

FRANZ JOSEF

GLACIER

ONLY TEN MILES FROM
THE SEA

FOREST TRACKS LEAD TO THE
ICE RIVER

There must be few glaciers in the world as beautiful and as accessible as the Franz Josef. The beauties of the great glacier itself are almost excelled by the marvels of scenery which confront the traveller who walks to the glacier along one or other of the fine bush tracks. This is the most striking feature of the Franz Josef—that its ice should push so far down from its desolate source into the forest.

Usually glaciers wend their slow and stately way far from places accessible to man. But, the Franz Josef is friendly; one thinks of a crystal giant who has glided far from his alpine home into an avenue of sub-tropical forest to watch the ways of men. The huge terminal fall, half a mile wide and 100 feet high, is only 10 miles away from the sea and only 700 feet above ocean level. It is only two miles by an easy path from the Waiho Hotel through a fairyland of ferny forests to the place where the glacier's sparkling body, ever renewed, feeds the roaring Waiho river.

Eight and a Half Miles Long

As Franz Josef's course of eight and a half miles begins at a height of 9000 feet, the slow fall of ice is heaved into marvellous shapes, ever changing. One has an impression of supernatural artificers, making and breaking their palaces and castles, for huge towers and spires and battlements of crystal are going in or out of place. From dawn to dusk the vast masses of ice catch the light and play with it and turn it to hues of blue and green, pink and orange.

There is one aspect of this region which could perhaps receive more attention from the many who speak and print their praise of Waiho and the Franz Josef. That is the very fine facilities for climbing offered by a chain of mountain huts accessible from the Waiho Hostel. The region provides scope for wide climbing activity on rock and ice from any of the well-appointed huts. From the Alma, for instance, it would be possible to put in a fortnight of unsurpassed opportunity for the mountaineer. The same region and the same hut could form the base for extensive ski-ing, and authorities have stated that the basin of the Franz Josef, with its great snow-fields, is one of the finest ski-ing grounds to be found.

By the development of aviation on the West Coast the Franz Josef is being brought within very easy reach of the outside world. Hitherto the Waiho Hostel has attracted a steady flow of tourists all through the year, but there are signs that this traffic will be increased considerably.

Prem. Dec. 1934

MIGHTY GLACIERS

John B. Fox's 1872
A PREMIER'S VISIT.

See Ramm's Journal 1878
THE FRANZ JOSEF AND THE
FOX.

In R. C. Reid's book, "Rambles on the Golden Coast," published in 1886, there is an interesting account of a visit to the Franz Josef Glacier of the Hon. W. Fox, Premier of the colony, and Mr Mueller, chief surveyor of Westland. The party passed Ross and went along the bed of the Waiho River, to visit the glacier at its head. They reached a camping ground at the foot of Mount Mueller at evening. The account says:—

"The scenery was charming. The widening river-bed and ever-winding, ever-rushing stream, the changing patches of bush and scrub, the lofty hills backed by the towering mountains clothed in their bright snowy garments, and then the glacier, picturesque and beautiful, bathed in the sunshine and clinging to the mountain with icy hand; blood-red blossoming rata contrasting with the dull green bush. On the road up, sketches of the glacier were taken by Mr Fox and Mr Brown. The horses, with the aid of a few strokes of a bill-hook, were all placed in natural stalls in the scrub of the river bank, and fed, fires were lit, dinner was cooked, and tents were pitched. Breakfast had, and horses fed and watered, the journey afoot up the river was commenced. The highest point attainable by horses is the forks, and a distance of about two miles has to be travelled afoot to reach the glacier. In some places the river seems to have risen about 30 feet, and occasionally to have completely covered the summit of its banks. Approaching nearer, ever-changing views of the glacier present themselves deeper and deeper becomes the bluish-green tinge, deepening still more in the depth of fantastic clefts in the icy mass, the tips of its picturesque points or many steeples, one might say, seem to become shaded in mourning for the passing away of the bright white winter snows. The effect of the view of the glacier from a short distance was considerably heightened by the rata on the adjoining hills being covered with their bright red flowers, contrasting with the dull green bushes and the delicately tinted glacier, and all together bathed in a flood of sunshine.

"The glacier is about half a mile across, the point rising abruptly like a wall, here and there cut into caves, the lower part having at a short distance much the appearance of a grey rock, from the gravel and stones cover-

ing it. From a large cave at the southern end flows forth the first of the Waiho, which runs close across the front of the glacier. Upwards for miles lies the solid icy mass filling up the huge gully between the lofty hills, and finally hidden from sight by a bend of the mountains. The ice assumes all manner of fantastic shapes. At the base there is a perfect bridge, bright and clear, but not to be trodden by human foot. Higher up is a huge pinnacle with an eye through which the sunlight seemed to stream. These were striking points, but ever new beauties in the view met the wandering eye, and the effect produced on the mind is beyond description. The low altitude of this glacier—about 675 feet above the sea level, and the luxuriant vegetation in close proximity to the ice, a vegetation covering the hills on both sides of the glacier for a height of from 800 feet to 1000 feet—are the most remarkable features. Further on we get a sketch of a glacier at one of the sources of Cook's River."

The party, says the narrative, proceeded up the river, but found the first and second fords rather deep. The riverbed at the mouth is considerably less in breadth than that of the Waiho, but higher up it opens into a far more extensive country, some parts covered with high scrub and grass, appearing to afford an excellent run for cattle. After following the river from its mouth for three or four miles, the party proceed-

ed in a north-easterly direction for about five miles, when they came within view of a grand glacier falling from the lofty mountains in one solid body, and conveying the idea of a mighty, rushing, overwhelming river suddenly chained and fixed by frost. When first presented to the view the scene was most grand and singular. By perseverance the glacier was reached, but to obtain a good view of it, crossing the river to the south side was necessary, and that, at first sight, seemed impossible. Soon, however, the discovery was made that close up to the base of the glacier the river ran in several streams. Crossing some of these, and crawling over large boulders, and sometimes over the lower parts of the glacier, the party succeeded in reaching the south side in safety, when Mr Fox took some sketches of the magnificent scenery before him. The debris continually falling down the glacier was very considerable, and the whole of the lower part appears from a short distance as if composed of grey stones. On the southern side of the point stands a lofty wooded hill, from which a fine view of the stupendous mass of ice can be had, but there was not sufficient time to examine it from that spot. The appearance of the glacier when closely approached is not so picturesque as the Waiho Glacier, but is perhaps more nobly grand in its simplicity. Its height is 770 feet, and therefore nearly 100 feet higher than the Waiho glacier. The water does not seem to flow out of it as from the Waiho Glacier, but bubbles up in its front where there is a remarkable fountain throwing out a great body of water, boiling up some feet in height. The effect of the whole view, like that of the Waiho glacier, is much heightened by the bright red of the rata flowers. As the party proposed to return to Gillespie's Beach the same day, but little time could be spared at the glacier, and having christened it the "Fox Glacier," the return was commenced soon after 2 p.m. Travelling homeward, several stoppages were made, and excellent views obtained of the glacier and Mount Cook range in their majestic grandeur.

16 June May 24. 1913

THE SOUTHERN ALPS.

A GRADUAL RECORD OF DISCOVERY.

LAKES, FIORDS, AND PEAKS.

(FROM A CORRESPONDENT.)

A well-known writer on Alpine climbing once saw in the parlour of a cottage in England a wonderful erection of what appeared to be brown paper and shavings, built up in rock-like fashion, covered with little toy-box trees and dotted here and there with bits of mirror glass and cardboard houses. "What," inquired the visitor, "may this be?" "That," said the owner of the house, very slowly, "is the work of my late 'usband—a representation of the Halps, as close as 'e could imagine it, for 'e never was abroad." There are still many thousands of people in New Zealand who, like this lady's "late 'usband," have but the vaguest idea of what their own Alps are like. The Alps of New Zealand extend in a series of ranges from the north to the extreme south of the Middle Island. In the south the ranges, which run in different directions, are intersected by the splendid fiords on the one side and by the arms of the long, deep lakes on the other. The mountain masses in some cases come sheer down to the water's edge, and their bases are far below the level of the lakes or of the sea. Many of their lower slopes are densely wooded, while their summits are capped with perpetual snow and ice. In the region of Milford Sound they rise steeply from the water's edge, and their solid and sometimes smooth granite walls seem uninviting to the foot of the climber. Going further north we have another fine series of mountains in the region of lakes Wakatipu and Wanaka. Though not high, as heights go in the European Alps, or in the Himalaya, they are imposing mountains. It is only within comparatively recent years that passes have been discovered between the lakes and the sounds, and although these passes do not lead the traveller beyond the sub-Alpine heights, they take him through scenery that is no less remarkable for its beauty than for its grandeur—a fitting introduction to those greater marvels in the heart of the Southern Alps.

THE MAIN CHAIN.

Northwards, from Mount Aspiring, which is at the head of this jumble of southern mountains that spreads itself through fiordland and lake-land, the Southern Alps proper extend in an almost unbroken chain along the western side of the Middle Island of New Zealand to where Mount Cook, or Aorangi, rears his snow-crowned ridge above the grim precipices and flanking glaciers, and, dominating the landscape, gives an outlook from sea to sea. The views of this Alpine region are perhaps most wonderful from an altitude of about 11,000ft. on the north-eastern arête. They are magnificently grand. Tasman, the second highest mountain in New Zealand, with his wonderful slopes of snow and ice and a fine snow cornice, is quite close to us on the north. Then comes Mount Ledentfeldt, and the jagged, pinnacled ridge of Haast, which, from this point of view, seems to bid defiance to the mountaineer. Further along on the main divide rises the square top of Mount Haidinger, from which the magnificent schruns and broken ice of the Haast glacier fall away towards the Tasman Valley. Beyond, the rocky pinnacle of De la Beche, and the beautifully pure, snowy peaks of the Minarets, cleave the blue, leading the eye in turn to the gleaming masses of Elie de Beaumont and the Hochstetter Dom at the head of the great Tasman Glacier. Across the valley the rugged mass of Malte Brun towers grandly above all the other rocky peaks of that range, and still further away towards the north-east is the most extensive view of all, range succeeding range, and mountain succeeding mountain for more than a hundred miles, or as far as the keenest eye can penetrate into that pearly haze of distance with which nature delights to finish off her pictures. Sometimes, even on the finest day, a great bank of cloud coming up from the ocean, is spread like a fleecy counterpane over part of the landscape, and the higher peaks come through and stand like pointed islands in a sunlit silver sea. Far below, through the clear air, the climber can trace his early morning steps across the grand plateau and along the narrow snow arêtes that he has laboriously climbed. Lower still are the great schruns and toppling pinnacles of the Hochstetter Ice-fall, and below that again the magnificent eighteen-miles sweep of the great Tasman Glacier. Eastward a few fleecy cloud masses sail over the foothills, and beyond are the plains of Canterbury and the distant sea. From the summit the scene is still magnificent, for, in addition to the views northward and eastward, seen from the lower altitude, there is a glorious Alpine panorama stretching to the south—a thousand untrodden peaks and passes still awaiting the foot of the climber. Through rents in a long stretch of billowy cloud to the westward patches of sea appear like dark lagoons in a sunlit land. Nearer at hand, but still far below, the rivers run like thin streaks of silver through the sombre forests, and the breakers of the Pacific Ocean, in long lines, roll slowly shoreward to spend themselves on shelving beach and rocky headland.