



Looking up Great Tasman Glacier from Haast Ridge to Hochstetter Dome (9,258 feet), Mt. Darwin (9,715 feet), Malte Brun (10,421 feet)

Mocha and the cheerful clatter of preparations for breakfast. Outside, the air has an icy tang, cuttingly sharp, searchingly biting. Reaction soon comes with upward progress, and numbed extremities glow with almost uncomfortable warmth.

It is our maiden effort at climbing. With meek obedience Clark's footsteps are implicitly followed. Doubt intrudes, fear, almost funk. Then a saving glimmer of humour. The whole thing is a huge joke! We are never expected to crawl up that perpendicular rock face! We are, though, and do. With quiet assurance our instructions are, "Keep cool," "Take it steadily," "Make sure of every handgrip and toe rest," and, to our own astonishment, we are soon spread-eagled half-way up. Little later the difficulty is surmounted, only to be encountered half-a-dozen times, till finally we reach the outermost point of a projecting buttress, panting, perspiring. Amongst other wishes, oh, for a loan of Sindbad's Roc or the Enchanted horse!

Only 9,000 feet above sea level, and right behind us the last 1,200 feet of Malte Brun, apparently vertical. What a glorious panorama of glacier, ice-crowned peaks, untrodden snow-fields! Range after range, north, south, west. The great Tasman Glacier far below visible for almost its complete eighteen miles. What a magnificent, stately sweep it presents, its graceful curves the very poetry of form! From this leight baffling mazes of crevasse resolve themselves into regular semi-circular ploughings. Chaotic ice-falls, yesterday so tiresome, now assume due proportion as mere ripples in the gigantic ice-stream, Darwin, Prinz Rudolf, Haast, Hochstetter, Ball and countless other glaciers each swelling the great frozen cataract, the largest tributaries temporarily deflecting the main stream with curious riplings.

In this crystalline atmosphere distance is most deceptive, few things more difficult to attain than a due sense of proportion. That point just across the Mueller Glacier, temptingly inviting an after-dinner saunter, takes at least a couple of hours' hard walking. That silver thread far below, glistening amongst the dull moraine debris, is an impassable river. Those tinsel threads

gleaming down the ranges compel careful negotiation on closer acquaintance, as they dash impetuously down their boulder-strewn courses. Joyously leaping and dashing in their new-born strength, wildly delighting in their release from glacier prison, how little they dream of the gloomy disappearance so close at hand! With what sullen murmurings they disappear into dark ice tunnels beneath the main glacier, reappearing miles below at the terminal face with geyser-like spoutings, where their real race seaward begins.

How difficult to realise those rugged, cornice-tipped peaks of Sefton are a mile and a-half vertically above the Hermitage! That Aorangi towers more than two miles above us! But when you have spent laborious hours climbing Mount Ollivier to view the first, or Ball Pass to view the latter, and still find each the better part of a mile overhead, some faint idea of their magnitude begins to be appreciated. So that, whilst distance is needed to correctly gauge relative heights, and Mount Cook only stands pre-eminent—like Joseph's sheaf—when viewed from fifty miles away, altitude and propinquity are equally necessary to a due understanding of magnitude and detail. Mountains must be viewed from mountains—from below, their perspective is distorted and bulk dwarfed.

Climbing the Ball Pass in the early rawness of an autumn morning, great seas of rolling clouds beneath, sunrise just tinting opening masses beyond the ranges, was a delightful experience. Mountain tops seemed to float like islands on a sea of down, the soft draperies beneath opening and closing like some garment, its wearer doubtfully undetermined whether to discard or not. Indeed, I doubt if anything gave greater pleasure than the wonderful phenomena of cloud-form and colour amongst the mountains. Never by any chance those great banks of billowy cumulus flocks; but broken up into a thousand strange forms, now like the feathery wings of Ariel, or as if some great magician had distorted and magnified millions of times snow crystal forms; again, as if their passage across the rugged peaks had shredded them into filaments light as thistle-down. Now gloriously transparent against a sky of turquoise; later, spun magically into Oriental riot of gorgeous colouring—a Penelope work-basket of rainbow hues.

This startling changefulness never lost its glamour; the eye never wearied of their swift transitions. As we wait and watch, from the west steal invisible moisture-laden currents, condensing on the cold mountain tops, till each peak waves a filmy banner, advancing, receding, disappearing, then re-forming



Mount Cook Range, from Malte Brun.



View from the Malte Brun Hut, looking across Tasman Glacier to Mts. Elie de Beaumont, Green and Coronet Peaks.