



May 24 1928

MOUNT ARROWSMITH, VANCOUVER ISLAND, B.C.—THE SUMMIT RIDGE.

J. A. Parker

THE
Cairngorm Club Journal.

Vol. XII.

JANUARY, 1929.

No. 67.

MOUNT ARROWSMITH, VANCOUVER ISLAND,
B.C.

By J. A. PARKER.

IN the course of my wanderings up the west coast of North America from San Francisco to Skagway, in Alaska, I found myself in Vancouver, B.C., with a fortnight to spare. Casting about in a C.P.R. office for a tempting lure I chanced to pick up a modest little "folder" advertising the charms of the Châlet on Cameron Lake in Vancouver Island, and so to speak just on the other side of the street, the Strait of Georgia. The said folder contained these fatal words, "Come and explore Mount Arrowsmith, a little climb of 5976 feet ; really not strenuous." Needless to say, I seized the bait greedily and crossed over the next day.

Cameron Lake I found to be a beautiful sheet of water set deep in the hills, all of which are densely covered with primeval forest. The railway runs along the north shore of the Lake, and the Châlet is a cosy little hotel erected by the C.P.R. in a delightful situation at its eastern end. In spite of Mount Arrowsmith being only "a little climb" I considered that a companion was advisable, even although I had been told in Vancouver that there was a good trail all the way up ; and very fortunately a Mr. Stove, who is employed on the railway, offered to go up with me on

Sunday, the 20th May, the only condition he made being that we should start not later than five o'clock in the morning, which looked rather ominous for a climb that was "not strenuous."

And so at 4.55 a.m. on a perfect morning we sallied forth from the Châlet and hit the Arrowsmith Trail. On packing up we had found that three lunches had been set out ; one for each of us and one (some choice bones) for the hotel dog in case we wished to take him with us. We took all three lunches but left the spaniel at home. The forest is, of course, for all practical purposes simply impenetrable, but the trail through it is quite good and led us up easily through magnificent forest scenery for thousands and thousands of feet. At about 3500 feet patches of snow began to appear among the trees, and then finally as we neared the timber line the snow became continuous and we said good-bye to the trail. The snow was fairly firm and we made good progress towards the north summit, called the Hump, which was now well in view. The final ascent of this involved much step kicking up steep snow and at 9.10 a.m. we reached the top (c. 5250 ft.). This is the usual end of the ascent of Mount Arrowsmith and it commands a very fine view.

We, however, found that we were standing on the north arm of a rugged crest which circles round the western end of a profound valley in front of us, and on the far side of which rose the highest tops of the mountain. Halting only to take a photo. of the summit we pushed off along the ridge. The first part was a rather unwelcome drop of about 500 feet down a very steep rock-face which demanded care ; but was not difficult as the rock was sound and there were abundant holds. Then, after a more or less level bit, we had to tackle a steep buttress which led up to the final crest of the mountain by way of a very steep snow slope, a steep snow arête, and, finally, some very steep rocks. Quite an interesting little bit of climbing and we got on to the top of the west end of the crest

at 10.35, having thus been on the move for fully five and a half hours without any rests. By descending a little to the south we found water and wood and soon had a good fire and a billy of piping hot tea. While we were thus having our first lunch I asked Mr. Stove, "what about the bones that were intended for the dog," and he replied laconically, "I am the dog." The bones had been stripped.

Lunch over we faced the next problem. We were a short way down the south face of the final crest of the mountain which led eastwards for about three-quarters of a mile to a snow peak, just to the south of which, and cut off from it by a small snow saddle, was a big knob of rock which was about 50 feet higher and was the actual summit. The side of this knob facing us was manifestly impossible, and the left hand profile, very deep snow leading up to steeper and at one place overhanging rock, did not look at all inviting, Mr. Stove now said that there was an easy way up just behind the skyline, and that while I went over and did the climb he would wait and watch me doing it. Very thoughtful and considerate on his part.

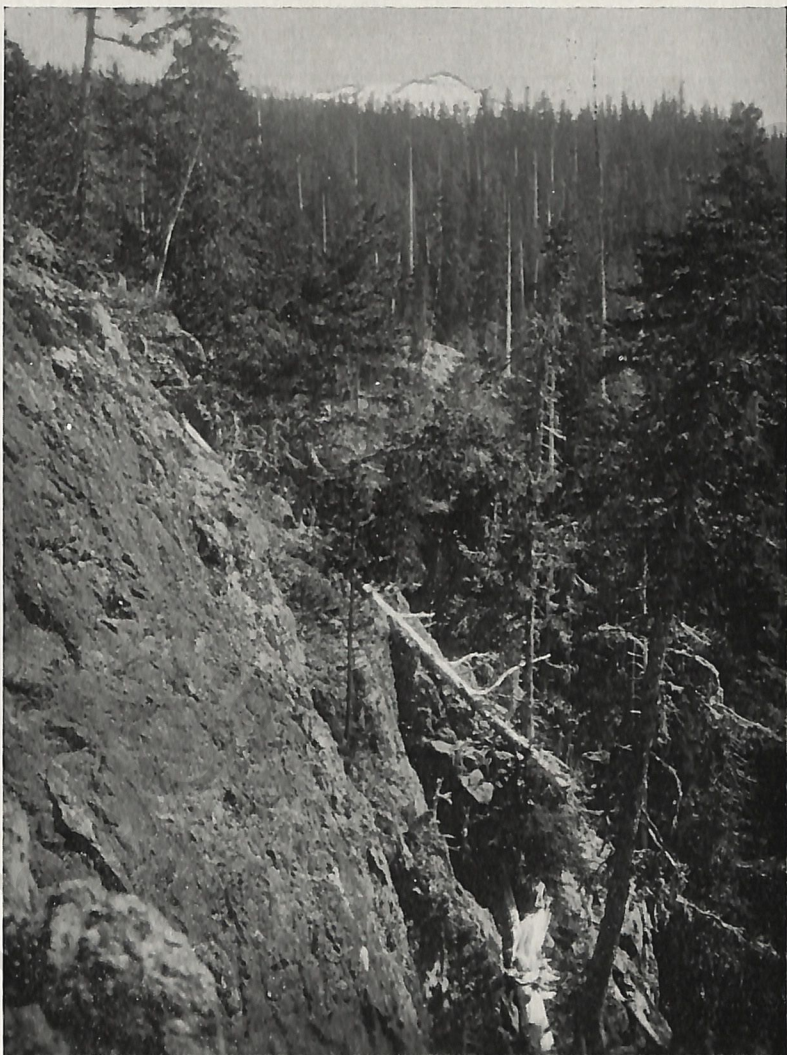
However off I went alone. The rock traverse across the south face of the mountain, to avoid two false tops, was very exposed in places, but I soon got across it and on to the actual ridge along which it was a simple walk on snow to the snow summit. This was right opposite the business side of the knob which now received my closest attention. In the first place, the "easy way up round the back" was a very forbidding precipice, and the only possible route was up the profile we had seen from our luncheon place. The lower part was a sharp snow arête butting up against some very steep and in places overhanging rock. A thin fixed rope hung down the face of the rock, and as it in places hung clear it was evident that the rope would require to be depended on a good deal. It was manifestly not a place to be tested, for the first time after the winter, by a solitary climber. So I had just to be satisfied

with the snow summit and the view from it, fortunately as afterwards transpired.

The view was magnificent, as Mount Arrowsmith is the highest mountain in this part of the Island, and the day was superb with perfect visibility. The features were the snow-clad mountains in the north end of the Island, and, across the Strait of Georgia, the peaks of the Cascade and Coast Ranges running from Mount Baker in the south to as far north as the eye could reach. And to the west a little bit of the Pacific. A glance at a map of British Columbia will show what this means.

Returning I reached Mr. Stove in due course, and on sitting down beside him for a few minutes I noticed that the shaft of my ice axe was cracked right across about nine inches from the head! And with a very slight pressure it broke in two, which caused me furiously to think what might have happened had I tackled the final summit. There must have been an internal flaw in the shaft for a long time as dry rot was visible; but it could only have come to the surface a few minutes before I rejoined my companion. The axe was bought in 1894, and was not worn to any extent at the part of the shaft which broke. It had not been subjected to any rough use on Arrowsmith, but may have been strained in coming from Aberdeen to Victoria, B.C., by Parcel Express. The moral of course is that an old axe should be very carefully examined and tested, with special attention to the shaft, before being used.

Mr. Stove very decently let me use his axe for the descent while he used the shaft of mine as a stick. We had no difficulty, as the rock simply demanded care, and the steep snow afforded us many glissades. The Hump was passed over at 2.30 and, descending rapidly into the trees, we reached a rest shack about 3.15. Here we lit a fire and brewed a big billy of tea, and after a good meal we cleaned up the place, which it badly needed. The shack belongs, of course, to the



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ON MOUNT ARROWSMITH, VANCOUVER ISLAND, B.C.—THE FOREST,



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CAMERON LAKE CHALET.

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C.P.R. and I presume that my companion considered that as a matter of duty he was bound to tidy it up. Our subsequent long descent by the trail through the forest was very fine indeed and we reached the Châlet at 6.55 p.m. well pleased with our long day of fourteen hours. The early start had been justified.

Four days later I went up the mountain alone as far as the Hump, to get photographs, and in the descent through the upper forest had just a little trouble in hitting the trail, (and the right valley!) However I luckily got it. Had I not done so it might have meant an uncomfortable night out in the primeval forest with bears and cougars for companions!

[NOTES ON THE PHOTOGRAPHS.]

Mount Arrowsmith : The Summit Ridge.—This view was taken from the North Summit (the Hump) looking south. The highest point is obvious, and the snow summit which was reached is just in front of it. The steep snow and rock buttress which we climbed is seen leading up to the west end of the Summit Ridge, just to the right of the two false tops.

On Mount Arrowsmith : the Forest.—The view was taken from near the Trail at about 3000 feet, looking up to the north summit which is much foreshortened as it lies a long way back. The view gives some idea of the going one would be up against were the Trail to be lost.

The Châlet, Cameron Lake.—The view was taken looking west and shows a portion of the Lake through the trees.