

Nineteen Hundred and Nine

[We have in the *Year Book* a rule that no verse is accepted, however good it may be. But rules are only made to be broken, and when the following verses came to hand we broke this one without hesitation. Its freshness and vigour bespeak the mining camp from which it came; there is the true flavour of the saga in its direct simplicity and shrewd humour.

To the uninitiated some words of explanation may be necessary. In those days men raced (as Swiss mountain folk do to-day) in their Sunday best, with bowler (or "boxer") hats and stiff shirts. The word "ski" was unknown here. In Kiandra they were known, as they had been since 1861, as "snow-shoes." The word "riding" was applied to ski-ing. One "rode in" to Kiandra from the mountains on horse or ski. Riding astride on horseback for women was, to say the least, unorthodox.

There were two hotels in Kiandra then, one kept by a Syrian and one by an Australian, a fact which explains the trouble over the racial question referred to below. These few matters explained, the story may be left with the few words of appreciation attached by the contributor who brought it to our notice.—Editor.]

So much impressed by the ski-ing sports, held in Kiandra in 1909 was Mr. C. Hethrington, a bush lyric, that he composed the following lines to commemorate them. Typical of the day in which they were written, they sum up the psychology of the class of men who participated in the various events, and give us a very interesting side-light on the exigencies which surrounded ski-ing in those days. The majority of those who made up the party, of whose trip from Ravine to Kiandra Mr. Hethrington speaks, are still living and will, perhaps, remember only too vividly the hardships which their enthusiasm enabled them to overcome. Ravine is 14 miles from Kiandra, and the return journey necessitates a climb and descent of 3,000 feet, over one of the most precipitous mountains in Australia. When we visualise the difficulties which these pioneers overcame with their home-made ski and "boxer" hats, one cannot help but compliment them on their achievements.

"1909."

For weeks before the day came round
They talked of races up in town,
In fact they were wire-ing up and down,
To know how things were going.

Men or women, it mattered not,
 There was only one thing troubled the lot;
 They did not seem to care a jot
 As long as it was snowing.

It was all the same wherever you'd go,
 They talked of nothing but the snow
 And how they'd race this so-and-so,
 And how they'd kick the fastest paces.
 It did not matter what the game
 The selfsame question always came,
 Are you going to see the races?

At last the day arrived, and then
 There rolled up ladies eight or ten
 And fully five and twenty men.
 As step by step they climb the hill
 They're talking snow-shoe races still;
 They're going to see the carnival
 In Nineteen Hundred and Nine

They were a merry-hearted lot,
 Who did not seem to care a jot
 Whether the day was wet or not,
 And they were playing larks.
 Some ladies had a horse to ride
 And gracefully they sat astride
 And seemed to look quite satisfied,
 So we passed no remarks.

Onward, onward, in a row,
 Upward, upward, marching slow
 Into the land of frost and snow
 And some were nearly beat.
 To some of them the game was strange
 But manfully they climbed the Range,
 And seemed to think it a pleasant change
 To rise three thousand feet.

There were ladies there
 Both dark and fair,
 And some of them weighed twelve stone I'll swear.
 Though some as thin as twine.
 But it didn't matter, thick or thin,
 They seemed to bear it with a grin,
 And manfully they all rode in,
 In Nineteen Hundred and Nine.

But the new chums must have had a treat,
 For seldom they were on their feet;
 They never seemed to choose a seat;
 They'd sit down anywhere.
 Although you'd think their backs were broke,
 Some of them thought it all a joke;
 Others seldom ever spoke,
 Unless it was a swear.

But the champion fall of all the lot
 Was one a lad and lassie got
 In Racecourse Creek, a nasty spot;
 They came a fearful whack.
 They rode the hill at such a bat,
 The snow was fast (and rough at that),
 There Tommy broke his boxer hat,
 Through butting the girl in the back.

The like of that's all in the game;
 Of course poor Tom was not to blame,
 He wouldn't do the like for shame;
 He's not a man like that.
 I do not wish to be unkind,
 But fancy Tommy wouldn't mind
 So much the butting the girl behind,
 If he hadn't broke his hat.

At last we landed in the town;
 For high old times we settled down.
 Of course we called for drinks all round
 And talked about the track.
 But as for me, I never spoke;
 I never told how Tommy broke
 His boxer, through that awful poke
 He gave her in the back.

We saw the races through and through,
 The new chums and the champions too;
 The Committee great credit drew
 For the way they got them up.
 The champion race, it was a treat,
 For twice they ran a level heat,
 But the third and last time Hughes was beat
 And Burgess won the cup.

But, oh! to see the new chums race,
 And how they tried to make the pace,
 It was that that took the cake.
 We never had such fun before,
 It made the lookers-on to roar,
 When the chummies said their heads were sore
 From sitting on the brake.

On Sunday morning we started back,
 Well satisfied to face the track,
 And each provided with a snack
 To treat the inner man.
 At last we landed in a bunch,
 We had a row about the lunch,
 It ended up without a punch,
 Still, here the fun began.

Now one thing always puzzles me,
 How females never can agree;
 But how they always seem to be
 At variance.

Some of them had words to say
 To those who lodged across the way,
 And wanted to know why they should stay
 At the Assyrian's.

Now some of the men began to chip
 And one of the ladies gave it lip,
 And try to stop her, take my tip.

It was a failure.
 She worked herself in such a tare,
 She kicked the pannicans here and there,
 She told them all she didn't care,
 She believed in "White Australia."

As long as people pay their way
 What odds to others where they stay;
 I think it only fair to say

To choose it should be theirs.
 This was all amongst a few;
 There is a saying, old and true,
 That those who mind what others do
 Neglect their own affairs.

Of course the thing soon settled down,
 It ended up without a round,

No more about the shine,
 Each one had a tale to tell,
 How who it was that rode and fell,
 When going to see the Carnival
 Of Nineteen Hundred and Nine.

