This noteworthy ascent is of especial interest in that it marks the closing of the era of major virgin peaks in the main range of the Canadian Rockies. Of those rising above 11,000 ft., only a bare handful now remain to tempt the climber away from the more or less beaten paths.

H. P.

Side-Valleys and Peaks of the Yellowhead Trail.*

By J. Monroe Thorington, M.D.

(*Continued from p.* 59.)

(*b*) Tonquin Valley and the Ramparts.

VISITORS to Jasper Park, in the Rockies of Canada, are invariably advised to visit Tonquin Valley. Much has been written of its spectacular scenery[1]—its unique combination of lake, precipice, and ice—which presents itself with a singular beauty almost unequalled in alpine regions of North America. From high peaks of the Whirlpool we had glimpsed its towers and glaciers in the north, and had looked into misty, forested valleys at Fraser head-waters. We knew that Simon Peak, the highest elevation of Mt. Fraser and the loftiest summit of the Divide between Fortress Lake and Yellowhead Pass, had yet to be climbed. And so we went.

The Indians believed that Jasper Park was the lurking-place of prehistoric monsters. David Thompson, journeying through in 1811, knew of this superstition, as he mentions[2]: 'Continuing our journey in the afternoon we came on the track of a large animal, the snow about six inches deep on the ice; I measured it; four large toes each of four inches in length, to each a short

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*** The maps opposite pages 320 and 342 of vol. xxxvi. may suffice for this article, but the full sheets 26, 27, and 28 of the Interprovincial Survey may be obtained on application to the Surveyor-General, Ottawa.**

[1] See especially *C.A.J.* x. p. 70. The scenic features are well illustrated in *A.J.* xxxvi. 342, 'First Ascents of Mt. Barbican, 10,100 ft., and of Mt. Geikie, 10,854 ft.,' Val A. Fynn. See also *Description of and Guide to Jasper Park* (edited by E. Deville, Department of the Interior, Ottawa, 1917).

[2] *Thompson's Narrative of his Explorations in Western America*, 1784–1812 (The Champlain Society, Toronto, 1916), p. 445.

claw; the ball of the foot sunk three inches lower than the toes; the hinder part of the foot did not mark well, the length fourteen inches, by eight inches in breadth, walking from north to south, and having passed about six hours. We were in no humour to follow him: the men and Indians would have it to be a young mammoth, and I held it to be the track of a large old grizzled bear; yet the shortness of the nails, the ball of the foot, and its great size was not that of a bear, otherwise that of a very large old bear, his claws worn away; this the Indians would not allow.'

We ourselves never came in contact with this unclassified beast, although we had looked for it throughout our journey to the Mountains of the Whirlpool.[3] It was when we arrived in Tonquin Valley—Ostheimer, Strumia, Conrad Kain, and I—that we located the solution of the mystery: the Ramparts themselves. When one sees that range, curving in sinuous, unbroken length, with spaced peaks like vertebral spines age-old and worn, it takes but little imagination to think of it as the dorsal skeleton of some gigantic creature of ages past. It is the glacier dragon of the Middle Ages turned to stone. In reality it forms a part of the backbone of a continent, for it is situated on the main Divide; and, best of all, it is easily accessible.

The Athabaska is an important river even to its very sources. It was not far from Jasper House that David Douglas, in the spring of 1827, met the philosophical old guide Jacques Cardinal[4] who, observing that he had no spirit to offer, turned towards the river and said 'This is my barrel and it is always running.' The Athabaska flows from two important passes of the Divide: Athabaska itself, and Yellowhead. The Athabaska Pass we already knew, and a portion of the Yellowhead route was to be followed on our way over the Meadow Creek trail to Tonquin.

The pass of Yellowhead, in the old days, was the gateway to the settlements of New Caledonia, as British Columbia was then known. It assumed importance a few years after the lower reaches of its great western river had been explored by Simon Fraser, Jules Quesnel, and John Stuart, in 1808. The fur traffic through the pass had become so extensive that about 1820 the pass was commonly known as Leather Pass. Then

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[3] *A.J.* vol. xxxvi., no. 229, p. 299.

[4] *Douglas' Journal*, 1823–1827 (Royal Horticultural Society, London, 1914), pp. 73, 261.

came the gold rushes to Cariboo in 1861 and 1862, when the pass was used by crowds of adventurers on their way to the North Thompson River. Among the earliest travellers who came through Yellowhead, bound for the North Thompson and Kamloops, were Viscount Milton and Dr. Cheadle, in the summer of 1863. Accompanied by the wandering eccentric, Eugene O'Beirne—the mysterious Mr. O'B.—and a one-armed Assiniboine guide with his courageous squaw, these gentlemen were the first to describe Mt. Robson and, indeed, much of the Yellowhead region. Their book, 'The North-West Passage by Land,' among many amusing and interesting things, relates their dramatic discovery of the Headless Indian, who, no doubt, perished on the way to Cariboo.

The story [5] and its sequel are worth re-telling: 'The corpse was in a sitting posture, with the legs crossed, bending forward over the ashes of a miserable fire of small sticks. The ghastly figure was headless, and the cervical vertebræ projected dry and bare; the skin, brown and shrivelled, stretched like parchment tightly over the bony framework, so that the ribs showed through distinctly prominent; the cavity of the chest and abdomen was filled with the exuvia of chrysales, and the arms and legs resembled those of a mummy. The clothes, consisting of a woollen shirt and leggings, with a tattered blanket, still hung around the shrunken form.' Nine years later, in 1872, several hundred yards up the bank of the river, the head was found by members of the T. Party, Canadian Pacific Survey. They buried the head with the body; but it was exhumed later in the year by Dr. Moren, of Sandford Fleming's Pacific Expedition. The skull, placed in the Canadian Pacific offices in Ottawa, was destroyed by fire in 1873.

Poor old Shuswap cranium; what a wandering career it had! But since we ourselves were starting out on the Yellowhead trail, it is scarcely to be wondered at that our own heads were filled with thoughts of these strange events that transpired within the memories of our fathers.

Jasper was our starting-point for Tonquin Valley; and, on the morning of July 11, the day immediately following our return from Athabaska Pass, we headed the pack-train westward into Miette Valley toward Yellowhead. An Iroquois hunter was this Tête Jaune, whose original cache was not at the station of the Canadian National now bearing his name, but at

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[5] *The North-West Passage by Land*, Milton and Cheadle (Cassell, Petter, and Galpin; first edition, London, 1865), p. 296.

the mouth of the Grand Fork of the Fraser. And there he hid the furs he obtained on the western slope before bringing them to Jasper. On the day of our starting, furs would have been as useless as skis; we were riding with as little clothing as possible, and the sun beat down unmercifully. Worst of all, when we wanted a drink we had to scramble down the steep bank to the river. Still we were in no danger of having a recurrence of the sad misfortune which befell Sandford Fleming [6]: 'The Chief's bag got a crush against a rock, and his flask, that held a drop of brandy carefully preserved for the next plum-pudding, was broken. It was hard, but on an expedition like this the most serious losses are taken calmly and soon forgotten.' We should have been less philosophical; but now sagging low in our saddles, with dust of the trail rising in a golden cloud and obscuring all but the heads and packs of horses behind us—with water close at hand, we were just too downright lazy to climb down and get it. Still this was our third consecutive day of long riding, and we felt that our lethargy was excusable.

We had looked backward to Mt. Edith Cavell—'La Montagne de la grand traverse,' as it was known to the voyageurs—southward and closing the Athabaska Valley with a face 'so white with snow that it looked like a sheet suspended from the heavens.' It was hidden as we crossed an old trestle above the sparkling Miette and the horses plodded on beyond. We eventually came near to Geikie station, where begins the trail up Meadow Creek, cut out by the park rangers in 1922. A beautifully engineered affair, it rises at first in breathlessly steep zigzags and curves for a thousand feet above the Miette to an upper forested level that swings into the side-hill beyond a canyon in the creek bottom. Snow peaks are seen across the valley, a brilliant little group centred about Mt. Majestic; we gazed upon them first from the base of Roche Noire, and the horses splashed through a stream near the mouth of Crescent Creek. A few minutes later we climbed again to higher slopes, where the trail leaves the darkness of mossy nooks and giant trees, and emerges in thinning timber to willow meadows near Tonquin Hill. From camp beside a gurgling brook we gazed out to the northern outposts of the Ramparts—Bastion, Turret, and Geikie—fantastic wedges and pinnacles, tinged with the metallic glow of light through the western passes.

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[6] *Ocean to Ocean, Sandford Fleming's Expedition*, G. M. Grant (Campbell & Son, Toronto, 1873), p. 230.

The Rampart Group forms the chief mountain uplift of the Continental Divide between Athabaska and Yellowhead Passes. Its western slopes are drained by the head of Fraser River and its tributary creeks, Geikie and Tonquin. On the east, Simon Creek, Astoria River, Maccarib and Meadow Creeks flow into the Athabaska system.

Following the Divide northward from Whirlpool Pass (5936 ft.), the first peaks of any importance form the western wall of the basin in which a number of glaciers converge, like wheel-spokes, at the head of Simon Creek—the 'North Whirlpool.' These peaks are Whitecrow (9288 ft.), Blackrock (9580 ft.), Mastodon (9800 ft.), and Scarp (9900 ft.). All are attractive rocky summits, with long radiating ridges and interconnected snow-fields. Just east of the Divide, Needle Peak (9668 ft.) rises as a slender flake of rock, with broad base flanking the mouth of Simon Creek. The best approach to these peaks is by way of Whirlpool River.

At the head of Simon Creek the Divide rises to Mt. Fraser, the culminating elevation of the group, and over its three peaks—Simon (10,899 ft.), McDonell (10,776 ft.), and Bennington (10,726 ft.)—to the rampart-wall of aiguilles beyond.

The Fraser Glacier, on the south-east side of the Fraser massif, occupies a pass between the head of Astoria River and the 'North Whirlpool,' Simon and Mastodon Glaciers forming the chief sources of Simon Creek, although a tongue from the Fraser Glacier also enters its head-water. The main drainage from the Fraser Glacier, however, is into Astoria River.

South-eastward from the Fraser névé there extends an interesting and unvisited group of peaks bounding the Eremite Glacier cirque. These peaks are Outpost, Erebus [7] (10,234 ft.), Eremite (9500 ft.), Alcove, and Angle, all of them lying in Alberta.

From Mt. Fraser the Divide circles over the sheer wall of the Ramparts—Paragon (9800 ft.), Dungeon (10,000 ft.), Redoubt (10,200 ft.), and Bastion (9812 ft.)—dropping abruptly to Tonquin Pass (6393 ft.), the crest of the range then swinging westward into British Columbia and supporting the precipitous

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[7] *Appal.* xvi. 97. In 1924 Messrs. Coolidge, Higginson, and Johnson, with Alfred Streich, made first ascents of Erebus, Oldhorn, and the unnamed rock peak south of, and adjacent to, Paragon. They also made the first complete traverse of Mt. Cavell over the east arête. See, however, Corrigenda, p. 421.

trio: Turret (10,200 ft.), Geikie (10,854 ft.), and Barbican (10,100 ft.).

The head-waters of Astoria River are derived in part from Chrome Lake, into which flow rushing streams from the Eremite and Fraser Glaciers; but a somewhat larger creek rises in the Amethyst Lakes, two lovely bodies of water closely connected with one another and lying close below the stupendous east wall of the Ramparts.

Moat Lake is finely situated in the eastern hollow of Tonquin Pass and sends a stream to join with a northern outflow from Amethyst Lakes; and, in an expanse of willow-covered, marshy ground, drains both to Meadow and Maccarib Creeks.

In the western cirque of the Ramparts, glaciers streaming from Mt. Fraser drain to Geikie Creek. Scarp and Casemate Glaciers slope off abruptly to Icefall Lake; while the long, winding Bennington Glacier is separated from them by the jagged rock arête extending N.W. from Simon Peak and supporting the dark towers of Casemate (10,160 ft.) and Postern (9720 ft.).

Although Mt. Edith Cavell (11,033 ft.), in the central part of Jasper Park, just W. of the Whirlpool-Athabaska junction, had been ascended as long ago as 1915,[8] no climbing party had attained a summit on the Continental Divide in this area until 1919, when Messrs. Carpe, Chapman, and Palmer, from camp ground at the southern end of Amethyst Lakes, made the first ascent of McDonell; and, later, Carpe and Palmer, of Paragon.[9] They were the first to look over this 'Rampart' wall and to see the impressive southerly faces of Geikie, Turret, and Bastion; with the Bennington Glacier almost completely hidden in the depths of the gorge formed by their gigantic cliffs. The importance of Simon Peak as the culminating point of the group was first realized at this time. Although not indicated on the map of the Bridgland Survey, the extreme summit must

[8] *C.A.J.* viii. 68.

[9] *Climbers' Guide to the Rocky Mountains of Canada*, Palmer and Thorington, pp. 146, 148. Mr. Carpe, at that time, obtained an altitude of 10,900 ft. for Simon Peak, and the party recognized it as the apex of the massif; it was not then thought of as a part of Mt. Fraser because the Bridgland map had applied the name 'Mount Fraser' specifically to the east peak. The use of 'Mount Fraser' to cover the whole massif—Simon, McDonell, Bennington—is a later development, arising in the discovery of Simon Peak, and which has been incorporated with the maps of the Interprovincial Survey.

have been visible from many of their stations. The map and finely illustrated report by Bridgland, published in 1917, first made known the Tonquin Valley region. In 1921 members of the Interprovincial Survey occupied many high points as stations, including Beacon (9795 ft.), Whitecrow (9288 ft.), and Rufus (9053 ft.), effecting a junction of the two surveys.

One realizes, almost instinctively in the valley of Tonquin, that the carving of its great rock spires is still in the formative stage. The mountains are but roughly hewn out, with an impressionistic technique as fantastic as it is fanciful. The great slopes of sharp chips and ragged blocks indicate plainly that Nature has but shaped out the plan; there is as yet nothing of the soft smoothness of finished work.

It was a gay day, bright with sunshine, when we rode the trail toward Amethyst Lakes. Through flowering meadows—heather and painter's brush—we came to the lake shore, where broad sheets of translucent blue water reflect the steep buttresses and crescentic hanging glaciers of Redoubt and Dungeon. There is one conspicuous horizontal snowy ledge, mid-high in the wall and continuous, with scarcely a break save where icy gullies cut through at right angles from high notches in the jagged crest-line. In a little while camp was pitched in the trees near the southern margin of the lakes, and we eagerly awaited announcements from the cook.

Surprise Point is an amusing little pinnacle that rises above the camping place to a height of 7873 ft. It looks so easy, but is really quite a scramble if one tries it in moccasins and with each hand encumbered by a camera. Strumia and I climbed up during the afternoon, in something less than two hours, although we made frequent stops to photograph some queer little rickety towers of the ridge that looked for all the world as if a giant's child had been playing at building blocks and had finally disjointed his construction with a push. There is not much room on the summit, but we found a ledge where snow was melting and a place where we could stretch out for a snooze on the warm rocks. There we stayed for more than three hours, held by the panorama of peaks, meadows, and winding streams. Only when the westward sun threw a dark serrated silhouette of the range down upon the Amethyst Lakes did we tear ourselves away and race down to the camp fire.

Simon Peak, although the culminating height of the group, is most retiring and quite invisible from camp ground at Surprise Point. On July 13 we left at 5.30 with the idea of finding and climbing it if we could. An old game trail was followed

through dense forest to the moraine below Fraser Glacier. We entered a shadowed glen where the bed of the creek is somewhat wider and the waters spread into limpid pools that perfectly reflect the symmetrical outlines of Bennington, towering above a line of stately pines. Unfortunately, the ground is marshy and forms a breeding place for mosquitoes, which followed us in clouds until the breeze from the ice drove them away.

Hurrying up some rising grassy slopes we were soon among the enormous morainal blocks below the glacier, and in a few minutes had rounded a tiny marginal lake to the ice itself. Past a corner of Outpost the circle of little peaks bounding Eremite Glacier presented themselves in snowy line. Eastward we looked down upon the curious yellow brilliancy of Chrome Lake, and into the Astoria Valley, where Mt. Edith Cavell raises a shaly snowless gable to a sharp point wholly unlike the great white face one sees from Jasper. The Fraser tongue is almost unbroken, and we rapidly gained height on long slopes of snow and moraine. A little to the south rises Erebus, in a series of steep cliffs and receding ridges in step-like formation that would make direct attack a difficult procedure. Foreshortening makes the peak seem very sheer, but toward Simon Creek, south-westerly, it breaks down into an easy gradient of shaly strata.

We had heard that Simon Peak possessed a formidable ice crest, and for that reason it seemed best to reconnoitre a little in order to spy out a satisfactory route. In two hours and a half from camp we reached the nearly level snow plateau on the Erebus-Fraser saddle and could look over to the radiating glaciers at the head of the ' North Whirlpool.' Distantly in the south, the Scott Group and the mountains near Athabaska Pass were visible through a thin veil of forest-fire smoke. We stopped for a few minutes and then crossed two small snow basins to the head of Simon Glacier. We sat down for lunch in the shadow of a curious little tower, perhaps 40 ft. high, and looking for all the world like a ' pill box ' of wartime days. It was a blunt needle with steep walls which nearly aroused us into an attempt to climb it. Food, however, proved more enticing.

The actual peak of Simon was still hidden, but we could now see that it would be possible to get onto the glacier, cross to its head and ascend steep slopes toward the col between our objective and McDonell Peak. This plan was duly followed out, and we were soon a considerable distance up the snow. Due care was necessary in avoiding the base of a small ice-fall

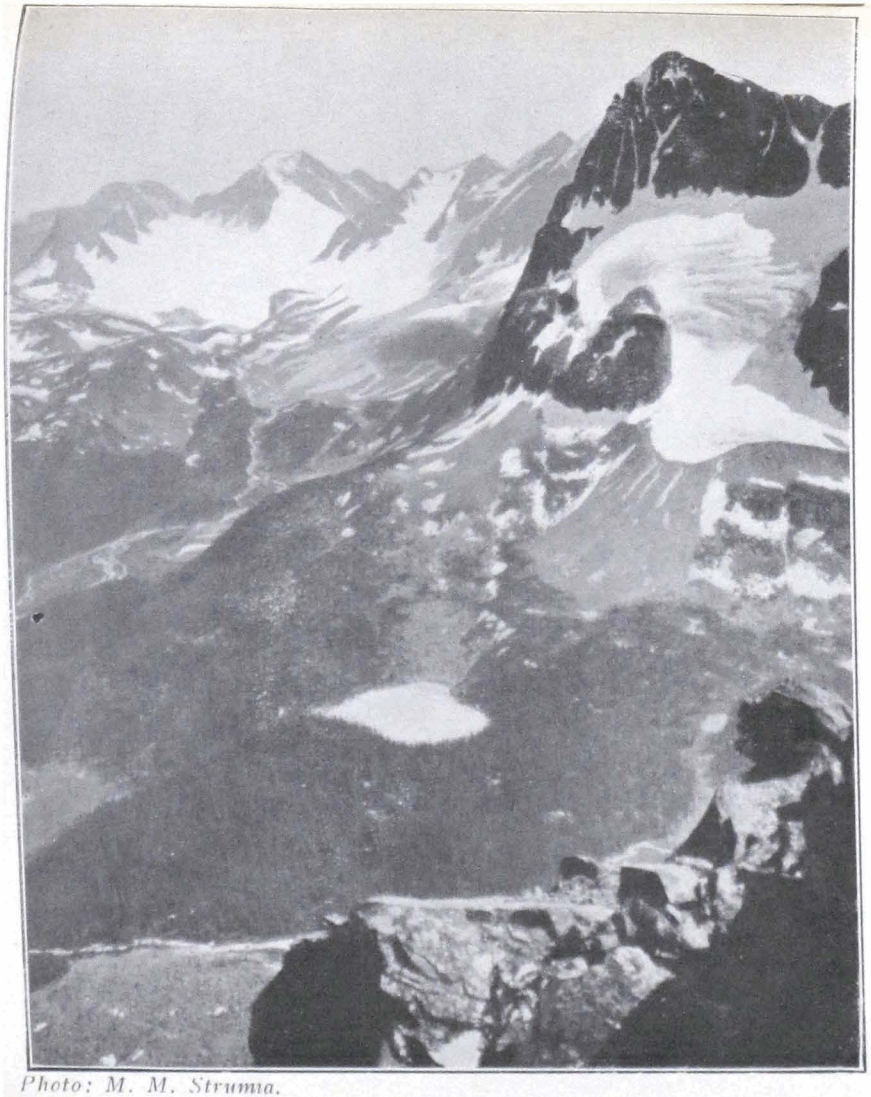

Photo: M. M. Strumia.

EREMITE CIRQUE and CHROME LAKE
from Surprise Pt., Tonquin Valley.

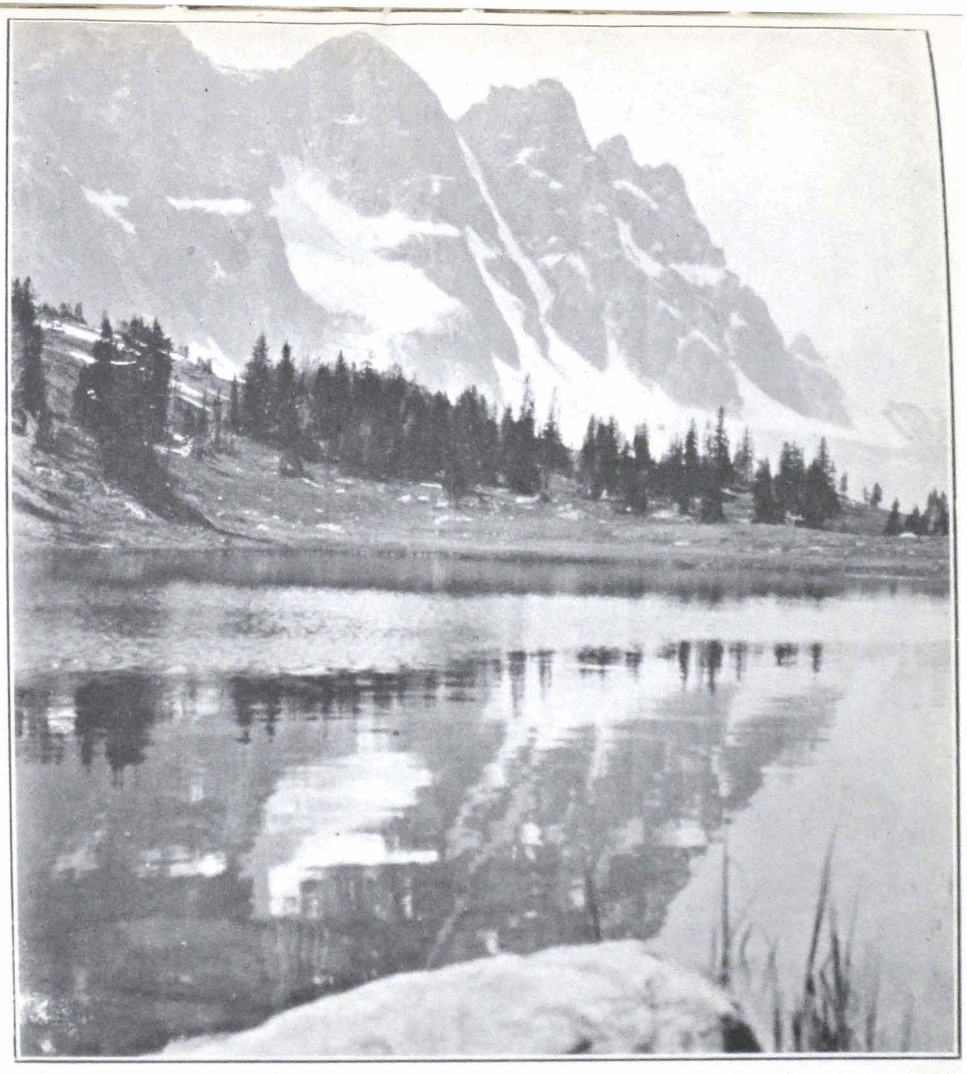

Photo: J. M. Thorington.

THE RAMPARTS
from Amethyst Lake, Tonquin Valley.

Photo: M. M. Strumia.

THE RAMPARTS
from Simon Peak across gorge of Bennington Glacier.

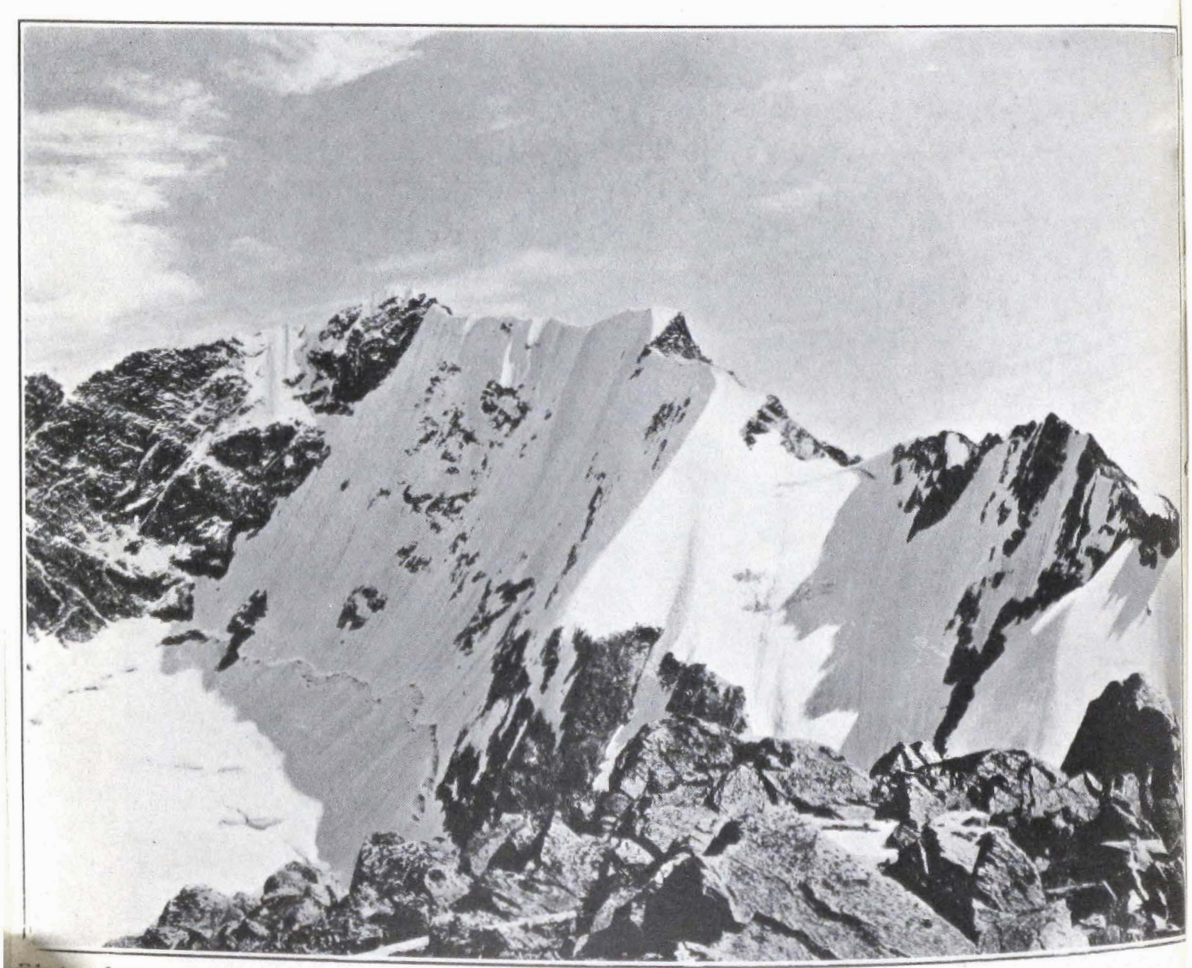

Photo: Interprov. Survey.

SIMON PEAK, 10,899 ft.
Highest summit of Ramparts from S.W.

which enters the snow-field at the edge of our proposed route, and blocks of blue ice imbedded far out on the snow gave indication that little avalanches sometimes came down. We crossed a deep schrund below a rocky wall, over a bridge that was narrow and steep, and then mounted steadily over down-tilting strata where water cascaded down and filled our sleeves if we were not careful in our choice of handholds. There was a gully in the margin of the ice-fall where a careful watch was made to avoid the flakes of shale which frequently scaled down and sailed over a rocky bench to lower snows.

It was soon possible to cross above the top of the fall and take to the rocks, after which we made good time to the ridge above. For the first time we now saw Simon Peak, a little to the north, icy, and with superb frozen cornices overhanging the gorge of Bennington Glacier. The rope became a real necessity; Conrad cut steps along the southern slope, where the ice fragments swished down and vanished. There were patches of quite hard ice, slowing our progress, and more than a hundred steps were made to the first snow point of the final crest. Beyond us lay a higher cornice, and then a short level of rocks and shale forming the summit; it was just 1.30 when we arrived and took off the rope. The difficulties had been much less than we expected.

It was a pleasurable surprise to find a rock outcrop on the very highest point of the mountain, and we sat down in a comfortable spot to have lunch. It was not the best of days for a distant view, as smoke hid many of the far peaks that we had hoped to see. Most spectacular, however, was the gorge of Bennington Glacier. Formed by the snows that lie in the northern cirque of Mt. Fraser's three peaks, the ice stream winds sinuously below the barren west wall of the Ramparts and disappears around the corner of Casemate—the lowest portion of visible ice being more than 4000 ft. below our viewpoint. The glacier is more than 3 miles long and gives rise to Geikie Creek, flowing to Fraser River; the long northern arête of Simon Peak walls the ice on the west and plunges down in snow-powdered precipices and broken ridges that support the gigantic towers of Casemate and Postern. Beyond the muddy waters of Icefall Lake are two smaller pools of clear deep blue, and on the meadows across Geikie Creek we discovered the tents of another party,[10] whose members were carrying on a mountaineering campaign in the vicinity.

[10] Messrs. Fynn, Geddes, Wates, and Slark. See *A.J.* xxxvi. 342.

Above their camping place rises Mt. Geikie; a tremendous grim wall it is, seared and fissured by ice-filled couloirs, and surmounted by two fine towers sprinkled with new snow. We thought that the rocks would be scarcely dry enough for climbing, but were pleasantly surprised to learn that a successful ascent was achieved only a few days later. We ourselves had at no time any real designs on Geikie, and as we gazed at its fascinating crags we could scarcely believe that our own position on the summit of Mt. Fraser was by a few feet a loftier one.

It was now quite plain that nothing of difficulty intervened between Simon and McDonell Peak; so rather than retrace our roundabout route, we built a cairn, walked back in the ice steps, and traversed McDonell. We were just one hour between the summits, Strumia leading up the ridge on steep crags where every hold was firm and belays for the rope were found wherever required. We had some thought of going on and adding the unclimbed Bennington Peak to our bag; but it looked long and not too interesting; storm clouds were blowing over, and we decided to go on down. Besides, it was 3.30, and we, as usual at this time of day, were beginning to think of supper.

Long slopes of scree and shale lead down to the Fraser Glacier; we took off the rope and were soon far below. Peals of thunder were heard rumbling in the north, and a shower of rain swept by as we left the ice. At 5.0 we were once more amongst the mosquitoes—Conrad heard them buzzing nearly half a mile away and put a turn of the rope about his ice-axe lest they carry it off—and spent a miserably unhappy hour fighting them in the woods below our camp. On arrival we found the men stretched on the grass beside the tents, looking through binoculars toward the Astoria meadows. What at first appeared to be a grizzly bear turned out to be a cariboo; and on watching we counted no less than twenty-five of them feeding and slowly moving across the grassy slopes. As we turned toward the fire, drawn by the appetizing odours from the cook-pots, the clouds were breaking above the Ramparts, and a broad shaft of golden light formed a bright pattern on the Eremite glacier.

Early in the morning we broke camp and returned to Moat Lake, a ride of some three hours. The sky was overcast, and the spires of the Ramparts were all hidden in trailing mist. Our tents were set up near the little ponds on the summit of Tonquin Pass, with a frontal view of the cliffs of Bastion and Turret. During the afternoon we examined the northern wall of Geikie, but were able to see little of its upper portion because

of low clouds that swirled about without lifting. Below the Turret pinnacle is a narrow gully, with broad, funnel-shaped top which collects the stones that come rattling and banging down night and day; the Indians for generations have known of this place of 'mountain thunder.' Sunset glow cast crimson and purple lights on the buttresses of Geikie and Barbican, with sulphur light suffusing the transparent mists through which the higher ridges were occasionally revealed.

Although the next day came with a grey dawn, Conrad and Strumia went out for a climb on Bastion. We watched them cutting over a steep slope of snow high up, and disappear into the hollow beyond. They were back in time for supper, having reached a lofty notch through which they looked down upon Bennington Glacier. The final wedge, like a huge stone spade, had been out of the question under such weather conditions and the limited time at their disposal.

It was our last night in camp with the outfit, and, as usual, the weather showed signs of immediate clearing. As we sat by the roaring fire, listening to stories of far adventure, we noticed that from behind Maccarib and Oldhorn, beyond the little lakes, a full moon had come up to light the shadowy walls of the Ramparts. Pinnacle after pinnacle caught up a gleaming moonbeam, as if hidden sprites were racing along the ridges and touching them with torches into a silver glow. Slowly rose the moon, not in solemn grandeur, but with full face smiling as if in sympathy with our merriment. A wind from the Tonquin Pass was gently moving the pine-tops; there was a tinkling of bells as our horses wandered across the meadows.

A Note on the Original Journals of David Douglas.

By J. MONROE THORINGTON, M.D.

FEW problems more interesting have arisen in the mountaineering history of the Canadian Alps than that occasioned by the Scots botanist, David Douglas, incorrectly ascribing tremendous elevations to the peaks of Athabaska Pass, which he named Mt. Brown and Mt. Hooker.[1]

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[1] For a general summary of the Brown-Hooker problem consult the writer's article, 'The Mountains of the Whirlpool' (*A.J.*, No. 229, November 1924, p. 299).

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