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A Trip up the Whirlpool River.

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ON Sunday August 3, 1913, I arrived with my old friend Moritz Inderbinen at the camp of the Alpine Club of Canada.* The events which made that camp memorable, the three climbs on Mount Robson, have already been described by Conrad Kain,† and the rest of its story will be told in its proper place in the 'Canadian Alpine Journal.' Favoured by an exceptional spell of fine weather, it was brilliantly successful, and I cannot refrain here from expressing my regret that so few of our members were able to respond to the invitation of our Canadian friends to be present at it. Of my own doings there, there is little to be said. The day after our arrival we took a much needed training walk as far as the gap now known as Snow Bird pass, first visited by Inderbinen and L. S. Amery four years before. There is a way round from it back to the camp by the Coleman glacier, and this was a very popular excursion last year, but no one, so far as I am aware, has yet made the complete passage to the W. fork of the Moose river by the way we came up in 1909. As we were returning, one of the peaks in the range facing Mt. Robson on the N. attracted my attention: it made a gallant show, and as I knew that it was the only one of the main summits of that range which had not

* *A.J.* xxvii. 123, 261, 329.

† *Ante*, p. 35.

Mt. Robson.
(from peak climbed 9th Aug.)

A. L. Mumm, photo. Swan Electric Engraving Co. Ltd.

Peak climbed 9th Aug. on the left;
Mumm's Peak on the right; Robson Glacier in foreground.

been climbed in previous years I was rather surprised to learn that no one had yet been up it. I made up my mind to annex it, and succeeded in doing so, with Miss Phina Pearce and Mr. F. W. Godsal, on August 9, the day before the camp broke up.* With the exception of some very large and treacherous crevasses, into one of which Inderbinen disappeared and from which he emerged *minus* the legs of my camera, and considerably disgusted at having been taken unawares, the ascent presented no features of interest, but it gave us an extremely enjoyable day, and I must make as much as I can of it, for it was the only climb that I made from the Robson camp, and the only complete 'new expedition' above the snow line that we succeeded in accomplishing during the whole summer. As there was an embarrassing tendency to take it for granted that I must be burning to attack Mt. Robson, I feel bound to record that after a fortnight of continuous travelling, having only five or six days at my disposal, I felt no inclination whatever to try conclusions again with that redoubtable peak. My ambitions with regard to it were limited to finishing it off photographically by getting views of it from Mt. Resplendent, and if possible also from the heights above the lower portion of the Grand Forks valley. Humble as they were, they were not destined to be gratified. The day we started for Mt. Resplendent (August 6) the long spell of fine weather, which had lasted all through July, came to an end, and a violent snowstorm drove us back when we were near the head of the Robson glacier. This was a grievous disappointment; the view from this peak is possibly the finest of all and has never yet been taken. Not for nothing did Mr. Wheeler say that I was a Hoodoo where Mount Robson is concerned. (The best definition I know of a Hoodoo is that it is the exact opposite of a mascotte.)

The other project never came within the range of practical politics, but the fact that the crest of the range on the W. side of the Grand Forks valley has only been visited once, and then with topographical rather than mountaineering aims, deserves few words of comment, as it is a rather striking illustration of the way in which a mountain may be indirectly affected by the topography of the adjacent country. From the plain on which the camp was situated, and which has been the starting point of all attacks on Mt. Robson, to the floor of the Grand

* It is the northernmost point of the Continental Divide between Mount Gendarme and the White Horn Station on Mr. Wheeler's map, *A.J.* xxvi. 404.

Forks valley there is a very steep drop of between two and three thousand feet. Till last year—when a road up it was constructed by Donald Phillips, Mr. Kinney's companion in his ascent of Mt. Robson—the descent involved some actual climbing, and had only been effected twice, by L. S. Amery and a man called Keller in 1909, and by Mr. Wheeler and his companions in 1911. Now the first visitors to Mt. Robson in 1907 were the only ones who approached it by way of the Grand Forks, and they very naturally abandoned that line of attack, which looks anything but promising from the bottom of the valley, in favour of one which gave them a base nearly 3000 ft. higher. The later parties were generally in a bit of a hurry, and their main pre-occupation was to be on the spot if the weather improved. I do not think that it entered the heads of any of them—it certainly never entered mine—to seek for the solution of the riddle of Mount Robson on the heights near the entrance of the Grand Forks valley. Consequently, no complete reconnaissance of the W. face of Mt. Robson has yet been made: even Mr. Wheeler only saw enough of it to convince him that Mr. Kinney's route was the wrong one, and never realised that the true line of attack was to be found farther down the W.* face, where it was gradually worked out by the three parties who were on the mountain last year. To go into the matter at length would occupy too much space, but I believe that any one who studies carefully the history of the successive attempts on Mt. Robson will agree with me that if the upper plain had not been cut off from the Grand Forks valley in the way I have described, that history would have been entirely different. The whole story confirms and illustrates in a remarkable manner Clinton Dent's dictum, 'The worst way to reconnoitre a mountain is to go actually on it.' †

The camp broke up on Sunday August 10, and a large crowd of us assembled a little before 7 P.M., in a deluge of rain, at Mt. Robson station to await the train on its way back from Tête Jaune Cache. There we learned that the train was still somewhere in the neighbourhood of Jasper, and might arrive towards midnight, or might not arrive at all, a huge boulder having fallen on the line just in front of the engine. (It transpired later that a very ugly catastrophe was only just averted by the skill and presence of mind of the engine-driver.) Fortunately, the rain ceased and a large fire was built close to the station,

* See the view from Little Grizzly Station, *A.J.* xxvi. 402.

† *A.J.* xiv. 433.

round which we pretended to be spending a last evening in camp. But everyone was relieved when at 11.30 the train appeared; we scrambled in and went to bed; the train completed the journey to Tête Jaune Cache, and eventually Howard, Inderbinen and I turned out on to the deserted platform at Jasper at 6 on Monday morning instead of 9.30 on Sunday night. It speaks well for the enterprising spirit of Jasper that before we left they had picture post-cards representing the engine blocked by the boulder on sale at the post-office.

The country we had just left is well shown on Mr. Wheeler's map already referred to, and its relation to the regions to the S., which were explored by Dr. Collie and others between 1897 and 1903, can be seen at a glance by comparing the small inset map with the map in Dr. Coleman's well-known book 'The Canadian Rockies, New and Old Trails.' The most northerly piece of exploration carried out in those regions was Dr. Coleman's own journey to the Athabasca pass at the head of the Whirlpool river in 1893, described in his 23rd and 24th chapters, when he finally ran down Mt. Brown. In olden times the Athabasca pass was one of the regular trails of the Hudson Bay Company. They had stations on the Athabasca river (the remains of one of them, the Henry House, were visible five years ago, and perhaps are still, a few miles below Jasper), and they used the Yellowhead pass to get to the valley of the Fraser, and the Athabasca pass to get to that of the Columbia. Everybody now knows the story of the botanist David Douglas who came up from the Columbia over the Athabasca pass in 1827; how he found the two great peaks, Mt. Brown and Mt. Hooker, 15,000 ft. and 16,000 ft. in height; how he ascended one of them alone, starting at 1 o'clock in the afternoon; and how these two giants found their way into all the atlases, and remained there for fifty or sixty years. People used the word 'ascent' loosely in those days, but still Douglas does speak expressly of 'the view from the *summit*," which he considered to be 'of too awful a cast to afford pleasure.' I shall return to Douglas and his doings later; for the present it is only necessary to say that Dr. Coleman was disabled by an accident and could only make the journey up the Whirlpool valley and back, and though his companions climbed Mt. Brown, the mountains which separate the Whirlpool-Athabasca-Miette valleys from the basin of the Yellowhead lake and the head-waters of the Fraser have remained almost entirely unexplored; the same remark applies

even more fully to the very striking range which shuts in the Whirlpool valley on the other (S.E.) side.

My interest in this region was first awakened when I was on my way to Mt. Robson in 1910. Dr. Collie wanted to stop at the narrows of the Yellowhead lake * for a day's fishing, so I took the opportunity to climb one of the peaks of the Yellowhead mountain, and from it I saw across the lake, fifteen or twenty miles away, a magnificent peak which, as we ascended, gradually dominated the whole landscape, and reduced Mt. Pelée to comparative insignificance. Its dark rocky face, too steep for any snow to rest on it, seemed to be quite worthy to be compared with the Southern face of the Meije. I had never heard of this mountain before. It is the Mt. Geikie of Mr. Wheeler's map, but is quite distinct from the peak overlooking the Athabasca which is so conspicuous from Jasper, and is there generally known as Mt. Geikie. Throughout the rest of this paper I have followed local usage and referred to the latter peak as Mt. Geikie.†

That season and the next our path lay northward and I did not see the big mountain again, but last year I thought that my chance had come to make its closer acquaintance: I should have some weeks after the Robson camp was over, and could not do better than devote them to the last bit of unexplored country between the Canadian Pacific and Grand Trunk Pacific railways. I had been corresponding for some time on the subject with my old friend John Yates, the well-known packer of Lac St. Anne. My original idea was either to make for the big mountain by following up the Fraser to its head, or to go

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* There is a view of this part of the lake in *A.J.* xxv. 297. The 'Mt. Pelée' of the picture is Mr. Wheeler's Mt. FitzWilliam.

† The name 'Mt. Geikie' first appears on Mr. McEvoy's *Survey of the Yellowhead Pass Route*, made in 1893, and there coincides in position with the big mountain. For reasons which it is now needless to set out, I had come to the conclusion that this coincidence in position was fortuitous, and that Mr. McEvoy intended the name for the mountain visible from Jasper, the Mt. Geikie of this paper, and not for the big mountain, of the existence of which I thought he was probably unaware. I had just finished this paper when I learned that I was mistaken, and that Mr. McEvoy did see the big mountain and locate it by survey methods, and bestow on it the name of Mt. Geikie, which it will bear in future. It must therefore be clearly understood that my Mt. Geikie is not the genuine article; I have retained the name for convenience' sake, as I do not know what else to substitute for it.

straight at it from the upper end of the Yellowhead lake, and, later, to push on to the W. of it and, if possible, find a way through to the upper part of the Whirlpool river, so as to return by the Whirlpool valley after paying a visit to Mt. Brown. Yates, however, threw cold water on these suggestions, urging that the only definite information we had was that the travelling in the upper Fraser valley was extremely bad, that all the rest of the country was quite unknown, and that we might easily find ourselves obliged to return to Jasper having accomplished nothing and arrived nowhere in particular, and with not enough time left to make a fresh start; whereas if we reversed the route and started up the Whirlpool, we could prospect for a way through as we went along, and at the worst would make sure of reaching the Athabasca Pass and Mt. Brown. I accepted Yates's views unreservedly and he was now waiting for us at Jasper. With him were J. F. Dickinson, commonly known as Dick, and George Follie, capital fellows both and very competent; I hope I may have the pleasure of travelling with them again. Fred Stephens was expected to arrive at any moment to take charge of Howard, who had no very definite projects on hand and to my great satisfaction decided to cast in his lot with us. Monday and Tuesday were wet and we spent most of our time in endless topographical discussions with Colonel Rogers the Parks Commissioner, Jack Otto and others, of which Howard has written a very lively description which I hope will one day appear in the 'Canadian Alpine Journal.' One result of them was that the ascent of Mt. Geikie now began to assume a prominent, if not the foremost, place in our programme, but the only tangible piece of information which emerged was that a short distance above Jasper there was a way through the mountains to the Yellowhead basin, which had been recently taken by Donald Phillips. There are three minor creeks which descend to the Athabasca between the Miette and the Whirlpool; apparently the route referred to goes up the first of them.

On Wednesday, August 13, we got under weigh, and the very next day an incident occurred highly characteristic of Rocky Mountain travel. The third of the creeks just mentioned comes down from the glacier at the foot of Mt. Geikie; it must have been crossed several times already that summer, but no one had mentioned it to us as even a possible obstacle. We found it a furious raging torrent which would have swept the strongest of horses off his feet in a moment. There was nothing to be done but wait, so on the 15th we left the packers to deal with the situation if they could and started to go up a neighbouring

hill from which we reckoned on getting an instructive view of Mt. Geikie and other things. We followed the bed of No. 2 Creek for a couple of hours in order to avoid some very obvious windfall and then scrambled out at a point where it looked as though we should be able without much difficulty to reach open ground, but what we found was an endless expanse of windfall of a peculiarly vicious type cunningly masked from below by young jack-pine growing up among the fallen tree trunks. We struggled on for nearly an hour and in that time progressed perhaps two hundred yards, so we gave it up as a bad job. Another characteristic incident. We had just advanced far enough to see that No. 2 Creek also took its rise in a glacier, and one of considerable size, whose existence was quite unsuspected; our time would have been well spent if we had continued up the bed of the stream and made a fuller inspection, but too much had been wasted in the windfall for such an excursion to be possible that day. On our return we found the others safely encamped on the far side of Creek No. 3; it had gone down a little in the night, and they had assisted nature by tearing down a log-jam and so diverting a good deal of the water into another channel.

By now it was evident that any attempt to ascend Mt. Geikie from the Athabasca valley would be mere waste of time; we could only hope that the N.W. ridge, the obvious route to the top, might be more accessible from the other side. So starting again on the 16th we arrived at about 1 o'clock at the mouth of the Whirlpool river, which runs parallel with the Athabasca for some distance before joining it, then, after crossing a wooded spur, descended again to the water's edge, and found ourselves in the jaws of the Whirlpool valley. It was an interesting day, but beset with petty mishaps: two of the horses, one of which carried my bedding, made a determined attempt to drown themselves in the river; the tent which Inderbinen and I occupied was lost; and last and worst we had to camp after a hard march at an uninviting spot where there was no feed to speak of for the horses. It was a long and tiresome job to collect them next morning; we started late and pulled up at the first decent-looking camping-place at 3 in the afternoon. The proper thing to do is to camp just above the junction of the two rivers and push on through this inhospitable tract in a single day, but the check at No. 3 Creek had thrown the outfit out of its stride. That day too had its incident, which came near to being more than a minor one. The point of a fallen tree caught in one of the packs, and the horse, pushing stolidly

forward after the manner of pack-horses, dragged the tree on till it was bent like a bow. I could just get a glimpse of what was going on; the tree, at length released, swung back with great violence, and there was a dull thud. I thought, 'One of the horses has had a nasty crack,' and two seconds later was horrified to see Howard coming towards me with a dazed expression on his face, and a large red wound in the middle of his forehead. Fortunately, the tree only reached him at the end of its swing back, and not much damage was done, but it was a near thing.

We had now come to the end of the solid block of mountain which had been towering above us since we entered the Whirlpool valley, and a reconnoitring scramble to the base of the bold bluff in which it terminated revealed a breach in the valley-wall extending for several miles; then the mountains rose again above a lateral valley, clearly the channel of the N. fork of the Whirlpool, which was evidently a stream of considerable size. Beyond the N. fork was one very strange-looking peak which —for immediate reference only—was irreverently christened Mt. Snub-nose. Some day it will present an interesting problem to ambitious rock climbers, but it is hopelessly unget-at-able at present, and our attention was mainly attracted by a lofty spur projecting into the angle between the two rivers, which seemed specially constructed for panoramic purposes. We reached the foot of it on August 19, having crossed the N. fork without much difficulty, and went up it on the 20th in $4\frac{1}{2}$ hrs. (exclusive of halts). After the usual struggle through windfall and brush, it is a walk, though a steep one, and there was some fairly good glissading on the way down. I strongly recommend the ascent to any future visitors to this region, for the peak more than fulfilled our expectations as a belvedere, and gave us a most comprehensive insight into the nature of our surroundings. No doubt the knowledge that a view has never been seen by anyone before is apt to make one unduly enthusiastic about it, but I was certainly surprised and delighted by the bold and varied forms of the peaks that faced us on the other side of the main valley. A broad lateral glen runs into the heart of this group; it is densely wooded, but Yates pronounced that taking horses up it would probably be a feasible operation and for nearly a day I dallied with the idea of making the experiment. Finally, however, I decided that it would be wiser to confine exploration on the farther side of the Whirlpool to the big glacier mentioned by Dr. Coleman, which was in full view a little higher up, and a fine snow mountain rising from the snow fields at its head,

Mt. Brown and Mt. Hooker (?)
from the Whirlpool Valley.

A. L. Mumm, photo. *Swan Electric Engraving Co. Ltd.*

Summit of Mt. Geikie.
from the Whirlpool River. (looking N.)

which was dubbed—likewise for temporary purposes only—the Whirlpool Breithorn. It was clear that we should have plenty to occupy us in carrying out the project with which we started, for the most exciting of the day's discoveries was that an easy way did exist up to the N.W. ridge of Mt. Geikie, and furthermore that between us and Mt. Geikie there was a distinct gap in the chain which seemed almost certainly to provide just what we had been hoping to find—a route practicable for horses into the Yellowhead basin.

The next day was an idle one, during which plans finally crystallised: first and foremost the journey to the Athabasca pass must be completed; to have come so far and not to pay our respects to Mt. Brown was out of the question; secondly, either on the way up or on the way back, we would try to reach the 'Breithorn'; then we would go up Mt. Geikie, and unless some very improbable obstacle cropped up, take the whole outfit through the gap, locate, investigate, and perhaps attempt Mr. Wheeler's Mt. Geikie, climb Mt. Pelée, and return in triumph to Jasper by Donald Phillips's route referred to above. A very attractive programme and, I still think, not an extravagantly ambitious one.

Unfortunately, Howard's time was up, and he had to set off with Fred Stephens for Jasper next day. The rest of us pursued our way up the valley. On August 23, at the incredibly early hour—for the Rockies—of 3 A.M., a start was made for Dr. Coleman's glacier, but heavy rain compelled a return to camp. We resumed our journey later in the day, reached the Athabasca pass early on the 24th, and on the 25th spent the best part of four hours in perfect weather on the summit of Mt. Brown.

Dr. Coleman not unnaturally has not a good word to say for Mt. Brown, but I look back on our day on it as the pleasantest one in a trip which, disastrous as it was, had many pleasant days. The camp was left to take care of itself and the whole party came up. To Dick and George it was a first experience of mountaineering, and they thoroughly enjoyed it. Mt. Brown, according to an aneroid which Howard had kindly lent me, is 8950 ft. high; Dr. Coleman's companions made it 9050 ft. They described the climb as 'an easy ascent over good slopes, including a mile of snow field, but ending near the top with stiffer work, needing both hands and feet, while the very top was capped with a heavy snow cornice which they did not think it wise to attempt.' I should say that the ascent is certainly easier than the ordinary route up the Rimpfischhorn but not very much easier. Perhaps I ought to add that more

than twenty years have elapsed since my last visit to the Rimpfischhorn, one of the few mountains that I have ascended more than once, and I may be doing it less than justice, but what I have said will give a fair idea of the class to which the climb belongs. I have a special reason for going rather particularly into this matter, which will appear presently. As a view-point I rate Mt. Brown very highly indeed, and it was a great satisfaction to have ample leisure to drink in the details of the panorama which remains in my mind as one of the most extensive, varied and interesting that I have ever seen, scarcely inferior, if at all, to that which we had enjoyed from Mt. Bess two years before. Mt. Robson rose up royally, presenting an entirely novel aspect, and making me regret once more that I had failed to obtain what must be approximately the same one, at closer quarters, from Mt. Resplendent. Mt. Geikie also asserted itself very decisively, and is, I think, considerably higher than any other summit between the Athabasca and Yellowhead passes. I quite failed to identify its rival, Mr. Wheeler's Mt. Geikie, but was interested to note a well-marked depression a few miles down the valley and easily accessible from it, which would apparently lead to the head waters of the Fraser; this showed that my original plan of campaign has something to be said for it.

On the way down we caught sight of a tent some distance down on the other side of the pass, and nothing would satisfy Yates and Dick but stopping over for a day in order to pay its occupants a visit. They found only one, a Norwegian who had been gold-digging in Alaska and was now trying his luck on the Rockies; his partner was down in the Wood river valley a long way below. The Norwegian came up next morning before we started on the return journey and had lunch with us, and we were able to supply him with some salt and butter, of which they had run short. Then while the packs were being put on I had a conversation with him, which made such an impression on me that I wrote down in my diary a list of the subjects over which it ranged, all of them, be it understood, introduced by him, not by me. It is as follows: Homer, Plato and Aristotle, Marcus Aurelius, Constantine and the Council of Nice, the revival of Greek, Bacon, Spinoza, Darwin, Herbert Spencer, Bjornsen, Ibsen, Bernard Shaw and Hall Caine. He told me that he had been educated in Norway for the ministry, but not being able to face the prospect of that career had emigrated and found his way to Alaska, where I learned later that he had made at least two substantial 'piles,'

but had been induced to put his hard-earned gains into wild-cat mining schemes run by speculators in Dawson and had left the country as poor as when he entered it. He was a genuine Mystic (though he did not use the word himself), the only one I have ever encountered. He talked about it quite simply and unaffectedly, and I wish I could quote *verbatim* the language in which he conveyed to me his conviction that in the solitary places of the mountains he found himself able to enter into some sort of direct spiritual communion with the Unseen.

It would have been quite easy to reach the foot of Dr. Coleman's glacier in a single long day, but I purposely took things easily in order to be in good trim for an attack on the 'Breithorn,' and on August 27 we camped in a picturesque gorge about half-way down. There, not without difficulty, I found a bit of open space in the forest from which the illustration of Mt. Brown and the adjoining peak was taken. Howard had impressed on me that I ought to start a theory about Mt. Brown, but I had not the slightest idea of trying to revivify a question which seemed to be completely exhausted, and I don't know in what obscure corner of my subliminal consciousness the question suddenly originated: May not these two peaks perchance be Mt. Brown and Mt. Hooker? True, they have always appeared on opposite sides of the pass in the maps, but is it not possible that it was a mere assumption of the cartographers that the giant guardians of the pass would naturally be situated on opposite sides of it? It was the idle thought of a passing moment, but it stirred up again the doubts I had already felt as to the likelihood of Douglas having ascended Mt. Brown. That he was an adventurous traveller is obvious, otherwise he would not have been on the Athabasca pass in 1827, but if he really found his way to the top of Mt. Brown he was something more, an exceptionally adventurous mountaineer of the calibre of Forbes or John Ball. His remark about the view, to say nothing of his wild notions about altitude, suggests that his mental attitude towards mountains was widely removed from theirs, but he may have been a heaven-born climber for all that. There was little enough in all this to build a hypothesis upon, but when I got home, I had enough curiosity left about the matter to refer to his original account. There is nothing there in any way material which is not contained in the extracts quoted some years ago by Dr. Collie * and not a word occurs anywhere suggesting that Mt. Brown and Mt. Hooker are on

* *Climbs and Exploration in the Canadian Rockies*, pp. 151–3.

different sides of the pass. Douglas gives just one topographical hint: after describing his ascent of Mt. Brown and the view from it, he proceeds 'A little to the southward is one nearly the same height, rising into a sharper point; this I named Mt. Hooker,' and he adds briefly that he was not able to climb it, without giving reasons. Now, so far as I can see, there is one hypothesis and only one on which the words just quoted become intelligible, namely, that Douglas went up the northern peak, and that his Mt. Hooker is Dr. Coleman's Mt. Brown. It would carry the matter a little further if I could say that the northern peak is the more easily accessible of the two; unfortunately, it did not occur to me, while I was still on the spot, to inspect it from that point of view. The whole matter is of no great importance, and of purely historical, not to say, archæological interest, but as no satisfactory attempt has yet been made to identify Mt. Hooker, I venture to suggest this solution of the problem as a probable one.

An easy march brought us back to the camp of August 22, and at 4.30 on the 29th Inderbinen, Yates and I started a second time for the big glacier. The weather was perfect and we looked forward to a day of great interest, whether or no we got up the Whirlpool Breithorn, as to which I did not feel very sanguine. The glacier was reached in exactly an hour; we had reckoned on an hour and a half, and Inderbinen observed that it was the first occasion in his experience in the Rockies when we had arrived at a place sooner than we expected. On the other hand, both getting on to the glacier and getting across it cost a good deal more time and trouble than we had foreseen. The whole of the level tongue of it, instead of being flat and easy to travel over, was broken up into huge ridges and furrows of ice, running in all directions but mostly parallel with the course of the glacier (there were no ordinary transverse crevasses), and it was past 7.30 before the right bank was gained. After scrambling up steep slopes of shale and loose rocks for half an hour, we took to the ice again, and still ascending steeply and rapidly, arrived at the upper plateau of the glacier at 8.40. The sky line in front of us was decorated by a long line of jagged and monstrous seracs, glittering in the sunlight with dazzling brilliancy, and very soon we reached a point where the plateau was thickly strewn with avalanche débris—murderous-looking chunks of blue ice the size of one's head and upwards. We struck off to the left, where on August 20 we had marked what looked like an easy way through the ice-fall; it was, however, anything but easy, and appeared to become still more compli-

A. L. Mumm, photo. Swan Electric Engraving Co. Ltd.

The great Glacier to the East of Whirlpool River, (looking S.W.)

cated farther on. Inderbinen, if not as nimble on rocks as he was in the 'eighties, deals with glaciers as masterfully as ever, and would, I think, have got us through, but signs were plentiful that we were still well within range of the formidable artillery of the seracs, and likely to be so for some time. It is seldom that a climber in new country goes out of his way to court difficulties, his predominant desire being to arrive, by the easiest route that presents itself; but with respect to dangers the tendency is the other way, and the temptation to take chances may easily be greater than in the Alps. We were sorely tempted now, but there was no possibility of an alternative return route, and with the memory in my mind of two highly sensational warnings in previous years I decided, after half an hour of slow progress, to turn back. We hurried down till clear of the avalanche zone and then took things easily, photographing and admiring at leisure one of the wildest and most fantastic ice-scapes that I have ever seen. There was no sign of any other route to the upper snow-fields. Ten days later we saw that these were wider and more extensive than we had supposed and that there would not have been nearly time enough, in any event, for an attempt on the 'Breithorn.'

Though the failure to reach the crest of the range was a disappointment, our repulse did not weigh very heavily on my spirits as we proceeded on our way down the valley. After all, the attempt was only an excrescence on our original plan, of which by far the most interesting part still lay before us. By 1 o'clock on Sunday, August 31, we had safely crossed the North Whirlpool, and an hour later were halted at what I hoped was our last camp in the Whirlpool valley. Everything was planned out: we were to make a light camp at timberline and thence climb Mt. Geikie, the top of which I regarded as already in my pocket; during the ascent we should be able to see the whole of the proposed route through the gap, and if all was well, Inderbinen and I would spend the next day lazily in the light camp while Yates went down and brought up the rest of the outfit. And then the tragedy began. Rain fell one day after another, till on Friday we grew desperate and set out on the strength of a few gleams of sunshine, only to be driven back, two hours later, by a snow-storm. Matters began to mend on Saturday evening, and finally, on Sunday, just a week after our arrival, we started at mid-day, reaching the camping-place, where snow was still lying thickly, soon after 4. On Monday, September 8, a walk of two hours over nearly level ground, which

was literally crawling with ptarmigan, brought us to the foot of Mt. Geikie. The mountain on this side formed a vast rocky amphitheatre with two horns or arms, the one on our right huge and precipitous, running right up to the summit, the other a gently sloping ridge, which we had noted on August 20 as providing an easy way to the main N.W. arête. Discarding this route, we climbed straight up the face, and in 1½ hrs. struck the N.W. ridge at its lowest point. Though there had been plenty of indications of a strong wind, its violence staggered us, and we dallied long over breakfast to give it a chance of abating; but the gale only seemed to gather fresh strength as time went on. Soon after we had started again one of my hands lost all sensation; some little time was spent in restoring the circulation, and another hour passed before we completed the passage of the easy nearly level ridge to the foot of the final peak. We had expected steep but good snow, but found rocks covered with *verglas*. It was not a day for difficult climbing; away to the right a gentler ridge separated from us by a broad ice-slope, steep but not impracticable, seemed to promise an easier way. Worth trying?—Yes.—'But it will take a long time,' said Inderbinen. Owing partly to the hardness of the ice, partly to the difficulty of wielding an ice-axe in a hurricane, it took fully two hours. Long before they were over I wished I had never been born, and my interest in the ascent began to be obscured by an ugly vision of a return to camp drenched, after dark, and with a snow-storm raging. The rocks on the far side were certainly easier, but before they could be reached there was some more step-cutting to be done, up hill and along the crest of the ridge. The summit was three to four hundred feet above us, and further progress was not impossible, but in the circumstances it was risky and we had all had enough; so once more a retreat was sounded. It was a fitting climax to an exasperating week. Later, when I emerged from the condition of stupefied idiocy to which I am invariably reduced by a violent wind, it occurred to me that we might easily have gone on another 60 or 80 yards before taking to the ice and so reached the second ridge above the awkward bit. Had we done so, I think that possibly we might have completed the ascent, but I do not know and do not greatly care. A quiet hour on the top would have been priceless, but there would have been neither pleasure nor profit in poking our noses above it for a couple of seconds and then hurrying down again. The only thing that does annoy me is the reflection that the next party will get up comfortably in six hours or less from

the camp, and wonder what on earth the difficulty was. But they won't be there when a hurricane is blowing.

We went down by the western ridge of the amphitheatre. It was bad travelling—over large boulders half smothered in fresh snow—and the route up the face is much to be preferred, at any rate in ascending, but camp was regained in good time, before the impending storm had really set in, and we supped deliciously off a fool-hen, which Yates had killed on Sunday in the orthodox manner by throwing stones at it till he made a hit. Afterwards Inderbinen and I slept snugly in the small Mummery tent ; not so Yates and George (who had come up with us as porter and spent the day in a vain quest for caribou) ; they had only a lean-to in front of the fire, and passed a miserable night in the rain, snow and driving wind.

We returned to the main camp next morning. There was little temptation now to try the new way back to Jasper, with the prospect of having to travel in all weathers and no time for exploration or climbing. On Wednesday a long day's march brought us to the junction of the Whirlpool and the Athabasca, where we found our Norwegian friend, returning as unsuccessful as ourselves. Early on Friday, September 12, we were once more in Jasper. I could not get out of my head the words in which Edward Whymper once described an expedition to Dauphiné, ' They came, they saw, but they did not conquer.' However we did manage to see a good deal, and what we saw was largely new, and of special interest at the present moment owing to the fact that these regions have just been rendered easily accessible by railway. And I hope it will not be long before some other member of the Club is tempted to make, with happier fortune, a Trip up the Whirlpool river.

On the Outskirts—Mont Aiguille and Beyond.

By W. T. KIRKPATRICK.

(Read before the Alpine Club, June 9, 1914.)

IN making our plans for the season, Hope and I usually try to include some bit of country quite new to us, and have thus at least visited every snow-clad group from Dauphiné to the Gross Glockner. And yet, like so many members of the Alpine Club, we had often admired from a distance,