

a Canadian. Eventually a decision was deferred until the next meeting.

Illustrating his talk with some excellent slides, Mr. Allston Burr read a very carefully prepared paper on Mont Blanc, setting forth the history of the mountain, and dwelling especially on the different routes of ascent and their variations.

After the lecture Mr. Howard Palmer showed a collection of very fine enlargements of the Canadian Rockies, including a number of Mt. Clemenceau.

The sixth Dinner will be held in New York early in December 1923.

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Hon. Sec.

11, Broadway, New York City.

OLD MEMORIES : THE COLUMBIA ICEFIELD.

By J. NORMAN COLLIE.

DR. MONROE THORINGTON is certainly to be congratulated on his visit to the Columbia district. It is remarkable that this splendid icefield has received so little attention, for rising out of it are two of the three highest mountains in the Canadian Rockies ; moreover, it is the source of those three great rivers, the Athabasca, the Saskatchewan, and the Columbia. Around it are many other splendid peaks, and numberless are the glaciers that flow from it, down to the pine-clad valleys below, and the camps, as Dr. Thorington says, 'one despairs in the telling of them, they are places to which one will return.'

It is now more than a quarter of a century ago since Woolley and I from the summit of Mt. Athabasca first discovered this lonely land. I had been hunting the peaks north, and ever northward from the Canadian Pacific Railway at Laggan, through a country about which we could find no information. In those days things were very different from now. There was a total lack of knowledge of where the few mountains that had been named by Dr. Hector exactly might be. Mts. Forbes, Lyell and Murchison were somewhere in the beyond, but how to get there was uncertain ; they were 'tucked away behind the foothills where the trails run out and stop.' Beyond were the mysterious lands, unknown and unexplored. In

1896 the whereabouts of even Mt. Balfour was so uncertain that we went to the head of the upper Bow Lake to look for it, and overshot our mark by many miles.

But the call of the wilds was stronger than the love of climbing mountains,

‘Something hidden. Go and find it. Go and look behind the Ranges—
Something lost behind the Ranges. Lost and waiting for you. Go!’

In 1897 the something hidden was Mt. Forbes, next year it was to try and win to a great snow peak far away to the north, and seen from the slopes of Mt. Freshfield. After weeks of battling with the rivers and forests, at last we found it, keeping guard over a mighty snowfield—Mt. Columbia. A noble array of peaks surrounded that vast and lonely expanse of snow and ice.

But we had scant opportunity to ascend the great peaks. Looking back to those times, it is with little regret that we did not climb to the summits of more of the monarchs that watch over those far-away valleys. ‘Have we climbed those mountains? No, the price was paid us ten times over,’ as we wandered free in that land, forcing our way ever onward, through the rivers, or the vast expanses of fallen timber, or across the windy grass uplands of the passes, bright with flowers, whilst always beyond were the mysterious mountains, often half hidden by the drifting mists, and always with the wonder what the morrow would bring forth, the uncertainty of an unknown land.

Snow-draped peaks we passed by, and turquoise lakes set amidst the old pinewoods and ringed round by gaunt precipices, and above, the snow. Wonderful waterfalls that plunged sheer for hundreds of feet into rock-cut canyons where the wild waters raged in fierce tumult. Sometimes the whole undergrowth amidst the black stems of the burnt forest would be aglow with the many coloured ‘painter’s brush,’ or a mass of golden orange daisies would have their colour set against the black satin stems of the charred trunks and a sapphire blue sky. The lure of the wilds always called us onward.

Dr. Thorington too has been caught also by this lure. Although he has conquered many new summits, yet he cannot help seeing occasionally how surprisingly beautiful the underworld in the Rockies can be—‘Lakes with a setting that would make an Izaak Walton oblivious of his sport,’ or ‘a spent

moon hanging over Mt. Forbes in the early dawn,' or his description of Castleguard Camp, 'an Alpine Paradise.'

It is a regret that this delectable land is so far away. But it will be many a long year before much change can happen to the country round Mt. Columbia; it is too far away from the railways. There one will be able to pitch one's tent, and wander free, it may be through primæval forests, or along the shores of a lake, set like some great emerald in dusky gold with the white silk of the snows as a foil, or the forbidding limestone precipices may urge one to try some new and perilous ascent of a mountain. For those who delight in unclimbed peaks there will be plenty and to spare for many a day. And how fortunate we are that there still remains this land of virgin summits, for were we not told in the *ALPINE JOURNAL* (year 1868) that 'so far as the Alps are concerned we can now, I fear, expect nothing free altogether from the taint of staleness. For us the familiar hunting grounds exist no longer, etc., etc.' The Alps have paid the penalty of civilisation. Still, civilised life no doubt is a great blessing, but an occasional return to the wilds will also teach us much that is good for both one's mind and body, much undreamt of in the philosophy of the ordinary man.

In the camp life amidst the far valleys at the headwaters of the Athabasca, the Fraser, and the Saskatchewan rivers, this teaching will come clad in not too strenuous a garb. In that land things are not too easy and not too difficult. In the Himalaya one must be a giant to cope with the vast heights, and one wearies of the immensity of everything. Those, however, who wish to be free from all the unnecessary annoyances of everyday life, let them spend a month camping in the Canadian Rocky Mountains; there they will find one thing at least, that life is worth living, and that for the time being nothing else is worth troubling about.

IN THE OBERLAND AND SAVOIE, 1923.

By GEORGE S. BOWER.

AFTER months of, at times, almost fierce discussion of equipment and plans, Pryor and I, with a feeling of relief that the first pitch was over, collected enough francs of the right type to satisfy an obviously thirsty porter, and secured our seats in a Lötschberg bound train. So thorough