

The Hotel Kosciusko—Early Days

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WHEN the Kosciusko Hotel was first opened in June, 1909, members of the Alpine Club, whose headquarters originally were at Klandra, falling for the attractions of the new field, transferred their allegiance and formed the Kosciusko Alpine Club. Active canvassing among guests for new members was begun and annual carnivals of ski sports were organised.

By the time I had become associated with the hotel as a visiting junior officer of the Government Tourist Bureau these carnivals had been well established in the Sydney Social Calendar. Various competitions, somewhat ludicrous to sophisticated modern eyes, were run off on the Kerry Course and the

Grand Slam. Regimentation was rife. Offenders were penalised as social outcasts if they dared to use the road or the courses when closed by the committee some twenty-four hours prior to the "Races." The famous Heath Robinson Snowball Cartoon framed in the Hotel lounge gives a fair idea of the scorn poured upon such delinquents.

The "piece-de-resistance" of these Alpine Week Carnivals was the "hors concours" demonstration by Mr. Niel Storaker, the highly respected member of the Norwegian Consulate in Sydney, who rode the Slam straight on one ski, finishing with a perfect christiania on the flat.

So great was the demand for this exhibi-

tion that on a similar occasion years later after the Ski Club of Australia had been formed, giving way to the pleading of the crowd against his own better judgment, Mr. Storaker essayed a single ski run on the Kerry Course with disastrous results. It was late in the afternoon at the termination of a carnival. The course had been badly cut up by traffic forming a wicked looking series of icy furrows at the bottom. Notwithstanding the adverse conditions, Mr. Storaker ran the course in his usual perfect style with his left foot resting on the ski behind his right foot, but the turn at the end of the run tossed him on his shoulder and broke a collar bone.

The formation of the Ski Club of Australia in 1919 was a milestone in the progress of business for the Hotel Kosciusko. Prior to that date the K.A.C. held dominion over the infant sport, but an inevitable breach occurred among the leaders owing to competition for available accommodation at the Hotel in the restricted Alpine Club season in July.

In the days of my management most rooms had acquired names in lieu of numbers and were referred to, among the staff as Mr. Pitt's Room, Mr. Moulden's Room, Dr. Schlink's Room, Mrs. McLurcan's Suite, Percy Pearson's Room, Richmond Scott's Room, Lady Hackett's Room, Mr. Pat O'Shea's Room, Mr. Toole's Room and so on according to the long list of regular club visitors. Mrs. McFadyen with a family of boys and girls, Mrs. Meek and her two daughters occupied all the north wing year after year.

As manager I was concerned to find the Hotel too small to contain the club members in the July season and too large for the remainder of the winter.

An impression had been fostered in Sydney that winter at Kosciusko was "over" when "Alpine Week" disclosed its Kerry Course Champion and Dr. Schlink had reduced his previous record time for the classic Summit Run of 34 miles.

Members returned jubilantly to their city homes and pastimes to relate the story of the snow. The newspapers gave a splash of publicity to the Alpine Week events and then

all seemed forgotten. I recollect an occasion when a prominent member of the Alpine Club used my office telephone to answer a call from a friend in Sydney. "Oh," said he. "It's no good coming here now—the season's over. 'We' are coming home."

I was soon enlightened regarding the need for other clubs to be formed. I and my family in the preceding years had enjoyed all August and September like aristocrats living in a winter palace at Archangel or some other remote and enchanted place with all the world of snow-covered landscape completely at our disposal. Guests who arrived in August and September were so few as to be included in the family arrangements for tours to the unending choice of hills and valleys and even to the Summit and Main Range objectives usually so far removed from the July multitude. Naturally I talked of these delights each succeeding season to the members of the Alpine Club. The effect quickly showed up when Drs. Schlink, Teece and Paul approached me for confirmation of my earlier statements that there was as good snow sport to be had in August as in July. It was then revealed to me that the formation of the Ski Club of Australia was in hand. Members wished to avoid the recurring clash of claims for available accommodation in July, so chose to make their season August.

The way to succeed in building a profitable business for the Hotel became obvious—encourage the formation of a series of clubs sufficient to take up the whole winter season.

Soon the Millions Club was approached and agreed to book the whole Hotel for a week in September. This venture proved a successful experiment and the Millions Ski Club was formed to repeat the performance annually.

Other clubs quickly followed suit and to cope with the growing demand for ski sport school children's parties were organised to fill the Hotel almost to suffocation in the May, June and September vacations. Success bred success until the Hotel burst its sides and in May, 1930, produced the so-called Annexe—The Chalet at Charlotte's Pass.