

THE SUMMIT TRACK.—II.

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(Continued from June issue.)

In the first part of this article, which appeared in last month's issue, the trip from the Lyttelton Lighthouse to Dyer's Pass was described. Beyond this the track is only formed for five or six miles, that is to Cooper's Knobs. Thence, however, there is a surveyed line passing over the highest hills of the peninsula at or near their summits. (Mt. Herbert 3,050 ft., Mt. Fitzgerald somewhat lower, and Mt. Sinclair 2,800 ft.). Then it drops down to the Pigeon Bay saddle, where it meets the well made Akaroa Summit Road. I shall deal with the various sections separately. The first from Dyer's Pass to Kennedy's Bush is the most popular portion of the whole route, the remaining part is known only to a few of the sturdiest walkers, though it affords some of the finest views of the peninsula.

After leaving the Rest House at Dyer's Pass we continue still westward over the crests of the hills a distance of some two or three miles to the Kennedy's Bush House. Built from a chocolate coloured stone found in the immediate neighbourhood, its red-roof and brown walls contrast admirably with the green foliage around it. It is intended as a place where people may go to stay for a week end or a few day's rest. There is a glorious outlook over the plains to the great western mountains. All the peaks from Mt. Peel to Mt. Torlesse are readily visible, and on very clear days hills very much farther to the south may be seen, as well as some of the higher summits in the neighbourhood of Mt. Cook. Such a wide view can only be paralleled in a few parts of the world; but still more extensive panoramas present themselves from many parts of the Summit Road near Cashmere Hills. Thence one may often see at least one hundred and fifty miles of mountain range—Tapuaenuka, the giant peak of the Inland Kaikouras, like the morning or evening star, lights up occasionally at sunset or sunrise, while at the opposite end of the view may be seen away to the south and west of Four Peaks, more remote ranges out towards Lake Tekapo. These I have hitherto been unable to identify satisfactorily. Tapuaenuka (9,400 ft.) is the highest peak commonly visible. On a clear frosty morning, when the foothills are snow-clad, almost to their bases, the view is finest. But here let me guard against a common error. It is not the Southern Alps we are looking at, though occasionally some of the peaks of the Main Divide may be seen; but at the mountains of the terminal faces of the westward spurs of the Southern Alps.

Beyond Kennedy's Bush the track goes on for another three miles to Cooper's Knobs. From the summit of these great rocks one sees most clearly the ridged rim of the old Lyttelton volcano. At one time the Lyttelton Hills were probably twice their present height, now there is only the dissected stump of the old volcanic cone—to the geologist a prehistoric relic of intense interest, but to the

public only steep tussock clad slopes. Here behind Governor's Bay the track ends; but survey pegs and an occasional flag mark its route to the next stopping place, the Kaituna Hut. This is some seven miles further on. There is a steep descent to Gebbie's Pass, then a tortuous route along the low ridges that form the watershed between the head of the bay and Gebbies Valley. This area is so deeply dissected by eastern and western valleys that overlap at their inner ends, that it would be easy here to miss the line of the track. From the southern side of the pass, by a steady ascent, partly by old grass covered tracks the road runs up towards the Kaituna Hut, passing close under the great volcanic dykes—the largest in the whole system of hills. These huge rocky walls with their transverse pillars, seem like gigantic cyclopean ruins rather than natural formations. Not far beyond them the Kaituna hut, as yet unfinished, but comfortable enough for those accustomed to camping. Thence to the Hill-top Hotel above Duvauchelles on Akaroa Harbour, the traveller must find his own way, over the summit of Castle Rock (Mt. Herbert Peak) and Mt. Herbert. Then he will pick up the old Purau-line, the main route sixty years ago from Lyttelton to Akaroa, at one time running through nothing but dense totaramatai forest of which nothing now is left. Somewhere here stood the giant totara tree, whose grandeur so impressed Bishop Selwyn, that he spent some hours carving on it a verse from the Psalms to the glory of God and in praise of the tree.

From the top of Mt. Sinclair one of the finest views of the peninsula is obtained. Many years ago in a somewhat 'purple passage,' I endeavoured to describe it, and the effusion may be worth quoting. Fortunately perhaps I have been unable after search to find my old description, and so will only outline here in more restrained terms, some of the features visible. At one's feet spread out like a blue pocket handkerchief lies Pigeon Bay. Away to the south are the huge caldera walls of Akaroa Harbour, showing here and there a patch of the waters—behind is the long and at one time densely bushed Little River Valley. Like a great moat round a castle wall glimpses of the ocean appear beyond the high cliffs of the eastern capes; and away in the distance shimmer like the Delectable Mountains, the snow clad Kaikouras.

An easy descent from Mt. Sinclair brings us down to the Main Akaroa Road at the Hill Top Hotel. Here the Summit Road joins the arterial road system of the peninsula, and here too for the present my description ends.

But I cannot leave this short account without a word upon another aspect of the matter. We owe this magnificent hill road almost entirely to the energies of Mr. H. G. Ell, M.P. He has planned and carried out the work in the face of immense obstacles and difficulties with the assistance of the meagre financial support from the public and the government. The undertaking is still far from complete and urgently in need of further assistance, for the maintenance of what has already been done, let