

An Adventure with a Sleigh

The experiences of three members of the Kosciusko Club last season on an excursion to the terrain round Betts's Camp prove that there is plenty of excitement to be obtained in the snow hills without crossing the Snowy River and tackling the Main Divide.

The party, consisting of Messrs. Fred. W. Pentecost, H. Keinzle, and A. Vollbrecht, were not at the time very expert skiers, although one of them afterwards broke the summit record.

Inspired by reports of good snow higher up and the reputed good cooking of one of their number, the party arranged to spend a week at Betts's Camp. One of their number tells the story, as follows:—

The appetite of one of our party made it necessary to make special provision, and a whole rump of beef and a dozen pound of frankfurts were part of the luggage from Sydney. We arrived at Kosciusko on Saturday, 9/7/27, and on the following morning, after consultation with the secretary, loaded a sleigh with rucksacks, containing personal clothing, 8 loaves of bread, 25 lb. of meat, fruit, eggs, a flat iron, ski wax, and boot oil. The sleigh was drawn by the three members, in tandem form, and a great send-off was given us by fellow members and the guests at the hotel.

Owing to the icy condition of the road most of the pulling fell on Vollbrecht, who had skins on his ski. The pulling was very heavy, and after receiving a hearty cheer from the skiers on the Kerry course, the trio discovered that some "wag" had tied a kerosene tin to the sleigh. The party had many misadps climbing the hill to Dainer's Gap, the sleigh not only leaving the road and capsizing, but pulling the skiers with it. We took a little over an hour to negotiate the first 1½ miles.

At Dainer's Gap our troubles began with a vengeance, the sleigh deciding to travel downhill much faster than required, and in every direction other than along the road. However, a measured mile was covered in less than an hour, but from Piper's Creek the party took over 1½ hours to travel half a mile, owing to the snow drifts. With much difficulty we managed to reach Smiggins Holes, at 3 p.m., and, after a hurried lunch and repacking, pushed on, only to be faced by the impossible task of keeping the sleigh from pulling us down the steep sidling on the approach to Piper's Gap. This difficulty and the

fact that the weather was changing compelled us to abandon the sleigh, and we each took a rucksack laden with clothes. In addition Keinzle tied the meat (25 lb.) around his neck. He did not go far before it was also left behind.

We were now in the teeth of a raging blizzard, so strong at times as to blow us over. We could not see for the blinding ground-snow which blew into our faces and left bare the slippery frozen snow. Our progress was very slow and dangerous, and we were in a quandary as to whether it would not be safer to turn back. Night was fast approaching, and the party was very cold, tired and no doubt homesick. The moon, although welcome for what light it gave, disclosed the terrible icyness of the snow ahead. Falls were too numerous to mention, and when we arrived at Betts's Camp, at 7 p.m., we were bruised and exhausted, yet happy. After some "Nelsons" and some hot soup we retired "dead beat." During the night the blizzard became worse, the camp creaking and groaning under the terrific force of the wind.

Next morning it was great to be inside, for outside the wind was howling and one could not imagine worse at either of the poles. Nevertheless Vollbrecht volunteered to stay at home, while the other two faced the elements to get the remainder of the provisions left at Piper's Gap. The ground-snow was blowing at a fearful pace. The frozen ski tracks of the previous day, however, showed the way. Progress was fast, having the wind to help us. We found the rucksacks buried in snow, and after donning the very heavy packs we turned again for Betts's Camp. The falls were many and heavy, and our experience one never to be forgotten. The camp was reached at 2 p.m.; both were exhausted, and faces and clothing were covered with ice. During our absence Vollbrecht had done wonders at the camp. It was all "spick and span," and he had prepared a wonderful meal. He said he was lonely, the noises of the creaking building were gruesome and that he had worked like a nigger to keep his spirits down. Here it might be of interest to mention that owing to a leak in the water pipe in the bathroom, the whole of the floor and the bath was one mass of solid ice, over five inches thick.

Next morning (Tuesday) the weather improved, and all spent a delightful day on the beautiful slopes opposite the camp. Thermometer readings were maximum 32, minimum 28. On Wednesday we received our first visitor, Mr. John Wureker. He had juzzed at the hotel till midnight, and after a prow around the hills and a fireworks display outside Betts's Camp he came inside at 7 a.m. and had 40 winks. Later in the day Mr. Stan Over and a party of four arrived, very tired after a strenuous trip over the icy snow. They were on their way to the summit, but owing to the bad conditions they returned to the hotel. Pentecost and "Voll." also left camp to visit the

new hut erected by the Government Tourist Bureau on the banks of the Snowy, in the Pounds' Creek valley. They found the hut ideally situated, in a sheltered spot, surrounded by wonderful snow and skiing country, with a delightful view of the Great Dividing Range, of Mount Twynam, in the west, Gill's Nobs, to the north-west, and along the Snowy River, running due north for about five miles to where the Guthega Creek joins it.

On Friday and Saturday the party made further visits, accompanied by Keinzle, whose sprained ankle had improved. The run to the hut, about four miles, was covered comfortably in 50 minutes, and as conditions seemed favorable it was decided to try and return to Betts's Camp over the Perisher Range. Climbing the first range (an altitude of 5,500 feet) we immediately descended and began to climb another peak (6,500 feet). Here a blizzard greeted the explorers, and owing to the loss of direction—the compass showed we had been travelling towards Smiggins Holes—we retraced our steps and did not reach camp until 5.30 p.m. The thermometer for Saturday showed 32 maximum, 20 minimum, the coldest we experienced. Next day we left the camp and returned to the comforts of the hotel, picking up the sleigh on our way.

Although the little party had many trying experiences we enjoyed the jaunt. Great assistance was given by our worthy secretary, Mr. Percy Pearson, and the hotel management in making the trip possible, and we certainly gained knowledge that will prove most valuable for future excursions. A compass and a thermometer proved to be necessary equipment for tour.

Speaking of the No-fall race, a writer in the "British Year Book" says:—"The old tactics have long been abandoned by the modern racer. A race among experts is, in fact, virtually a no-fall race. Leonard Dobbs, one of the greatest of British racers, practically never fell. He did not fall once when he won the championship at Adelboden, and he only fell once when he won the Anglo-Swiss race. Mackintosh lost his races until he abandoned his old reckless habits."