

# Cavalcade

Elizabeth Davy

The Chalet,  
14th July, 1930.

Dear Aggie,

Would you believe it? I am at the Chalet. I shared a sleeper with a Miss de Vere who is up here, too. Very comfortable night.

It is considered bad for one's heart to do much the first day in these altitudes, so we just messed about at the Hotel yesterday and danced a bit last night. Miss de Vere a great success.

This morning fifteen of us assembled after breakfast to try and reach the Chalet. Mr. G. to lead the party.

Climbing Daner's we realised that it wasn't going to be easy as there was quite a strong blizzard blowing. Miss de Vere said she really didn't know how she was going to do it and kept stopping to gasp, but after Dr. P. took her rucksack she stepped along pretty strongly. Alfred S. kept telling us of his indigestion and bad attack of influenza last week, and poor Joan Arden, who had never had skis on before yesterday slipped back six inches every stride.

At the top we stopped to decide whether to go on or not. Alfred S. thought it would be madness to go on. Miss de Vere thought the whole trip was too awful for words. Joan Arden was told she mustn't go on. John, he brother, said he had better stay to keep her company.

Just as these people were turning back Miss de Vere said that if Dr. P. really meant it about carrying her rucksack she thought she could get there and so in the end only poor Joan and John turned back.

The part to Smiggin's was the worst. I soon got a blister on my heel and I was wearing that red hat I wore last month to the races and it soon started to drip great red blobs in the snow. Miss de Vere, by the way, wears a lovely pale blue, two-piece suit with long trousers. I must get one like it for next season.

At Smiggin's we stopped for lunch and Dr. P. lit a fire and cooked chops and made tea. Mr. G. said he would give him £100 if he could produce some beer. Dr. P. had no beer, but he pulled a large tin of apricots out of his pocket.

There is nothing much to tell about our trip. I fell over climbing the Perisher, but luckily Mr. G. fell over doing a kick turn and by the time he had untangled himself and explained how it had happened and picked himself up I was much rested.

The blizzard got really bad about Sugar Loaf and at one time Miss de Vere was blown flat on her face.

Alfred S. must have been feeling his indigestion or something because he gave her quite a hard prod with his ski stick and said something rather unkind, which was fortunately mostly lost in the noise of the wind. This place is a bit crowded. It is really only three rooms and the women's bathroom has no window or only one that is covered with snow. There is also only one mirror. This so far has been used exclusively by Miss de Vere.

Yours,

E.

The Chalet,  
10th July, 1937.

Dear Aggie,

Have had a marvellous trip and you will be amazed to hear, not one yard of it on skis.

When the bus pulled up at the Hotel there was old Tom to meet us as usual and he pulled me aside and whispered, "Run! Run up to the stables. There is a buggy just leaving for Smiggin's and you might catch it."

Well, I grabbed my rucker and skis and I ran and there sure enough was a buggy and two horses all ready to leave and I hopped up beside the driver and we were off.

When we got to Smiggin's I got my big surprise.

There drawn up at the door of Smiggin's, stately and dignified, glinting in the sunlight, stood great Aunt Mary's old black limousine car, or, anyway, its twin sister. The only difference being that it had lost its wheels and had caterpillar treads instead. It even had remains of that glass partition that prevented the chaffeur from hearing what Aunt M. said to Uncle H.

There were several people lined up here



to go to the Chalet. Mrs. G., Dr. P., John Arden and a few others.

Mrs. G. got into the limousine first, securing the seat where there was most glass in the window. Then the rest of us piled in, but it took a bit of shuffling round before we got settled.

It was decided, for instance, that it would be more comfortable for all concerned if I sat on Dr. P. instead of him sitting on me, and John, very politely of course, thought he would rather sit on the bag of onions than on Mrs. G.

It should have been quite a cheerful trip, I suppose, as we were all so thankful not to have to ski, but somehow it wasn't. John would keep on harping on the funeral of his late uncle and every time we went over a bump I hit my head against the flower vases. There was one rather complaining sort of girl. She said she would be perfectly happy if she could only get her foot inside the window. She seemed to think she would get frost bitten or something. It takes all sorts to make a world, doesn't it?

Yours,

E.

The Chalet.

6th July, 1945.

Dear Aggie,

You were quite right about cousin James. I met him at the railway station as arranged.

He had on the most superb pair of sking-socks I have ever seen with eidleweiss and pine trees running up them. He was having an unsatisfactory chat with the sleeping-car conductor when I arrived. I said it wasn't so much the sitting up all night I minded, but it was the cold that got me down. He said that didn't worry him at all. He had travelled nearly all over the world in trains and never felt cold in one yet.

I won't bore you with my unspeakable night. At Goulburn I got out to warm my inside with a cup of tea. I saw Cousin J. having one, too. He was huddled in his great-coat and looked just like I felt. Somehow it seemed kinder to pretend not to see him.

The Hotel seemed anxious to get rid of us the moment we arrived and hustled us up the back to get into a conveyance.

There in the middle of quite a large group of people was a red iron shed with a door at one end. On examining closely I found it was mounted on a sledge and that it

was probably pulled by the tractor nearby.

Cousin J. had a look in and came hurriedly to tell me that we must get in at once as there was only room to seat about six people. I had a look in and sure enough there was a narrow wooden seat on one side and a pile of skis on the other. Cousin J. muttered something about "Well, if you like to stand, I don't," and perched himself on the end of the seat. Gradually everyone else piled in until there was only Jim from the Chalet and me left and the shed looked full to the brim. The driver said, "Get in." I felt a shove and next minute the doors were fastened, with me and Jim inside. There was a long pause while we waited in stunned silence. Then a terrific jerk, a loud screech and we were off.

I had quite a fair trip on the whole. Air came in by the crack in the door and I could generally see where we were if I put my eye to it. The great thing was that I could hold on by a ledge of wood.

I was a bit worried about some of the others who seemed to be rather deep underneath, but I knew Cousin James was all right because I could see one of his legs sticking out from under some ski sticks and every now and then it gave a sort of twitch. Actually, we all arrived in fair order except for one poor fellow, but it turned out afterwards that he had something wrong with his tummy anyway. It's lovely to be here again after four years.

Yours,

E.

The Chalet.

4th August, 1946.

Dear Aggie,

I have hardly the strength to lift my pen to-night. There have been enormous falls of snow this season and the bus had to drop us four miles below the Hotel and leave us to come the rest of the way on skis. I was supposed to be showing the Victorian team the way, but somehow I took my eye off them going up Daners and never saw them again.

It's funny how some people never seem to want to eat or rest. I had just about had it by the time I got to Smiggin's and even felt like a bite of one of those sausages, but Ethel and Bill said they couldn't be bothered and what did I want to stop for. However, I stopped. Some of the racing crowd were in the hut and I felt I was making quite a

hit until one of them asked me did I still like ski-ing after all these years.

It's funny how some days seem to go all wrong, isn't it?

I staggered in here about 5.30. The Victorians had changed and were waxing for the morning. They were quite worried and asked if I had broken my skis or met with some mishap. They had been there for hours they said.

Do you know anything about croquet, Ag? I believe it can be quite interesting when you get used to it. I thought I might take it up a bit next year.

I don't think I will be doing much skiing this season. Just standing about keeping times I expect.

Yours,

E.

The Chalet,

8th July, 1947.

Dear Aggie,

I find it hard to describe my experiences to-day, but anyway I am here.

I left the car at Cooma and came on to Smiggin's by bus. From there some skied, but luckily it seemed to be taken for granted that a poor old thing like me should be conveyed in the new contraption and the new contraption is what I find hard to describe. It started life as a bulldozer, I believe, but now on top they have built a fibro cement cabin with a plate glass window in front, doors each side and windows in the back. Along sides and back there are wooden seats and, of course, the driver sits in the middle amongst the engine. Across under the roof are parallel bars.

I sat next to Herbert on the back seat at first, but it wasn't three minutes before I was clutching an iron bar with both hands and praying. We had dived forward into a hole on Piper's Gap, screwed round at

right angles, reared up almost perpendicular and plunged forward again. It is better to stand with a good grip. Then even if one's feet swing about sometimes it saves jarring. Over snowdrifts, into holes, up banks we went. Sometimes the banks were too steep and we had to slip back and charge again.

Herbert stayed stubbornly on the wooden seat. "My God! George, what happens to your duodenal in this thing?"

"This should not be carrying passengers at all," said the driver shortly. "It's really only meant for luggage."

If anyone had a complaint after this they kept it to themselves. Indeed, we were all fairly quiet except for a few muffled squeaks of fright every now and then or a yelp of pain when someone clutched the exhaust pipe by mistake.

The poor girl next to me had never seen snow before and I heard her muttering to herself that she had never served in the tank corps either.

Lovely snow up here. I must try and get the new body swing, feet together, etc., this year.

Yours,

E.

The Chalet,

4th July, 1949.

Dear Aggie,

Splendid trip up. The snowmobile met us at Smiggin's and we were here for lunch. Who do you think is here? Noni de Vere with her third husband. She has the most beautifully cut grey vorlagers, but you should see her hair, it's bright red. Please would you mind sending me that blue windjacket we admired the other day but thought too expensive.

Yours,

E.