

Ascent of Mount Townsend

(By Ashleigh Davy.)

An excellent day's run to Mount Townsend was made by Dr. Teece, Messrs. A. Stephen, Barrett, Gordon and myself last season.

On the previous day we had gone in a large party from Betts Camp to Mount Northcote, and thence along the Main Range to Mount Twynam, returning via Pounds' Creek and the Perisher Range. We had encountered perfect snow conditions, and so decided to climb the tempting-looking Townsend if the weather remained good.

Next morning, mirabile dictu, broke gloriously fine, and we started from Betts Camp at 7.30 a.m. From Charlotte's Pass we had a nice run down to the Snowy, whence we skirted round the southern side of Northcote and climbed to the saddle which is the lowest point of the ridge running due north from the Summit of Kosciusko. From this saddle an excellent view of our objective was obtained across Wilkinson's Valley.

There were two alternative routes which we could now follow—either to run down into Wilkinson's Valley and then commence the long climb, or to keep our height by edging round the slope on our right and then along a ridge running west almost to the top of Mount Townsend. As there was no ice to make edging tiring, we decided on the latter course, and an easy and more or less continuous climb brought us to within 100 feet of the top. Having negotiated this final steep portion by dint of much side-stepping and kick turning, we stood on the Summit of the second highest peak of the range, only 70 feet lower than Kosciusko itself, and commanding an even finer view.

To the south lay Kosciusko, seemingly only a stone's throw across the valley, and in the distance to the west of it the snow-clad peaks of the Victorian Alps. To our west stretching from almost directly below us as far as the eye could see lay the Murray River Valley and the surrounding wooded country. To the east lay the familiar stretches of snow covering the Ram's Head and Perisher Ranges. Northwards we beheld the grandest and most rugged part of the whole range, with the magnificent Albina Canyon in the foreground and the Grey Mares Peaks standing out boldly in the north-west.

It was about 11 a.m. when we arrived at the top, and we would have liked to stay some time to drink in the beauties of the scene, but somewhat threatening-looking clouds were appearing in the west, and, having refreshed

ourselves on the bully beef of the snows, viz., tinned fruit and chocolate, we looked round for the best run off.

We unfortunately chose the southern side and lost a great deal of height, traversing on rough wind-swept snow before getting our run down. We could see afterwards that we would have had a far better run had we retraced our steps for the first 100 feet or so on the north-eastern side, where we had ascended, and then run down the broad smooth slope on the eastern side of the mountain. Either route brings one into Wilkinson's Valley to the foot of the saddle from which we had started our main climb.

Here the party divided. Teece and Stephen climbed over the saddle and returned to Betts Camp. Gordon, Barrett and I decided to climb from Wilkinson's Valley to the Summit of Kosciusko round its western and southern sides—a route that had not been tried before. A lot of edging was necessary, but the snow was excellent and the heat of the sun was far more exhausting than the long, steady spiral climb. The last part of the spiral brought us on to the eastern aspect overlooking Cootapatamba Saddle. After a breather at the Summit we ran down to the Saddle, the perfect snow enabling us to take a straight course.

When the snow permits it this run is one of the best to be had—a direct line from the Trig Station to the snow pole near the middle of the Saddle being the best.

We then ran down the side of Ethridge to the Seaman Memorial Hut—a very solid stone structure, which will probably save any future ski-runners who are caught in a blizzard on the Summit from the terrible fate of the man in whose memory it was erected. It is most essential that this hut be stocked with wood, food and bedding, and that all are made to understand that these are not to be used except in case of grave urgency.

From here to Betts Camp was an hour's hot plugging, and, having arrived there about 2.45 a.m., we had a very late and very large lunch, followed by a good spell. In the cool of the evening we made our way back to the comforts of the Hotel, having had two days' ski-ing such as we had often dreamt of, but, on account of the fickleness of our weather, had never before been able to experience.

It is much easier to tackle irregularities in the ground in the Telemark than in the tramline position. The tramliner is solely occupied with his lateral stability, which he is usually able to preserve, thanks to the position of his separated ski. But this position rules out the possibility of a long base, and it is only the long base which provides the best means of travelling easily over ground which is broken, unknown, or badly lighted.—Marcel Kurz.



ENGLISH BIRCH 'MIDST AUSTRALIAN SNOWS, CLOSE TO HOTEL KOSCIUSKO.

Photo: W. H. Spare.

the good runs. Probably the Tasman is the best, as I believe there are some marvellous snowfields around and beyond the Lendenfeldt Saddle, and a round trip could be made from the Malte Brun Hut to the saddle and back to the Ball Hut, via the Murchison Glacier. However, in order to make these trips in comfort and safety at present at least four or five consecutive fine days are necessary, and from my own experience in the mountains of New South Wales and New Zealand this does not happen often.

Of course, until recently, people only visited Mount Cook for mountain climbing, but now that real interest is beginning to be taken in ski-ing, perhaps in the near future small hotels and chalets will be built further up the glaciers. This will make the real ski-ing more or less accessible to everyone, and, what is more, one could ski, even in mid-summer, as the snow is permanent all the year round at the heads of the glaciers. As a matter of fact, at present, while one has to ski or walk up the lower parts of the glaciers, it is better to go to Mount Cook a month or so later than we did, as by August, I understand, that the crevasses are mostly snowed-over and the going is much easier.

In any event, even if the good snow is rather inaccessible, any keen skier who is in New Zealand should certainly go to Mount Cook, and I hope one day when I have the time and the money to visit the Hermitage again, and this time I hope the weather will be more considerate.



CREVASSES ON THE HOOKER GLACIER.