

## "MORT" OF OTTAWA

**A** REQUEST of the President of the Canadian Ski Association being a command, I have the honour of presenting a snap-shot of the pack and myself, taken on a frosty March morning some two years ago, on the Pink Lake Trail. We both look a bit tired, deflated as it were, having followed at breakneck speed a young ski-devil over a five-mile run before breakfast. The lines of the face are not generally so deep on Saturday morning, but the outline of the pack is fuller. This pack has lured many from Ottawa to Camp Fortune, including Percy Douglas, who fondly hoped that it might contain all the requisites for an old-fashioned bar, while there was never anything in it but a loaf of bread and a pound of sausage.

Ski-ing is one of the best things I ever did in my life, though not one of the things I did the best. I strapped skis on for the first time in 1907, threw them away in disgust after a ten-mile run across flat country and over in-



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numerable wire fences, never, never to put them on again, picked them up again however in a moment of weakness the following weekend and never left them off since. My pack, my skis and myself have become inseparable friends and I have, in addition, picked up countless friends on the ski trail.

A very good thing my friends did for me was to appoint me President of the Ottawa Ski Club in 1919. It gave me a chance to lay the blame for my poor ski-ing on the "crushing load" of the cares and worries of the Club, which has become, I am told, in the short span of eight years, one of the largest in the world. My ski-ing has improved a lot lately, however, mainly through reading articles on ski technique which I wrote for the Ottawa Ski Club News.

It has been great fun, through all these years, watching them come over the hills by tens of thousands, since the ball started rolling; it has been great pleasure seeing the lodges of the Club expand from small shacks into stately

structures, and tower after tower, rising from the broken remnants of its wind-blown predecessor, reach into the sky. We hold ourselves very fortunate, my lieutenants and myself, to have played a part in the development of this manly sport, which has brought health and happiness to countless throngs and opened possibilities hitherto undreamed of in the Canadian winter.

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## REMINISCENCES

By PERCY E. NOBBS, Montreal

HAVING been asked by the editor to record my early impressions of ski-ing which go back in Montreal some 25 years, I must begin with a reference to a delightful Christmas holiday spent in Finland in 1901. Our party were staying in a countryside very like what the Laurentians would be if rolled out flat. There was more lake than land and the land carried finer forest than any we see hereabouts with little undergrowth, but plentifully strewn with boulders. Finland is a long distance country and the ski in use there were designed by a slow process of evolution to meet their particular requirements. The first pair I used were loaned me by a friend; they were some ten feet long, a straight groove along the under side, and the spring arch in the middle very pronounced. A loose toe strap and a piece of seal skin with the hair set forward were all the attachments and we wore Finnish beef boots, which for grace and elegance and quirked up toe greatly surpass the shoe-pack of commerce as we know it here. With such a pair of ski the trail one leaves on good snow is as regular as a railway track, and the strides one has taken can only be read by the alternate pole marks. A Finn running on the level on ski really goes on all fours, pushing alternately with his right and left poles and lifting on the spring arch of his ski as he transfers weight from foot to foot; their speed is astounding. The least crookedness on a 10-foot ski will cause divergence or conveyance, both equally unpleasant. As their ski are made of the lightest of woods they will not stand rough usage. There was a barn of vast dimensions near the place of my first introduction to ski, a huge place with a hundred cows downstairs and their winter's feed above. This was the only jumping hill we could find, and one got up a considerable velocity on its roof with long ski well waxed. The landing was not ideal and caused some considerable casualties among the ski, but strange to say not among the skiers.

Twenty-five years ago when I made my debut on the Montreal snows as a skier it was with a very long pair of Finnish ski most unsuited to our terrain. In those days half the skiers here (and this means not over fifty persons) used these Finnish ski. Every now and then a ski would run away from its owner and go snaking off at a wildly accelerating pace down the slopes, with the wickedest "come catch me if you can" leer over its shoulder. I remember a dog being transfixed by a runaway ski. It was our practice to go up to Mount Royal before turning in at night and drop down those still quiet streets between Pine Avenue and Sherbrooke Street. One night I lost a ski at the head of Simpson and came down on one as far as Sherbrooke where I managed to fall comfortably by way of putting on the brakes. The runaway ski which got there before me was retrieved in a snow bank on the south side, and had penetrated six feet of packed snow and taken a quadrant curve in the process.

Between the two types of ski, the Finnish and the Norwegian, there is no compromise; each is a highly specialized and differentiated instrument of locomotion, just as a rifle and a gun are each weapons of percussion and anything that will both spread shot and shoot a ball can do neither to perfection. In so far as the Finnish ski used on the level might and often did last a lifetime, there was I think much incentive to artistic elaboration of form and ornament. Extraordinary grace of line is revealed in many a fine pair made by some village master of his craft. The sports magazine product isn't and never can be the same thing.