

Sierra Club Bulletin, Feb. 1931  
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### SKI-EXPERIENCE

By ANSEL E. ADAMS

FRI TSCH rests his skis upright on a brittle arm of alibaults. "We should wax now; it is a long run down to the lake." While we wait for our skis to warm in the sun we search the gleaming skyline for old landmarks and the peaks and cañons of new adventure....

Just two days before we had thrilled on the extensive snowy summit of Mount Watkins overlooking Yosemite Valley, where we made mile-long runs with the gigantic forms of Clouds Rest and Half Dome rising before us across the abyss of Tenaya Cañon. Beyond these somber masses of sculptured granite, profoundly accentuated by heavy robes of snow, shimmered in white majesty the Merced Range—Mount Clark (the Gothic mountain), and the colorful shoulders of Red Peak. We skimmed the very brink of the great valley; four thousand feet below lay the white threads of roads, and a tiny rectangle of gray, dotted with almost invisible moving specks, which we knew as the large ice-rink in the shadow of Glacier Point. Beyond, steel-toned foothill ranges notched the long vistas of the San Joaquin plain. And against the western sky leaned the coastal mountains, unbelievably blue and far away.

This very morning, at the hour of silence and frosty stars, we were edging along the base of Tenaya Peak, our skis rasping and crunching on the brittle snow. Climbing around the western shoulder of the mountain, we came into full sunlight and a thrilling view of the main-crest peaks, white and cold in the early light. Here the snow was powdery and swift under our skis, but we refrained from downhill running and soon emerged on the summit—the hub of a tremendous wheel of mountain grandeur. A hundred miles of glittering peaks encircled our pinnacle of granite, and far below stretched the shadeless, dazzling plain of frozen Tenaya Lake.

The familiar and intimate aspects of the Sierra that one has learned to love during the long summer days are not obscured by winter snows. Rather the grand contours and profiles of the range are clarified and embellished under the white splendor; the mountains are possessed of a new majesty and peace. There is no sound

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of streams in the valleys; in place of the far-off sigh of waters is heard the thunder-roar of avalanches, and the wind makes only faint and brittle whisper through the snowy forests. To us, four motes on an Earth-gesture of high stone, it appeared that great mountain spirits had assumed white robes of devotion and were standing in silence before the intense sun....

Fritsch whips his skis on the snow and leaps down the long billowy slope; a cloud of powdery snow gleams in his wake. We follow; long spacious curves and direct plunges into the depths that take our breath with sheer speed and joy. Down and down through the crisp singing air, riding the white snow as birds ride on the wind, conscious of only free unhampered motion. Soon we are at the borders of icy Tenaya Lake—two thousand feet of altitude have vanished in a few moments of thrilling delight....

Today we are moving on to Tuolumne Meadows. All the bright morning we were conscious of a deep stirring in the air, the world quickening to some obscure activity. Now, as we come upon the lower stretch of the meadows, we are aware of a remote, ominous sound, insistent as the murmur of a sea-shell pressed to the ear. Soon is this pulsing world-sound swelling to a deep and throbbing roar—the organ-tone of storm-wind sweeping the skies and mountains with immeasurable power. A huge dragon of cloud crawls out of the southwest, and with it comes a horde of gray demons, darkening the sun and veiling the summits. We arrive at our cabin under a leaden sky as the first snow is drifting down on the wind.

After several days, we emerge on a new and glorious environment, for the storm has piled a great splendor on the world, and peak and forest gleam with frosty beauty. The morning is clear and cold, the last stars burn with diamond light as we cross the meadows on our long run to Merced Cañon. The new day lifts over the silent range, Mount Conness takes sudden fire, blood-red and golden light flames on the long Sierra crest, and the crisp snow at our skis sparkles in the first sun. At Tuolumne Pass we find true alpine conditions—supremely fine snow, swift and dry; grand open areas above the last timber, undulating for miles under cobalt skies; peaks and crags flaunting long banners of wind-driven snow. A world of surpassing beauty, so perfect and intense that we cannot imagine the return of summer and the fading of the crystalline splendor encompassing our gaze.

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The white magnificence yields to the clean motion of our skis, and we glide over the glistening dome of the world and launch our long descent to the Merced River. Down we rush, cutting the sharp air with meteor motion; always the cool rushing wind, and the shrill hiss of skis upon snow. Above us towers the noble Merced Range, wave upon wave of lofty stone glittering in the low winter sun. A huge ledge lifts suddenly on the curved face of the hill; we turn in a bright mist of ski-spun snow and slant anew along the cañon wall. The mountains soar higher into the flaming sky, and the blue depths rise to enfold us as we skim down through the dusk to the shadowed valley with the swiftness known only to the ski.

CROSSING TUOLUMNE PASS ON SKIS  
 Yosemite National Park  
 Photograph by Ansel Adams



PLATE XX.

S. C. BULLETT, FEB. 1931



SKIING IN THE VOSEARTH HIGH SIERRA  
Mount Piute, at the right  
Photography by ALAN L. BROWN

### AN ASCENT OF THE MIDDLE TETON

By ERICOT M. FRYXELL, GRAND TETON NATIONAL PARK

IT was late August, 1929, in the Grand Teton Park, and the summer drouth had finally given way to light rains. Fall was at hand, and tourist travel had dropped off until the camp-ground at Jenny Lake was virtually deserted. After the somewhat feverish activities of the first summer of the park, calm had settled over the Jackson Hole country. The moose were coming down out of the cañons, stampeding the horses at night—to the infinite disgust of the horse wranglers who in the mornings repeatedly found that their animals had been scattered. Flowers there were in abundance still, lending tones of purple and yellow to the meadows and mountainsides.

For weeks there had been scarcely a cloud along the Teton skyline, and little of snow—a panoply of bare peaks, sharply defined and bright as steel points in the transparent atmosphere. Day after day we had beheld to the west the incomparable panorama of the Teton Range, motionless, silent, changeless.

How different now! The clouds had come, at once as inseparable a feature of the mountains as the peaks themselves, softening the sharp outlines, bringing life and unceasing change to the scene. One could gaze on indefinitely, forgetful of all else, at the endless succession of compositions in mist and mountain—gray banks of clouds into which the peaks thrust their lofty summits, long silvery banners that wreathed the granite brows of the mountains or trailed across their feet, heavy fogs which settled into and filled the cañons. There were days when clouds blotted out the range entirely, and, for all that was apparent of them, the Teton might as well have been a thousand miles away. Back in the range the thunder rolled, giving voice to the scene.

To leave at this season, the most intriguing of all, was my lot each year, and reluctantly I packed up on August 27th preparatory to a journey home. Not strange that to the pleadings of my friend, Phil Smith—that I stay over *one* more day for a final trip into the Teton— I listened, and yielded. We would make the 28th a memorable day, one which would yield a store of memories on which we could subsist till spring would bring us back again. We decided to climb