

WESTERN CANADA IN 1933.

By A. M. BINNIE.

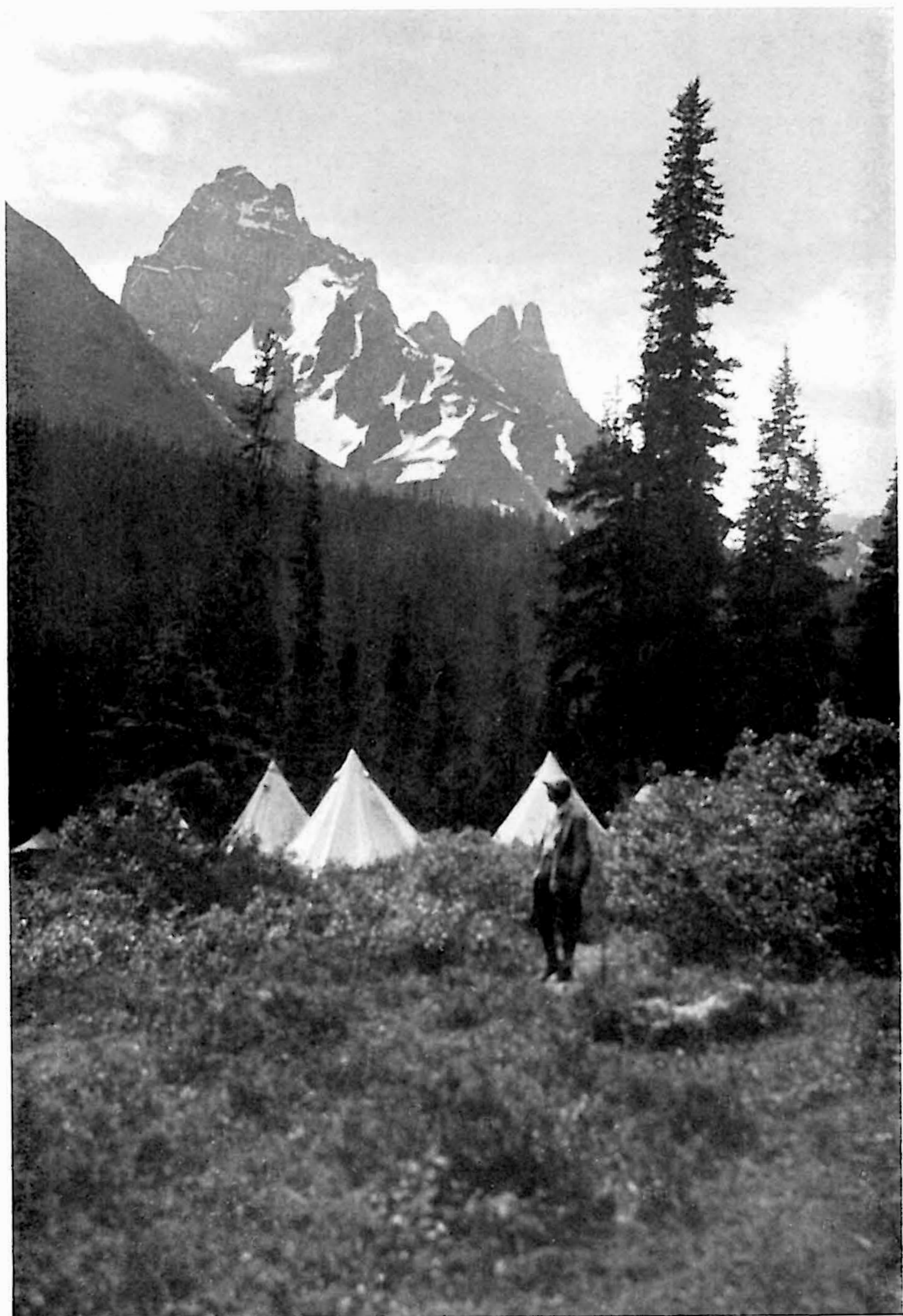
THE mountains of Western Canada have received much attention in recent issues of the JOURNAL, and new expeditions of many kinds have been recorded. This account has no such pretensions. It is a simple tale of the experiences of a solitary wanderer on his way home from the Pacific, paying a first visit to these mountains.

The Alpine Club of Canada had hospitably invited me to attend its annual camp in Paradise Valley. On July 16, 1933, after a day at Banff at the Club-house, which is an excellent headquarters, I was taken by the morning 'bus to Lake Louise, from which the camp was about two hours' walk. Paradise Valley is the first valley to the S. from Lake Louise. Mark Twain did not provide the name, for which Wilcox in no satirical mood is responsible.¹ The camp was pitched by the creek at a height of about 6300 ft., on the same site as a pre-war club camp, traces of which still remained. At this point the valley is narrow, shut in on the S. by the cliffs of Temple and on the other side by the screes of Aberdeen. The upper end of the valley is closed magnificently by Hungabee, on which, even so late in the year, were thick remains of the exceptional winter snowfall.

I arrived two days before the official opening of the camp, but I was fortunate in finding some members already in possession. After spending the first day by Lake Annette, tempting but far too cold, on the second I ascended Temple from Sentinel Pass, with two of the boys who were running the camp. There is a track over the pass, and the remainder of the route lies over that kind of slate-heap which is exhausting to ascend and impossible to glissade down. Further, it is most destructive to boots. We were rewarded with a clear view, which provided me with a much-needed geography lesson. We returned to a bustling camp.

The Club camps have previously been described in these pages²; and this one, I understand, ran true to form. It was simply a delightful round of eating, climbing, eating,

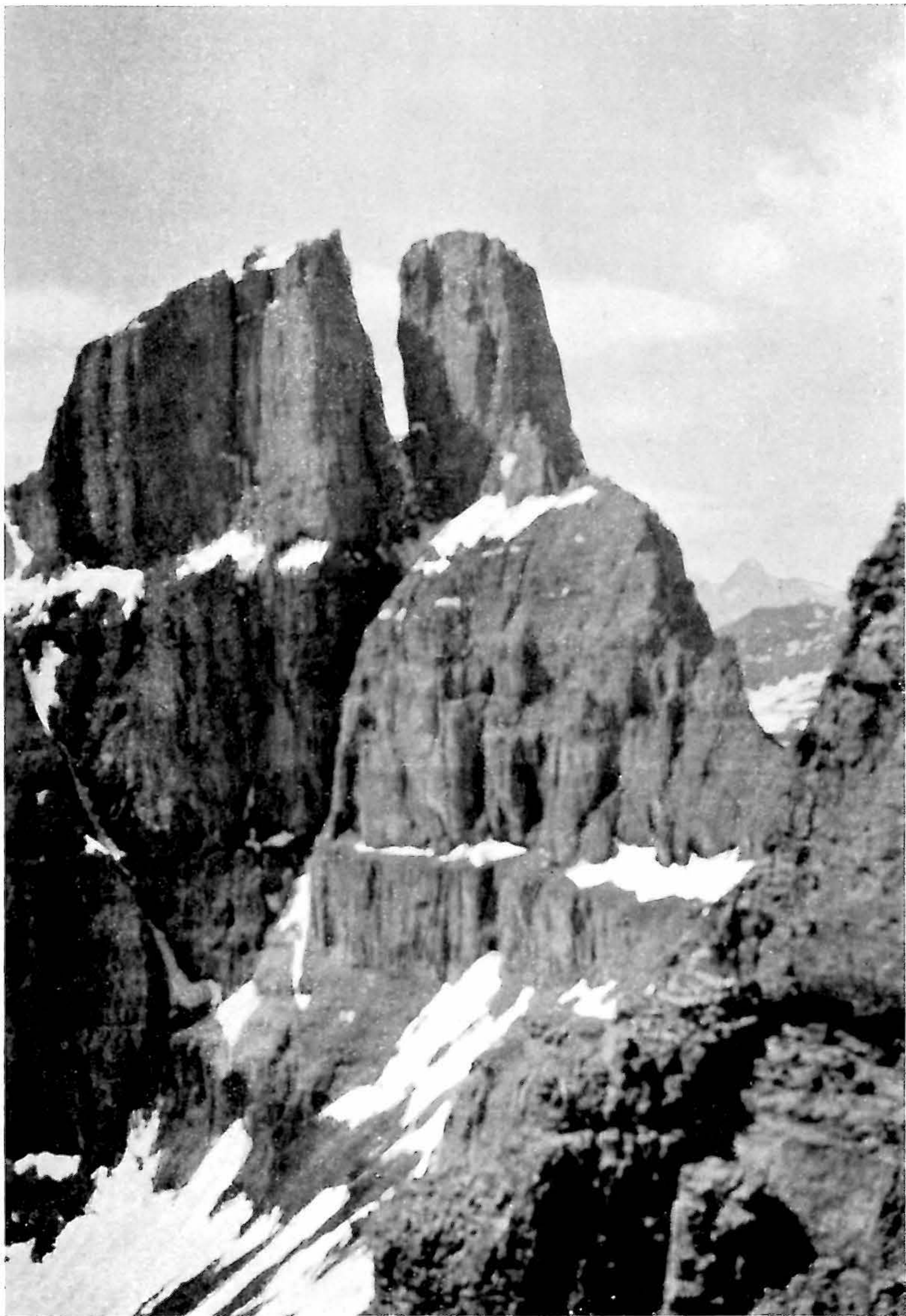
¹ *A.J.* 18, 223.² *E.g. ibid.* 24, 490.



Photo, Miss K. Gardiner.]

PINNACLE AND EIFFEL FROM CAMP IN PARADISE VALLEY.

[To face p. 80.]



Photo, A. M. Binnie.]

EIFFEL FROM PINNACLE.

listening (at the camp fire), and sleeping, that representing the sequence of events of an ordinary day. The first day, however, was bad, with a little snow at intervals and a mid-day temperature of 38° . To me it seemed miserably cold, but the natives appeared to think nothing of it, wearing shorts and little else, as if it were the height of summer. But then there set in a spell of fine weather, the like of which had not come my way for years. Haddo and Aberdeen were the first objective with a party of members who wished to graduate. The expedition presented no great difficulty; but it was not eventless, owing to the loss of two alpenstocks. One rapidly disappeared in the direction of Lake Louise, and the other was cast away down the steep and frozen snow slope which we were descending on our return. Its gyrations were impressive.

The next two days I was fortunate to be one of a party led by Edward Feuz, who bore an axe on which was inscribed the name of one of our most prominent members. We first climbed Pinnacle. It is necessary to ascend the long N.W. shoulder overlooking Sentinel Pass and, when the upper cliffs are reached, to traverse round to the Pinnacle-Eiffel col. Here we roped. The mountain is now adorned with two fixed cables, which afforded a great opportunity to our cinematographer. The lower turns a loose gully, climbable but dangerous to any but a small party. The upper, almost at the top, is very strenuous. It avoids the necessity of traversing round on to the steep and frozen N. face. Roger Neave, a few days later, made a new route, very severe in parts, from the Sentinel Pass side. From the summit we were able to discuss the North Tower of Eiffel. It appears inaccessible except by those detestable engineering methods with which we are now so familiar.

Mitre occupied us the following day. We reached Mitre Pass in two hours, the snow being in good condition. The ridge to the summit cannot be followed direct from the pass, but the bulge is turned without serious difficulty by a long traverse to the left. Then several caves, reminiscent of Wales, two or three walls and an earth gully lead back on to the arête, which is followed to the summit, two hours from the pass. This is said to be the best rock-climb in the district. The rock is comparatively firm, but the real charm of the expedition lies in the great variety of the obstacles which are encountered. After an off-day I accompanied a party on a three-day visit to the Club cabin at Lake O'Hara, which we reached in great heat by way of Wastach, Wenkchemna, and

Opabin Passes. Colonel Bell took me up Oderay next day by the snowfield and S.E. ridge. This was the third consecutive summit which greeted us warmly and rewarded us with an hour's sleep. Bad news awaited us in the evening: one of the party did not return to the cabin. Of the events which led to this the less said the better. Suffice it that, after an anxious ascent almost to the summit of Biddle, the search party next day discovered the missing man, crag-fast but unhurt. By a daring traverse on steep and rotten rock, Edward Feuz was able to reach him and assist him to easy ground.

We returned to camp next day. A 4.0 A.M. start was made, which is early for the Rockies. By means of the col between Huber and Wiwaxy and the glacier on the N. side of Huber, we attained the S.E. ridge of Victoria, and reached the South Peak at 9.40. This is a pleasantly varied route, which provides bush-whacking, rock-climbing and step-cutting in satisfactory proportions. We returned by the usual route to the Abbot Pass hut, and arrived in camp before dusk by way of Mitre Pass. This concluded the climbs from camp. The Club's annual meeting was held next day, at which, I am told, the only business of importance was the provision of yet one more badge. Bad weather then set in and the camp rapidly dispersed. The camp was as successful as ever, except for the almost complete absence of young men. Many theories were put forward to account for this, but none found general acceptance. Whatever the reason, it is still the fact that these delightful gatherings must inevitably cease unless they are strongly supported by the younger members.

A few days later the weather induced me to go up with Seccord of Winnipeg to the chalet at the Plain of the Six Glaciers, about an hour from Lake Louise and out of sight of the hideous railway hotel. The chalet is beautifully situated: it is admirably run by Mrs. Edward Feuz, and is a good centre from which to reach the peaks round the Victoria and Lefroy Glaciers. Pope's Peak provided us with a scramble; and on our return to the chalet we found that Mr. Kingman with Conrad Kain³ had arrived. I had heard much of Conrad's doings in New Zealand, and it was pleasant now to have them first-hand. It gave me no pain to be told that twenty-five

³ This great Tyrolese guide died, we much regret to say, from an incurable disease in February 1934, see p. 195 *et seq.* Kain contributed an interesting account of the first ascent of Mt. Robson to *A.J.* 28, 35-8.—*Editor.*

times he had started for Mt. Cook, to be turned back by bad weather on twenty-two occasions. We all made the ascent of the North Peak of Victoria next day ; the only serious obstacle was the steep snow slope up to the Victoria-Collier col.

August 4 found me with Mr. and Mrs. I. A. Richards walking up Yoho Valley to Twin Falls Chalet, which was our centre for a week. Accompanying us were Miss Gest of Philadelphia with Christian Hasler. To obtain an idea of the lie of the land we ascended Isolated Peak by way of Whalebone Mountain. It was clear that we had come a million years too late. Charming valleys are to be seen with extensive glaciers and snowfields above them. But the peaks which should rise from the snow have almost vanished. What little remains is disintegrating rapidly. However, a thunderstorm cut short these melancholy reflections and drove us from the summit. Our next expedition was to Marpole, to reach the base of which a two-hour walk round into the Little Yoho Valley is necessary. At the head of this valley we found a Winnipeg party encamped. Here Miss Gest and Christian left us and departed over Vice-President to Emerald Lake : they were due a couple of days later to start for the Ice River Valley, an expedition which turned out most successfully. The N.E. arête provided the obvious route to the summit : it is certainly the best rock-climb we found in this district. We descended direct down the E. face to Emerald Pass and, after tea at the camp, reached the chalet after dark. We then turned our steps to the N. to Habel, renamed *Mt. des Poilus* by war-time fever. It must be remarked in passing that the nomenclature of parts of the Rockies is deplorable. Judge of the traveller's astonishment when he is informed that a distant range he is admiring is called the French Military Group, whose individual names are Joffre, Sarraill, etc., admirable men, but whose claim to fame in this district is fleeting. Habel gave us one of our best days. From the chalet a circuitous path leads to the top of the falls, whence the glacier is easily reached over the delightful alps of Waterfall Valley. We crossed the dry glacier and ascended the snowy S. face of Habel in such good time that we were able to spend almost two hours on the summit. The Freshfield Group is magnificent from this side. It seems almost incredible that it cannot at present be reached from the railway in less than four days.

To conclude, we decided to climb Balfour, which is inaccessible direct from Yoho Valley, since for its whole length the valley is bounded on the E. by a continuous wall of almost impassable cliffs. The Yoho Glacier seriously delayed us.

Like most of the glaciers in the Rockies, it is now receding ; and it has exposed a great tract of slabby rocks. Before reaching Balfour Pass we bore off gradually to the right and ascended snow slopes to the N. ridge of the peak, which we attained almost at its lower end. Following the ridge, we arrived at the summit at 4.0 p.m. It had for some time been clear that we should probably spend the night out, so we decided, wrongly as it transpired, that it would be quicker to descend to the S. to the Bungalow Camp at Takkakaw Falls. We reached the floor of the valley at dark, but it was 10.40 before we had forced a way through the mile of dense forest to the bridge at the foot of the falls. We were warmly welcomed at the camp, and returned next morning to the chalet, where our absence had unfortunately caused some alarm. To leave the district we went round next morning once again to Little Yoho Valley, and ascended the long snow slopes to President Pass, from which the President, the highest point in the district, is accessible in half an hour. In the summit cairn we came across records of a pre-war A.C. party, but not of the famous 1901 expedition. We returned to the pass, crossed the summit of Vice-President, and descended to Yoho Pass, keeping strictly to the ridge overlooking Yoho Valley. This made an interesting route, the issue being in doubt until the last moment. We were just off the rocks before dark. The Bungalow Camp on the pass was not open in 1933 ; and we found it already a sorry ruin. We stayed the night at Emerald Lake, which should be avoided by mountaineers, and returned to Banff the following morning.

Two days later I rode out to the Bungalow Camp near Lake Magog, by way of Brewster Creek and Og Pass. It was a dreary route through country devastated by fire. Everywhere were dead trees, a few still standing, but the majority lying in an impenetrable tangle. The camp itself is in open, park-like meadows, with Assiniboine towering beyond the lake. Here I found Victor Kutschera, with whom I ascended Assiniboine the following day. Of the times that day I know nothing, since the camp clock and my watch differed by a whole hour. The sun was well up when we set out, and without hurrying we were back before dusk. We first skirted the lake and then climbed the steep snow slope which falls from the glacier almost to the lake. A short stretch of dry glacier and a long moraine lead to the foot of the N. arête. Here the axes were left, and we scrambled up rock of a most unstable description until stopped by the prominent vertical band of yellow rock which crosses the N.W. face of the mountain almost half-way

up. We then roped and climbed a short gully in the band about 150 ft. to the W. of the arête. The gully's defences were improved by two stretches of ice, one above and the other below, which in our axeless condition gave some trouble. Apart from this, the peak was as dry as a bone. Above, we rejoined the arête and followed it to the summit. Assiniboine commands a most inspiring view, since for a great distance it has no rival. We were unfortunate in seeing nothing to the W., owing to a fire in the Kootenay direction, but new friends to the N. were clearly visible. We spent a warm hour in the usual manner, and did our good turn for the day by rebuilding the cairn, which had been demolished by lightning. We descended to the camp by much the same route. As we looked back at the mountain, it seemed hardly possible that we had glissaded in the scree down much of the lower half of the peak. The slope is as deceptive as that of the Matterhorn seen from Zermatt.

I returned to Banff by the longer Healy Creek route. All the morning we rode gently downhill through the Valley of the Rocks, after which the ascent to Citadel Pass was extremely trying. The ridge to the E. of the valley, some 3000 ft. in height, presents a strange appearance. For three or four miles of its length it has entirely collapsed, and the scree slopes reach to its crest. At the top of the pass we were once more above tree-line, with no burnt forests to ruin the landscape. The grassy trail leads on over Quartz Col and down to Sunshine Cabin, where we spent the night. In the morning we descended quickly to Healy Creek, and were back in Banff soon after mid-day.

Week-end plans were spoilt by a snowstorm, but on the 22nd I set out for Louis with Lawrence Grassi of Canmore, who has acquired an almost proprietary interest in the mountain. After breakfast at 4.0, at one of the all-night cafés in the town, we drove three miles towards Lake Louise and walked up to the pass between Edith and Norquay. From here Grassi has made a trail to the foot of the peak. Louis bursts into view at the last moment. That it is steep will be seen from the photograph in 'A.J.' 32 (facing p. 70). After a short descent, we left boots and spare provisions hanging on a solitary tree, well out of reach of porcupines, gophers and other marauders. The lower portion of the climb⁴ traverses smooth rocks inclined at no great angle. Higher up the peak consists of a number of

⁴ For detailed descriptions of the peak, see *A.J.* 32, 68-73; 43, 265-6.



Photo, W. A. Macjarlane.]

ABERDEEN, MITRE AND LEFROY.

[To face p. 86.]



Photo, T. G. Longstaff.]

SIR DONALD, W. FACE.

enormous flakes with their planes of cleavage vertical. Some of these flakes have decayed more rapidly than others, and it is in the gullies thus formed that the route lies. These gullies are narrow and safe, as laborious to descend as to ascend; but when it is necessary to pass from one to the next, the technical difficulties are greater. Again we found the cairn demolished. A tin to hold a visitors' book was punctured, and the book itself had vanished without a trace. We returned by the same route and were back in Banff by 5.30.

I went by train to Golden two days later and joined Miss Gardiner, Walter Feuz, and Kenneth Jones our cook. We proceeded to Glacier in the Selkirks and encamped near the site of the former C.P.R. hotel. This portion of the range differs from the Rockies to a marked extent. Being nearer the sea, the rainfall is greater. In consequence the country is greener, the forests much more dense, and fires are less in evidence. There is a further great attraction in that firm rock is to be found.

It is most surprising that the C.P.R. have demolished Glacier House. Whether this was due to the diversion of the railway through the Connaught Tunnel, disastrous hotel fires elsewhere, a desire to concentrate visitors at Banff and Lake Louise, or the retreat almost out of sight of the Illecillewaet Glacier, none can say. But a demand for accommodation still exists, to judge from the numbers that Hartley, the forest warden, is compelled to turn away. The trails made by the railway are kept in repair by the warden, so that the difficulties of travel, so serious in other parts of the range, are here inconsiderable. Further, the Hermit and Glacier Circle huts, built also by the C.P.R., are still in fair condition.

To see if Sir Donald was free from snow we spent a short day on Afton, which lies to the W. of the Asulkan Valley. This inspection proving satisfactory, we left camp at 3.30 next morning by the Illecillewaet trail. After following this for an hour and a half we bore off to the left, and arrived at the Uto-Sir Donald Col at 7.30. From this point the N.W. arête, which we ascended, presents a most formidable appearance. The arête is steep, and the two faces of the peak which meet in it afford little scope for traverses. After changing boots for rubbers, we started off at 8.0. Climbing commences at once and continues without a break right up to the summit. The rock is sound—all the more welcome to us after weeks in the Rockies—and is seamed with horizontal cracks which provide comforting handholds. This splendid climb occupied us for

close on five hours, and it was 12.50 before we reached the summit, nearly 7000 ft. above camp. The descent by the ordinary route on the S.W. was a sad contrast. The rock is loose, the afternoon sun beat down with great strength, and we had some difficulty in finding the top of the chimney, which is the key to this route. However, we were back in camp before dark.

The weather now appeared to be breaking, so we abandoned the idea of visiting Glacier Circle. Instead, we traversed Leda, Pollux and Castor from Asulkan Pass. Rain commenced that evening, and next morning through the clouds we could see at intervals that much snow had fallen higher up. Regretfully I departed for Toronto, with grateful recollections of a charming country, unspoilt as yet by funiculars, field-forges and *Congrès d'Alpinisme*.

THE SIERRA NEVADA OF CALIFORNIA.

BY FRANCIS P. FARQUHAR.

A LITTLE over sixty years ago the ALPINE JOURNAL published a review of Clarence King's 'Mountaineering in the Sierra Nevada,' in which the reviewer congratulated the Americans on the possession of a chain of mountains 'surpassing in vegetation and rivalling in height and picturesqueness of form, if not in extent of glacier and snow-fields, the Swiss Alps.'¹ From that day until 1929, when Mr. Gunther's admirable article, 'The Sierra Nevada of the Upper Kern River, California,'² appeared, scarcely a mention of this great range is to be found in the teeming volumes of the JOURNAL. Yet during these days it has been explored, surveyed and mapped; its peaks have nearly all been climbed, its natural history and its geological features have been described, and its praises have been sung by one of the greatest of mountain prophets, John Muir. To bridge this gap I shall endeavour to place before the readers of the ALPINE JOURNAL a condensed account of the Sierra Nevada of California with special reference to the interests of mountain-climbers.

The Sierra Nevada is officially defined as being 'limited on the north by the gap south of Lassen Peak, and on the south

¹ *A.J.* 5, 389-96.

² *A.J.* 41, 328-40.