

# UP IN THE CLOUDS



**M**OUNTAINEERING is a sport very dear to the hearts of a host of New Zealanders. In Italy, like our own country, there are heights which represent an irresistible temptation to the ardent climber. This article, contributed by a well-known NZ alpine adventurer and sportsman, gives a background to the sport as Kiwis may expect to experience it, if they remain in Italy this winter.

By W. G. McC.

**T**HE playground of Europe includes Italy as well as Switzerland. In the east there are the limestone pinnacles of the Tyrol shared with Austria and Germany. They offer mountaineers most difficult rock climbs, and stalkers some of the best chamois in the world.



Like their descendants in NZ, these chamois, which are more numerous in Austria, have epidemics of venereal disease.

Further west are the Bernese Alps with endless snowfields and scores of peaks which are ice-climbs all the way. New Zealanders who have cut their way about the Mt. Cook district should be more at home there than in the Tyrol. West again there are some of the most famous mountains in the world—Monte Rosa, the Matterhorn and Mt. Blanc. Italy shares the first two with Switzerland and the last with France. Just as the Southern Alps are usually simple from the West Coast, so these peaks are moderate climbs from the North and extremely difficult from the Italian side.

Monte Rosa and Mt. Blanc illustrate this point perfectly. Seen from the

Swiss side they are like St. Peter's cathedral, impressive because of their great snow domes. But from Italy they have grace and beauty, the buttresses and pinnacles of some lovely Gothic cathedral.

Courmayer is the best Italian valley from which to see the black ribs of Mt. Blanc ascending to broken glaciers and narrow ice ridges. From Macunagna, Monte Rosa is a series of precipitous *arettes* separating narrow *couloirs* raked by avalanches and falling stones. The Division may see it from the hills above Milan—see it touched with the first faint flush of dawn. That restless genius, Leonardo da Vinci, saw it from there and was not satisfied until he had climbed the lower slopes.

The Matterhorn is difficult from any angle but is exceedingly so from the Italian side. Therefore, wire ropes have

