

## A SUMMER CAMP IN THE CANADIAN ROCKIES.

### PART II.

ON the 3rd of August, then, an eventful day for some of us, we were called by the boys at 5, and got up shivering to make a hasty toilet in the sharp morning air. I wondered even more than the night before why I was doing it, and envied the happy sleepers who, murmuring a drowsy "Good Luck" to us, turned over and relapsed into slumber. At Mr. Wheeler's instigation we choked down more breakfast than we wanted. Before every party started, the director read out the names, and also read, to those about to climb, a little sermon on the necessity of absolute obedience to the guide.

In camp a sort of martial law prevails—and necessarily so. A despotic monarchy—although a beneficent one—reigns supreme in the person of Mr. Wheeler, and on the mountains the guide's will is law. This year we had two rebels. One was an eccentric man who, starting with one company, attached himself to another—one of the cardinal sins here—and still further distinguished himself by coming down entirely on his own. That he did so quite safely made no difference to the principle involved. The other, I regret to say, was an Englishman with a passion for fire-arms—which are forbidden—and an unappreciated gift of extreme profanity. Both got their congé from the director and left unobtrusively early next morning. Against Mr. Wheeler's decisions there is no appeal, and we felt very content to have it so.

Behold us, then, in our climbing canonicals, staff in hand and burden on back, like Christian again, only the staff was an alpenstock and the knapsack was a light one, the real provisions for the journey being carried by the Swiss guide, with help from the men of the party. Edouard Feuz, a well known Swiss guide, whose father was a guide before him, led our imposing party of thirty-

five—and I came next. I knew enough to be quite aware that it was no post of honour. Anyone of whose climbing capabilities they know absolutely nothing, or any one from “furrin parts,” whom they are specially anxious to have graduate, is generally put in the best place next the guide, and I fulfilled both conditions. There are no more than five in any party, so we made quite a queue, as, with the good wishes of Mr. Wheeler ringing in our ears, we started up through the brushwood.

I had never climbed anything more formidable than Lochnagar and Mount Keen before, and in my mind there lingered a vague idea that all well regulated mountains had nice paths up their sides. Similarly, another deluded female later admitted she signed on gaily for what was said to be a *very* easy trip—an exploration of Storm valley. Her recollections of a valley were of something pleasant and fairly level. She concluded afterwards, however, that her recollections were at fault, or that valleys were not what they used to be. All definitions, we gradually learnt, go by the board here.

Well, I confess some of us found it hard, hot and thirsty work, climbing up that way with no trail. We held at it, however, tried not to drink the mountain springs dry, in obedience to counsels from those who knew better, and were rewarded by getting our “second wind” in due time. When up over 2,000 feet we came, from high above them, on the two lovely Storm lakes of purest emerald, at which we rested, quenched our thirst, and tried to fortify our souls for the struggle to come. Then, after some rough, monotonous work over slipping shale and boulders, came the eerie part of climbing up the steep rocks with but little hold for foot or hand. There were two “chimneys” to be negotiated, forming what the real climbers refer to casually as “a nice little bit of rock-work,” and providing the unhappy novice with the scene of future thrilling nightmares. A chance look downwards—we didn’t care to take many in spite of the unpromising prospect ahead—revealed the not very reassuring fact that every single company that followed us was securely roped together, while Edouard

let his particular charges clamber on in isolated peril. Later I was asked by many of the climbers why we weren't roped in such a place, but I had no explanation to offer. The one I hugged to myself was that possibly Edouard, seeing we were good climbers, had placed unusual confidence in us by giving us that test of our mettle. I submit this with the very greatest diffidence, however, for I must admit that if Edouard had any feelings of admiration for us at *any* stage of that day's proceedings, he succeeded admirably in concealing them. He certainly saw later on that he had made a mistake, for the next development was an outbreak of hysterics on the part of the lady following me. She wept, she sobbed, she declared she couldn't go on, there was no use speaking, etc., in such a giddy place. This had the effect of un-nerving us all considerably. I didn't feel at all superior. I have always felt that a spice of danger gave the zest best worth having to life, but I admit that the spice was too strong for my taste just then, though I flatter myself that I didn't show it. If I were to die, I thought I'd much prefer to die game! Well, it was of course impossible for her to go back, it was equally impossible to leave her there, and in time she was soothed sufficiently to go on. As soon as the change was practicable, I gave up my place next to the guide. She climbed well after that, and came down far better than I did. As soon as Edouard got an opportunity he roped us together, but to every one of us it seemed that the "chimney" he roped us for was not nearly so alarming as the one we had scaled by ourselves.

All through that precipitous part, a quotation of the director's at the preceding night's camp fire had rung in my mind. An unsympathetic outsider, he said, had defined the C.A.C. as "an assembly of lunatics, with strongly developed suicidal tendencies." I felt the thing couldn't have been better expressed! But apart from any danger to ourselves, there was the haunting dread of sending down, by some inadvertent movement, one of the many loose boulders on the innocent climbers winding

their way up below us. That was Edouard's great fear, and he imparted it to us so thoroughly that we were sometimes positively afraid to stir a step in any direction. Edouard was rather a worried man that day. The accident of two days before might have had something to do with this. He confided to us that he had never been at the head of such a big party before, and I knew by the tone in which he said it that he devoutly hoped he would never be again.

The last climb of all held no dangers, but was a steady, heart-breaking, apparently endless ascent through loose, rotten shale to the highest peak, on which the cairn stood out so welcome—but so distant. At last the very top was reached, and instructed as to the correct procedure, I touched the cairn with my alpenstock before sinking thankfully against it to rest my weary limbs.

After a brief, speechless glance at the wonders around, lunch was insisted on, for it was now almost 3, and we had breakfasted before 6. Lunch on this auspicious occasion was by no means a successful meal. The sandwiches, made 10 hours before, and carried on the guide's back in the sun since then, were hard and dry—one couldn't blame them—and better mixed than usual. Then, having no water to speed them on their way, and trying vainly to banish the tantalizing visions of steaming cups of tea, we had to eat mouthfuls of snow. If any of you, when hot, thirsty and tired, care to try that as a beverage, I think you will agree with me that it leaves much to be desired.

That Spartan meal disposed of, we were free to return to the view; *it* was eminently satisfactory. They tell me that real mountaineers climb for the joy of climbing, and that the view is quite a secondary matter. Well, I have long since decided that I am no mountaineer—no doubt you have too—and certainly I'd have felt much aggrieved if after all our hard work we had seen little or nothing at the top. The day was fortunately clear, and in every direction we saw a panorama of glittering mountains, peak after peak, range after range, a marvel indescribable of snowy beauty. We were in an elemental world, mysterious and

sublime, up among those silent sentinels of the sky, Ball, Whympfer, and countless other giants rearing their heads around us. And that *I* was really up there, so near heaven, was most wonderful of all to me! The Bow River wound along the valley far below us like a little silver thread. We felt we were on the crest of the world, and in fact we *were* practically on the crest of the New World, for Mount Storm takes its place on the Great Divide. On the one side, that of our camp, the mountain torrents flow to Hudson Bay, and thence to the Atlantic; on the other, to the Pacific.

But we have to descend, however reluctantly, to the world, and the bitter wind blowing up here makes us more reconciled to the fact, and also to the thought of the long miles intervening between us and home. Down the shale again we go, learning how to brace our alpenstocks and plant our feet for descent. We did not again tackle those precipices, but came down long, weary rock-slopes unmurmuringly instead. A glissade down the snow was a novel and exhilarating experience, but we struck surprisingly little snow on the whole. The hardest part for most of us came after the Lakes, under the timber-line, by which time the inevitable rain had begun. The four miles after that, through a pathless wilderness of thick brush, in pouring rain, each step an effort greater than the last, are no joy to remember, and seem liker forty in the retrospect.

The men were most good and helpful all the way through. I shall always remember gratefully the nice man who, seeing some of us weaker vessels puffing painfully up a long steep ascent, badly needing a rest but too proud to admit it, took in the situation at a glance, sank down in an attitude of extreme exhaustion, mopped his face feverishly—it was quite dry, unlike ours!—and said there was no use speaking, he simply *had* to have a breather. We rested thankfully, saying nothing—for breath was precious—got our wind again, and went on when he, seeing we were sufficiently rested, said he *thought* he could go on again. On the way home, too, the encouragement of the

men, more than the actual help they were so willing to give, cheered us wonderfully.

Our great aim was to get in before it was quite dark, and this was accomplished. At a little past 8, with joy unfeigned, we struck the familiar cluster of white tents, and were soon among friends, our hearts warmed by the cheer that greets the returning graduates. All except three, who gave up, had graduated—a pretty good proportion—having attained the height of 10,309 feet. Two of our number, however, had to be almost carried a good part of the way home. In spite of what they were good enough to call Scotch grit, I was tired to the very limit, and must have looked it, for the first two men I met—I happened to know both of them—simultaneously offered me brandy. I accepted—from both!—they made a bee-line for their tents, and I saw their faces no more. I know they came back, but meantime the director, on the spot as usual, came up with congratulations, and at once said: “Brandy—that’s what you need.” Producing a flask, he poured me out a stiff dose, of which I took about half, but he stood over me till I drank every drop. I was well off in every way, neither of my two special friends having climbed. Hot water, a rub down, fresh clothes, and a delicious hot supper in bed, with quarts of tea, made me feel that life was almost too happy. It was two hours later before the last of our benighted parties got in. Then knowing everybody safe, I slept the deep and dreamless sleep of utter exhaustion; the rippling creek was silent for me that night.

Next day I was pleased to find that I was quite able to move, which from my feelings of the night before I hardly expected. Sunday was a delightful day of well-earned rest. Every one who hadn’t climbed wanted to hear our exploits. As I looked up to the frowning heights of Storm—though the summit itself was invisible—I asked myself again in wonder if I had really been there at all. We had a simple service at 11 round the camp-fire, conducted by Dean Robinson, formerly of Belfast—a service that will always stand out unique in my memory. The Annual General Meeting was held in the afternoon, that being the

only day on which the people can be got together. An interesting talk by Professor Coleman on the making of mountains followed, while the evening's entertainment, highly un-Sabbatical, was an uproariously funny "Court Martial," by far the best thing of its kind I have seen anywhere. As the trial proceeded, the shadows grew deeper, the fire burned brighter, and we crept closer and closer to it, unwilling to lose a word, and refusing to think of bed till the thing was over and the prisoner acquitted of the grave charge brought against him.

I have left myself no time in which to tell of our delightful, if somewhat tiring, two days' trip to Prospectors' Valley Camp, some twelve miles off, where an auxiliary camp was pitched. On the way thither we saw the box-canyon in the pursuit of which we had suffered so many things the first day. Here we saw the glorious Valley of the Ten Peaks, and our friend Storm being voted too hard a climb, some of the Ten Peaks were attacked instead, with varying success. Neither have I time to tell of our happy little pic-nic to the five wonderfully-coloured fishing lakes. We had a perfect day and an ideal leader, and there was not even a hint of strenuousness in the whole excursion. In that it stood entirely alone. It was in the course of our afternoon tea here, after many unsuccessful attempts to balance my cup, first on one slippery leg, then on the other, that I solved, to my own entire satisfaction, the problem why so many men do not enjoy afternoon tea.

The last day came all too soon. This time the road could offer us no surprises; every iniquity of which a trail was capable we had sounded to the very depths. Surely, while memory lasts, I shall remember walking along that road with new friends who yet seemed, some of them, of such old standing—Storm Mountain, with all the unforgettable experiences of the last ten days, lying behind us, Castle Mountain in its extraordinary beauty at our side, and before us, with the shriek of the train (which unwonted sound stirred us mightily) civilization and conventionality again. When our train came in, what joy to get off our own hard-worked, blistered, abused feet, and to be borne

along without any effort on our part! As I looked back at Storm triumphantly, I felt something like Thackeray's retired sea-captain, who regarded the storm indifferently as being "another man's business." How we enjoyed our first civilized meal again, clothed and in our right minds, with Christian foot-gear on our aching feet, and how we delighted in piling up all the unnecessary dishes possible around us!

I'm afraid I don't sound a very enthusiastic camper, and yet I don't know that many enjoyed their experiences more than I did. One lady left the camp on the second or third day, with, we heard afterwards, nothing good to say about it or any one in it. It is far from surprising if some cannot stand it. To say that it was the most strenuous ten days of my life is to put it very mildly. I question if I shall ever pack as much sheer hard work into ten weeks in the future! And *we* had conscientiously tried, so far as possible, to put ourselves in training for it, while some of our co-campers were fresh from what has been well called "a pink tea existence." We had at least climbed before, if under far easier conditions. Some had hardly even *seen* a hill before. I think the wonder rather is that so many of us could by hook or crook be labelled graduates at the end of the time.

Even if most of the excursions *were* too hard to be unmixed joy to the novices, there was always the camp-fire to look forward to, with its good-fellowship, its lectures by distinguished specialists, its evenings of song and story, of Swiss pipe-music, of fun and frolic of every kind, generally sobering down before we went to bed to the singing of that exquisite Canadian paraphrase of the 121st Psalm to "Sandon,"—"Unto the hills around will I lift up my longing eyes." Of this "Camp-fire hymn," echoed back nightly by the mountains, the poor man lying helpless and broken in his tent said he had never heard anything that sounded to him more beautiful.

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