

just before 11 o'clock. Although forced to retrace our steps on two occasions, the ascent was not so difficult as we had anticipated. The day was somewhat dull and bad for photographic purposes, but the view of Mount Cook across the great gulch of the Hooker Valley was indescribably grand. The whole Mount Cook Range from the summit to the Canterbury Plains was in view. The Westland side was heavily clouded, and on our descent we entered a dense fog, but found no difficulty in reaching our bivouac, and subsequently our comfortable high camp. Our ascent was made by the western *arête*. On the one side was the La Perouse Glacier, and on the other the Gulch Glacier, a deep gorge surrounded by perpendicular rock-faces from two to three thousand feet high.

"On the 5th February we made an expedition to the head of the valley, and ascended the Balfour Range immediately opposite Mount Tasman. It was a glorious day, and the point of view was very favourable, permitting us to take numerous photos.

"On the 7th February, starting from a bivouac on the north side of the glacier and well up the valley, we attempted to traverse the two great icefalls at the head of La Perouse. We got through the first one, and were struggling with the second when the weather changed, and we were forced to retire.

"On the 9th February three of the party, Newton, Low, and Alec. Graham, completed the ascent of David's Dome, 10,410 ft. (Mount Hicks). I was suffering from an injury to my foot, and was unable to tackle such an undertaking, so remained behind on this occasion. The day was perfect, and the Rev. Mr. Newton secured some excellent photos of the neighbouring peaks.

"This ended our holiday, and with a record of two virgin ascents we had to be content. The valley is a very interesting one not only to the alpine climber, but also to the naturalist—it is remarkable for the immensity of the rocks and boulders on the mountain-sides, on the river-margin, and in the river-bed. Tony's Rock, the largest noticed, is about 120 ft. high, 800 ft. round, and carries a forest on its top. It is also rich in alpine flora, and is well worth a visit from any one prepared to put up with some roughing.

"On account of the plentiful supply of wood right into the heart of the Alps, camping out can be made quite pleasant and comfortable in spite of the rather copious rainfall that is common to these valleys."

QUEENSTOWN.

By special Act passed last session the park and esplanade were brought under the control of the Government, to be administered by this Department.

The bowling-green has also been taken over from the local club, and works are now in hand for its improvement. A number of garden-seats were procured and placed in suitable positions.

Since taking over, work in the park has been regularly carried on by the Department's ground staff. The park fencing, gates, and band-rotunda have been repaired and repainted, and some necessary conveniences erected. The bathing-shed was also renovated and painted.

SOUTHERN LAKES AND SOUNDS.

Te Anau Accommodation-house.

This house has been acquired by the Department, and when the Government takes over the Lake Te Anau steamer the Department will be in a position to control the traffic for this wonderful district to the best advantage of visitors.

Glade House.

An increase in the traffic through this house is recorded for the year, the gross takings amounting to £699 0s. 6d., as compared with £370 13s. for the previous twelve months.

The contractor for the new house has experienced considerable difficulty in getting his supplies up the lake, but good progress has been made, and the work will be completed during the winter.

Lake Manapouri.

The private interests in the steamer on this lake were acquired by the Government, and a launch, the "Manurere," was purchased and put into commission during the season. This craft was brought from Auckland, and an illustration in this report shows it on the way from Lumsden to Manapouri.

From the 1st November to the close of the financial year 218 tickets were issued, of the value of £163 10s.

Lake Wanaka.

A well-graded track to the top of Mount Iron, a conspicuous feature of the district, was completed, thus providing a short and easy means of access from Pembroke.

Te Anau—Milford Sound Track.

The number of tourists over this route again shows an increase as compared with the previous year, the figures being 287 for 1905-6, as against 275 for 1904-5. The receipts show a still more satisfactory result, the takings on the track for the year under review amounting to £358 12s. 6d., as compared with £299 18s. during the previous year.

In order to reduce the number of stages on the route, a new hut is being erected about three miles nearer Te Anau than the present Mintaro Hut. This will enable the trip to be done in three stages of ten, nine, and thirteen miles respectively from Glade House to Milford Sound.

The material for a large hut at the Sutherland Falls stage of the track has been forwarded to Milford. When completed this, with the present huts, will provide ample sleeping accommodation and living-room for visitors' and caretakers' apartments. Great difficulties are met with in carrying building-material to this site, as everything has to be carried on the men's shoulders, but it is expected the work will be completed by the opening of the season.

The plans for a foot-bridge over the Arthur River have been prepared, and its construction and the snagging of the river and Lake Ada will be put in hand as soon as the staff have completed the works now in hand.