

A FEW NOTES ABOUT THE SELKIRKS.—I.

BY H. W. TOPHAM.

I PROPOSE to give in a short paper an account of the excursions which I made last summer in the Selkirk Mountains, British Columbia, and to give also what information I can to aid any one who may have the time and inclination to visit America this year. Probably the first mention in the 'Alpine Journal' of these mountains was a short note in the August number of 1888, alluding to a winter excursion which I made that year.* In the summer of the same year the Rev. W. S. Green made a very fair survey of a portion of the Selkirks, and added a great deal to our knowledge of the district, both by a paper which he read before the Royal Geographical Society, and by a book which he wrote upon the subject. The paper and a map will be found in the 'Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society,' vol. xi. No. 3.

Messrs. Nottman, of Montreal, have published some fine photographs of Selkirk scenery, which may be seen at the rooms of the Royal Geographical Society; and I may add that I hope myself to be able, at a meeting of the Alpine Club in June, to exhibit some lantern-slides from photographs taken by Mr. Huber and myself last summer.

The best months in which to visit the Selkirks are July, August, and September. About a fortnight should be allowed for the journey out; and it will be best to go through to Vancouver, the terminus of the Canadian Pacific Railway. This for two reasons—first, because the whole journey from the plains to Vancouver, across four ranges of mountains, viz. the Rockies, the Selkirks, the Gold Range, and the Cascade Mountains, is exceedingly beautiful, more so than anything which resembles it in the States; and, secondly, because Vancouver is the best town in which to purchase food-supplies and camp outfit.

The best route to take from New York is either by way of Chicago, St. Paul, and then through Manitoba to Winnipeg on the Canadian Pacific Railway, and so on to Vancouver; or from New York direct by the Canadian Pacific Railway. In either case I strongly advise a visit to Vancouver.

The expenses will be: London to New York, say 15*l.* to 18*l.*; New York to Vancouver, say 30*l.* return. This is first-class. The price of a ticket to Glacier House

* *Alpine Journal*, vol. xiv. pp. 58–60.

Station, in the Selkirks, is very little less than the price of a through ticket to Vancouver.

It is better at New York to pay duty upon excisable articles than to send them through on bond. Such articles are cameras, instruments, and new guns. I sent my camera and instruments through on bond, paid heavy express charges for carriage, and did not receive them for six weeks afterwards, when they arrived too late to be of much service. The things most needed from England are condensed soups, condensed vegetables, ice-axes, alpine-ropes, boots, instruments, and plenty of boot-nails. At Vancouver the following things must be bought: Tents, blankets, cooking-utensils, and provisions. Flour can be obtained from Donald. Let us now suppose that you are starting from Vancouver. You will arrive in twenty-four hours at Glacier House Station, which is situated nearly at the highest point reached in the Selkirk Mountains by the railway. You will find an extremely comfortable hotel, and a landlord who will do his utmost to help you in every way, although he may reserve his private opinion as to your sanity. It will be best to write to him a few days in advance to engage the porter whom I took with me last year; for this man is the only one in the neighbourhood who has any knowledge of the mountains. If you cannot get him or his friend, who also accompanied me, you will have to get any one you can—probably some prospector after minerals or wood—and you will have to educate him yourself in the art of climbing. This is what I had to do myself with the men of whom I speak; and although they could not at first see the necessity of carrying a stick of any sort, yet, by the time we parted company, nothing would suit them but an ice-axe of the very first quality. I mean by this that the men are quite capable of learning. With the exception of men of this sort, who are by far the most agreeable men to camp with and climb with, you will find no porters at all, unless a few Indians should happen to have been brought from another part of the country and located here by the railway company as a doubtful attraction to travellers. These Indians will grumble if asked to carry more than 50 lbs.; and you will find that, although they can walk clean away from you over snow and rocks, yet they are like helpless babies upon ice. They are not particular about sleeping out without a tent—a couple of blankets each is all they want; but it is unlikely that they will consent to leave their squaws for more than two nights at a time.

Before leaving this part of my subject I must add that letters of introduction to the managers and officials of the railway company are of great service. I have always received the greatest courtesy at their hands.

And now for a brief account of the climbing accomplished last year. The limits of this paper must of necessity preclude anything but the most summary account of our doings, and the reader had better place Mr. Green's map before him, in order to get some idea of the lay of the country.

My first excursion, on which I was accompanied by two porters, was to the Dawson Glacier, where I camped for several days, and ascended Mounts Donkin and Fox. The latter is very easy, but there is a steep snow-slope at the summit of the former, which requires some care. We descended into the Horne Creek, which contains a series of fine falls and rapids; but we had great difficulty in forcing our way through the dense undergrowth, which renders walking below timber-line almost impossible. There is one golden rule to be observed in the Selkirks: 'Keep above timber-line.' From the summit of Donkin innumerable snow-peaks and glaciers were seen. One peak in particular stood out from the rest prominent for grace of outline and the beautiful pureness of its snow. I named it, with the licence allowed alike to great and small travellers in a new district, Mount Purity. Want of provisions prevented us from attempting any further ascents at present, so we returned to the hotel by way of the Illecellewaet Névé. By doing this we were enabled to clear up what had hitherto been something of a mystery—the extent of the névé; and we found that it does not extend farther than Mounts Macoon and Fox, and that it is entirely disconnected with the Deville Glacier, which is fed from a different source.

I was joined at the hotel by my friend Forster, and we then crossed the same névé and descended to the Deville Glacier, which we thoroughly explored, together with the Deville Névé. We also ascended the peak which on Mr. Green's map lies south of Mount Fox.

The Deville Névé, besides being the great feeder of the Deville Glacier, sends down also great quantities of ice in a fine ice-fall on to the Grand Glacier.

This last is the largest glacier which we found, and is considerably larger than the Illecellewaet. Like the Deville Glacier, it descends into the Beaver Creek, and it became our ambition now to ascend this creek and make a base-camp at the foot of the glacier. It was our belief that the Grand

Glacier was the source of the Beaver River ; but in this we were mistaken, for when, after infinite trouble, we had reached this glacier from Bear Creek and over the Prairie Hills, we found that the source of the river must be looked for in a glacier still farther up the valley. But previous to this last excursion we had once more to return to the hotel upon the same old quest of food.

Here we were joined by two Swiss gentlemen—Messrs. Huber and Sultzzer—who had just succeeded in making the ascent of Mount Sir Donald.

From Grand Glacier we ascended a conspicuous peak shaped like a sugar-loaf. It was the highest peak within easy reach of our camp, and from its summit we obtained a magnificent view of glaciers and mountains as far as the eye could see. Before leaving this camp we visited the two glaciers at the head of the Beaver Valley. These two glaciers run parallel to each other, and are not separated at their snouts by more than a few hundred yards. The one feeds the Beaver River, and the other the Duncan River. We named them respectively the Beaver and Duncan Glaciers, and gave the same names to two fine peaks, one at the head of either glacier.

We next determined to attempt the ascent of Mounts Purity, Dawson, and Mitre, and we therefore retraced our steps by way of the Deville Glacier to the hotel. Mount Purity was the only one of the three peaks which we succeeded in climbing, and I think we must have taken ten days to do it ; for whereas we had had so far nothing to hinder us but lack of provisions and a superfluity of mosquitoes, the weather now broke, and we were driven back again and again before our perseverance was rewarded. From its central position, Mount Purity will be useful to the topographer, and the panorama from the summit will well repay the climber.

In conclusion, I will ask any one intending to visit the Selkirks to obtain from me certain data, which will enable him to continue the observations which I commenced for the measurement of several of the glaciers.