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Climbing in the Selkirks and Adjacent Rocky Mountains.

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TO the westward of the Great Prairies of the North-West territories of British North America, the Rocky Mountains rise abruptly as a line of purple peaks clad in glaciers, and extend along the horizon as far as sight can reach to the north and south. This first rampart as seen to the west of Calgary contains many peaks of 11,000 ft., from which the glaciers descend to about 5,000 ft. above the sea level.

To the westward of the first barrier there is the deep Valley of the Columbia, and beyond it the Selkirks rise into another glacier-clad range, on which the forests grow more luxuriantly, and from which glaciers descend to about 4,000 ft. above the sea.

It is about this Selkirk range I have been asked to speak to you this evening.

My first ideas of the beautiful Alpine scenery of the Selkirks were derived from descriptions brought home by my kinsman, the Rev. Henry Swanzy, who, with Mr. Barrington, crossed the Selkirks with pack-horses in 1884, before the railway was constructed, by the pass discovered by Major Rogers. Mr. H. W. Topham, of our Club, visited this region in the winter of 1887–88, and in the summer of 1888 I went there with Mr. Swanzy, our object being to climb some of the peaks. Also I wished to commence a survey of the range, of which no map, except that of the railway-track, had yet been attempted. Accepting the railway-track, as previously determined, the extreme limits

of my survey included a section of country containing about 500 square miles. We commenced this survey on July 16, and brought it to an end on September 1. Mr. H. W. Topham returned to these ranges in 1890, and met there Messrs. Huber and Sulzer, of the Swiss Alpine Club. They made several ascents, and between them they produced a map * including a region to the south of my map, which addition ought to measure about 250 square miles, and they corrected my map with regard to the junction of the Deville and Illecillewaet glaciers, which I had wrongly assumed.

In 1891, Mr. W. S. Drewry, one of the surveyors of the Dominion Government, carried the trigonometrical survey into the Selkirks, and to his interesting expeditions I shall refer later on.

Travellers from the United States have not been idle. Mr. H. P. Nichols, of the Appalachian Mountain Club, published in 1893 an interesting account of his ascents.

This maze of mountain-glaciers and forest has thus gradually been unravelled, and still beyond the known lies the unknown, and there are fine peaks within comparatively easy reach as yet unclimbed. I say comparatively easy reach, and this brings me back to what may be of more immediate interest this evening—viz. what mountain-climbing in the Selkirks is like.

British Columbia is famous for its magnificent cedars and pines, and the forests of these trees which extend into the valleys of the Selkirks form the first and greatest difficulty in exploration.

On one occasion, after a very hard day's work, we found ourselves camped only 1½ mile from where we started in the morning. We were carrying double packs, and the only difficulty in our way was forest. But such forest! The trees were tumbled about and packed almost like the sticks in a rook's nest.

On reaching Glacier House by rail we decided on making it our base of operations. It is admirably situated near the foot of the great Illecillewaet glacier, and most comfortable in every way. Mount Sir Donald's great rock peak, 10,625 ft. high, from here looked most attractive, and from the upper portion of the glacier it seemed as though we might find our way to its summit. Before trying this, however, we

* See *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society* for September 1891, and *Jahrbuch* of the Swiss Alpine Club for 1890–91, vol. xxvi.

ascended a lower peak, from which I could take plane-table observations, and advance our survey from the base-line we had measured on the railway.

A few days later we camped close under Sir Donald, and ascending the great glacier turned off to the eastward, and climbed a peak on the south shoulder of that mountain, about 10,000 ft. high, but cut off from the main peak by a deep cleft which we could not cross. This gave us our first good idea of the formation of the district, and was a most interesting and useful point of observation.

ON THE WAY TO MOUNT BONNEY.

During this ascent I first saw the high rock-cliffs of Mount Bonney (10,620 ft.) rising over several intervening ranges, out of a bed of glaciers, and the Dawson range away to the southward. The strangely straight Valley of the Beaver lay at our feet, and the flat-topped Prairie hills beyond. If I could reach the summit of Mount Bonney and the summit of the Dawson range I felt my mapping

work would be complete. I hoped that I might have a try at Sir Donald by some other route, but our expeditions for the present had all to lie in other directions. To carry our camp across the Illecellewaet névé was our first thought, but to do this we needed help. After some difficulty we settled with two young men of the railway gang to come as porters, and on our second day out we got our 'outfit' up to the great flat summit of the glacier. If now we could part with our two assistants all would go well, but our provisions would soon come to an end with four men to feed. We discussed the matter with them, but as they were quite unused to mountain-travel I feared to send them back by themselves. We were therefore compelled, after a reconnoissance down the Geike Glacier, to return with them to a patch of rocks which I called Perley Rock, and camp there for the night; from this they could safely return next day. Unfortunately, however, the weather, hitherto splendid, broke that night; thunder and lightning, followed by storm and rain, which lasted until morning, ushered in a spell of broken weather, during which we descended to our base. After the weather cleared we started again by our two selves to find Mount Bonney. Camping in the forest for three days near its base, we ascended a glacier coming out of a glen to the south-westward, and reached the arête. The arête was very easy, until we came to a small peak rising abruptly from it to a height of about 300 ft. This had to be passed some way or other, and the snow was not in a safe condition to leave the arête and go around it; so we climbed its face. Shales covered with soft snow formed a most insecure foothold, and the axes were almost useless, except to scrape away and dislodge as much of the loose rocks as possible. We at last reached its top, and found ourselves on easy slopes of snow, by which we gained the summit in about eleven hours out from our camp.

The view was simply entrancing, looking down as we did upon a world almost quite unexplored. Swanzy busied himself with his camera, while I set up the plane table, and an hour on the summit passed all too quickly. Our minds, however, were far from being restful, for the thought of having that bad spot in the descent troubled us. We determined to avoid it, so descending to the left of the arête, Swanzy fixed himself firmly in the snow, while I descended by the rope to test the snow-slope on the face of the peak and see could it be thus turned.

No sooner did my feet touch the slope than it began to

slide, and, like a snowball gaining in size, it soon resolved itself into a huge avalanche, which went roaring into the valley thousands of feet below. This was evidently not the way down; and with heavy hearts, after I had scrambled back to a place of safety, we trudged up the slope, no route being possible but the arête by which we had come up.

Taking off the rope and making a bowline hitch on one end, we descended, trusting to the rope for hand-hold, then, jerking it clear of the rock it was fixed to, we hitched it on

MOUNT BONNEY FROM THE NORTH.

to one lower down, and thus reached safe footing. All now went well until we got down to the glacier, when dark night closed in, and stumbling back through the forest in utter darkness to our camp, which we reached shortly before midnight, was an experience not easily to be forgotten. The day after this ascent we were compelled to return to our base, having eaten through all our provisions.

I shall not now trespass upon your time by describing

other expeditions which we undertook, sometimes with a pack-horse, and at other times 'packing' our goods on our own backs. I must briefly sketch out what has since been done.

Mr. Harold W. Topham, in his 'Notes about the Selkirks,' in the 'Alpine Journal' for May 1891, gives an outline of his expedition in 1890, with some useful hints for future travellers, and readers of the 'Jahrbuch' of the Swiss Alpine Club will be familiar with Herr Emil Huber's paper on his climbing with Herr Sulzer, also in 1890.

Huber's first object after a reconnoissance from the summit of Eagle Peak, was the ascent of Mount Sir Donald. Camping at its foot, they climbed by a small glacier under the S.W. face of the peak to the rock wall connecting the main peak with the little peak we climbed. The passage of the Bergschrund and ascent from the glacier to the arête constituted the chief difficulty, but they gained the summit without much trouble and descended in safety.

Afterwards, combining with Mr. Topham, they made some ascents in the Dawson range and other peaks to the southward. Broken weather then put an end to this interesting expedition.

To the north of the railway track Messrs. Huber and Sulzer ascended a peak in the Rogers range of about 10,600 ft. in height. In 1892 a Government surveying party, under charge of Mr. W. S. Drewry, encamped in the valley of the Incomappleux,* to the south of Mount Bonney, and proceeded with the trigonometrical survey, which had been advanced the previous year from the Columbia to the Valley of Beaver Creek. The sketch-map published in their Report for 1892 is most useful, and, as it includes Mr. McArthur's survey of the adjacent Rockies, will be found most helpful to the future climbers who may visit this region. Mr. Drewry seems to have encountered much bad weather, and he was driven back from an attempt on Mount Bonney by avalanches, after they had waited a fortnight for the weather to give them a chance.

Looking over the maps in search for new expeditions,

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* When I struck the head waters of Incomappleux I did not know what river it was, but adopted the suggestion of an old frequenter of the Selkirks that it was the Lardo, and I put this name on my map with a '?' Mr. Drewry followed it downwards, and settled its identity with the river above named.

several interesting ones suggest themselves. Mount Dawson (about 10,700 ft.), in the Selkirks, is a fine peak still awaiting its conqueror. It can easily be attacked by advancing a camp two days' journey from Glacier House.

In the Rockies, Mount Lefroy, if not yet climbed, would be a most interesting expedition, and might be undertaken from Steven House, on Hector Pass.

Much more remains to be done beyond the limits already mapped.

For many years much mystery has hung about the sources of the Athabasca, where Mount Brown and Mount Hooker were supposed to tower above all adjacent mountains to a height of over 16,000 ft. More recent travellers threw much doubt upon these measurements. Mount Brown and Mount Hooker gradually came down in the world, and so rapidly was this descent accomplished, that some United States geographer predicted that in the end it would be found they were no more than hollows in the ground. The downward career of Mount Brown has, however, been arrested, Mr. L. B. Stewart, of Toronto, who accompanied Professor Coleman on his exploring expedition, having recently climbed to the foot of the snow cornice forming its summit. Their interesting narrative, with a map, will be found in the 'Royal Geographical Journal' for January 1895. Mount Brown proved to be only about 9,000 ft. high, but other peaks which were seen, of probably 13,000 ft., will, no doubt, prove worthy of further attention. This expedition started from Morley, on the Canadian Pacific Railway, which, being on a reserve of the Stony Indians, seems to be the best place for obtaining ponies at $20 to $30 each, and Indian guides.

Travel in the ranges of the Rockies is much easier than in the Selkirks, owing to the forests not being nearly so dense.

With regard to sport, travellers cannot count on much unless they devote their whole time and attention to it.

In our expedition to the Selkirks we met the white mountain goats. Marmots of large size were numerous, and often proved an acceptable addition to our food-supply, as did also the blue grouse.

There are numbers of small animals, and apparently a great number of bears. We came every day upon their fresh tracks. One day a bear was within a few yards of us in the alder scrub, and yet we never got the chance of a shot.

Mr. Drewry's party was more fortunate. They shot a

grizzly within 75 yards of their camp, and saw another of huge dimensions on the slopes of Mount Bonney. They also met with tracks of deer and cariboo.

We found the climate in the Selkirks all that could be desired, the broken weather lasting for very very short spells, and consisting chiefly of thunderstorms. The weather troubled Messrs. Drewry's party very seriously; he describes it as having rained or snowed on them for fifty-five days in three months.

Everyone who has wandered among mountains far away from the beaten track knows that the greatest of all difficulties is the commissariat. Experience alone can impress this in its full meaning.

An expedition in the Selkirks to be really successful should consist of two sections—(1) the climbing party, and (2) the commissariat. The latter section must consist of one or two good men, who would see that the advanced camp was kept supplied with provisions. It is very aggravating to find on a fine morning when an ascent might be made that you have to trudge back over the ground you have travelled to fetch up the necessaries of life.

At Glacier House, Ben McCord, who accompanied us on two expeditions, can be heard of, and is a good man to organise such work. And Harry Cooper, who accompanied Huber and Sulzer up Sir Donald, is also well spoken of.

All supplies can be obtained in Calgary or Vancouver. Flour, tinned meat, bacon, &c., can be purchased at Donald, only an hour's run by rail from the summit of Rogers Pass.

The manager of Glacier House was ever ready to help us in all these respects.

The mosquitos are very bad in July; therefore take a piece of netting to form a door to your tent. They vanished quite suddenly in August.

Since the time of our visit various paths have been cleared through the forest with a view to make easier access to places from which tourists may obtain good views of the glaciers. As these paths penetrate far into some of the valleys, they will be found of much use to those who may wish to explore the regions beyond.