

Several days in the car to Invercargill via the Clutha and back via the Waitaki, then home to our mountains at the Hermitage and Ball Hut where Mike again joined us. While waiting for him we took a look at the Caroline Glacier and went up to see if the Ball Glacier still reaches the Caroline - it doesn't. More wind that night and the keen trying to get in. Mike turned up the next day but as the weather looked a bit dirty to risk being caught with a heavy pack travelling up the Tasman Glacier, we went down to the airfield and went the easy way to within two hours climbing of Tasman Hut. The wind again curtailed our activities, but we did have a look at the Godley Valley from the Tasman Saddle (where we mean to climb this November/December) and shared the hut with a very decent climbing class. The wind had us all hutbound, but what with playing bridge, and the class practising prussic loops to the rafters, the time soon went. Then for ten solid hours we travelled down the Tasman and I was tired, especially the last 200 feet up the dratted lateral moraine. Back to civilization after a heavenly bath at Ball Hut and so home. Now I can draw a breath. Howzat for the oldies!

YOUR BEST FRIEND COULD BE ONE

Mt. Albert,  
Tuesday 3rd.

Dear John,

No doubt you will be somewhat surprised to receive a letter from me, as it is only one week since we last saw each other. However I have just experienced such a shattering phenomenon, and one of a very unusual nature, that I felt I must unburden myself to someone who will not scoff.

Last weekend I was collecting samples in the headwaters of the Karamatura Valley. (The same spot that we investigated a couple of months ago.) I was particularly interested in studying the cross-pollination of *Coprosma robusta* with *C. lucida* and *C. australis* and trying to identify in my own mind the extent of hybridisation in each of the samples I found. You know, it is most interesting how the leaf formation is.... But I digress. I had just found a rather unusual sample when:-

aaahheeeaaahhgrrrraaahhee!

A terrible blood-curdling roar - animal like, but fiendish in its spine-chilling ferocity - shattered my happy ponderings. I began trembling like the very leaves I had been studying. I was in a quandary to explain the awful sound. I could think only that it belonged to a maddened boar. But even as I crouched lower into the undergrowth there was a series of crashes as a large body thrashed through the bush, grunting and roaring. To make matters worse there came a scream from the same vicinity - a girl's scream.

What could I do? All I had with me was my collecting bag and magnifying glass - hardly boar catching gear. I must confess I shrank into the very ground; not bearing to look; dreading what would happen next. There was a swift running of feet on the nearby track and another scream as the pursued girl raced past within yards of me. And almost immediately a heavy thrashing of the bushes and thumping of the ground as the pursuer followed. As it passed, it let out a most evil.... perhaps chuckle is the best description: A chuckle as if from someone who is quite potty - deep throated and terrible.

The sounds of the chase moved swiftly away from me as I waited with bated breath for the inevitable end. But it never came! Perhaps it was a swift killing. Perhaps the poor victim died of heart failure.