figure of importance who graced the early days.

Lord Chelmsford opened the Hotel in 1909. He was later Viceroy of India and afterwards in London enjoyed talking about his experiences at Kosciusko.

I read an account of the ski-ing resorts of Europe a few days ago and it recalled to my mind the fact that E. C. Richardson, an Englishman, introduced ski-ing to Switzerland in, I think, 1888. It is interesting to note that many years before that we were

ski-ing in Australia at Kiandra where the sport was established by some Norwegian miners. This account mention that ski-ing was for people of all ages. I agree with that so far as the very young are concerned, but alas! there comes an age when ski-ing is no longer practical as a sport.

The various ski-clubs have successfully established the sport and in spite of difficulties and disasters, such as the fire at Hotel Kosciusko, the facilities grow and the field is open for real expansion. The enthusiastic spirits in whom the conduct of the sport is vested will, I have no doubt, make such progress in the next quarter of a century that the dreams of the pioneers will be fulfilled and we will see along our main range something approximating the development in Switzerland and in the other ski-ing resorts in Europe, all of which development (outside Scandinavia), has occurred in the last half century.