Side-Valleys and Peaks of the Yellowhead Trail.*

By J. Monroe Thorington, M.D.

'. . . *Is this the summit, crowning the day? How cool and quiet! We're not exultant; but delighted, joyful, soberly astonished. . . . Have we vanquished an enemy? None but ourselves. Have we gained success? That word means nothing here. Have we won the kingdom? No . . . and yes. We have achieved an ultimate satisfaction . . . fulfilled a destiny. . . . To struggle and to understand—never this last without the other; such is the law. . . . We've only been obeying an old law then? Ah! but it's* the *law . . . and we understand—a little more. So ancient, wise and terrible—and yet kind we see them; with steps for children's feet.*'—G.H.L.M. (*A.J.* xxxii.).

'*We camped that night on the banks of a small stream, a source of the Myette, which our Iroquois told us was named Pipestone River. The place was very pretty, a tiny plain, covered with flowers, and surrounded by the Rocky Mountains in all their grandeur.*'—Milton and Cheadle.

(*a*) The Robson District.†

OF course we had read about Mt. Robson before! It was first described by Lord Milton and Dr. Cheadle in their book 'The North-West Passage by Land.' 'On every side,' we

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* This paper is a sequel to 'The Mountains of the Whirlpool' (*A.J.* vol. xxxvi., 299 *seq.*), continuing a study of the Continental Divide from Athabaska Pass to Mount Robson.

[Previous articles: 'The Freshfield Group, 1922' (*A.J.* xxxiv. 387 *seq.*), 'The Mountains of the Columbia Icefield, 1923' (*A.J.* xxxv. 178 *seq.*), 'The Panorama from Mt. Columbia' (*A.J.* xxxvi. 116 *seq.*), 'The Mountains of the Whirlpool' (*A.J.* xxxvi. 299 *seq.*), with the present and a further article, 'Tonquin Valley and the Ramparts,' to appear in the November Journal, complete the work along the Divide between the Canadian Pacific and Canadian National Railroads. He has now climbed through from the S. to the N. line of rail, stopping in the principal groups. It has involved about 1500 miles of horse travel, and the ascent of over thirty summits above 9000 ft., nearly half of which were first ascents.]

† **The only available map is Mr. A. O. Wheeler's, issued with his 'Mountains of the Yellowhead Pass,' 'A.J.' xxvi. The map of the Interprovincial Survey on which Mr. Wheeler was the B.C. representative may be expected shortly.**

are told,[1] 'the snowy heads of mighty hills crowded round; whilst, immediately behind us, a giant among giants, and immeasurably supreme, rose Robson's Peak. This magnificent mountain is of conical form, glacier-clothed, and rugged. When we first caught sight of it, a shroud of mist partially enveloped the summit, but this presently rolled away, and we saw its upper portion dimmed by a necklace of light feathery clouds, beyond which its pointed apex of ice, glittering in the morning sun, shot up far into the blue heaven above, to a height of probably 10,000 or 15,000 feet. It was a glorious sight, and one which the Shuswaps of the Cache assured us had rarely been seen by human eyes, the summit being generally hidden by clouds.'

The very origin of the mountain's name is lost in the past;[2] but the Indians had their own names for it long before the arrival of white men. A. R. C. Selwyn,[3] Director of the Geological Survey of Canada, as early as 1871, reported that the Indians told him their name for the mountain signified 'the lines in the rocks.' As Dr. Dawson, in a paper presented before the Royal Society of Canada,[4] informs us: 'The Kamloops Indians affirm that the very highest mountain they know is on the north side of the valley at the Tete Jaune Cache, about ten miles from the valley. This is named *Yuh-*

[1] *The North-West Passage by Land*, p. 257.

[2] 'Jasper Park, Yellowhead Pass and Mt. Robson Expedition,' A. O. Wheeler, *C.A.J.* iv., p. 42. Mr. H. J. Moberly, factor of the Hudson's Bay Company, gives the following information in regard to the name of the mountain: 'Years before the Hudson's Bay Co. and the Nor'-West Co. joined (1821), it was the custom for the Nor'-West Co. to outfit a party for a two years' trip, hunting and trading. They went west and north, even as far as the border of California, one party, under the charge of Peter S. Ogden, some two hundred men, chiefly Iroquois and French Canadians. When west of the Rockies, he scattered his hunters in different parties, under the charge of a foreman, to hunt for the season. One of his camps, under the charge of a man named Robson, was somewhere in the vicinity of this mountain, and it was the rallying point where all other parties came together for their return east.'

[3] 'Report of the Geology and Resources of the Country Traversed by the Yellowhead Pass Route from Edmonton to Tete Jaune Cache,' James McEvoy, *Report of the Geological Survey of Canada*, 1898, vi., part D (Ottawa, 1901). A parallel account will be found in this paper.

[4] 'The Shuswap People of British Columbia,' G. M. Dawson, *Transactions of the Royal Society of Canada* (Ottawa, 1891).

hai-haś-kun, from the appearance of a spiral road running up it. No one has ever been known to reach the top, though a former chief of Tsuk-tsuk-kwălk on the North Thompson was near the top once while hunting goat. When he realized how high he was he became frightened and returned.' The Cree Indians call Robson simply 'The Big Mountain,' but this seems to be a modernism; old men say that their tribe never had a special name for the peak.

Mt. Robson is the highest summit in the Rockies of Canada; but, like many a lesser peak, its height has diminished with recent measurements. The first triangulation, that of McEvoy, resulted in a figure of 13,700 ft.; but the more recent determination of the Interprovincial Boundary Commission has brought this down to 12,972 ft. Thus an old illusion is shattered, and no peak of the Rockies of Canada attains 13,000 ft.

It was during a long ago season of mountaineering in the N.W. that I first saw Robson. During that summer we had tramped through the Cascades, voyaged up the coast to the islands of South-eastern Alaska, and had camped by the glaciers that come down to Taku and Atlin. It was late in the Fall when we started eastward, from Prince Rupert, on the Grand Trunk road; there was a delightful crispness in the clear September air, sharpening the outlines of jagged little peaks of the Coast Range that lifted above the dim violet of distant forested slopes, and the nearer brilliance of yellowed birch and poplar banking the Skeena River.

And then for a day our train had followed the canyons of the Fraser, past the hilly mining country near Prince George; and, at evening, we were on the bend near Tete Jaune, with the glorious massif of Robson towering afar. Clouds were gathering, and the vision was soon gone; but we had one splendid moment when the mountain's crest was golden, above a mist-wreathed base.

Dark was the night when the train pulled through Yellowhead Pass and down to Jasper. This was in the days before hotels, and one obtained lodgings in rooms above the grocery-store; or, if the vacation was an extended one, in the 'tent-city' on Lake Beauvert, where the attractive Lodge of the Canadian National is now situated. The Grand Trunk was then running a through train to Prince Rupert only on alternate days; so in order to go back for a better view of Robson —as I had decided to do—it was necessary to get permission to ride on the freight. There was less trouble about it at that time than at present, and there is no more delightful way of

viewing the mountains of the railway zone than from the caboose of a slow-moving 'side-door pullman.' If the engineer happened to be good-natured, one rode up in front on the cow-catcher, with every opportunity for photographs, and perhaps, if there was a delay in waiting for an express to pass, the chance to go fishing with the train-crew.

Road-beds of the mountain area, recently constructed, were not yet equal to the strain imposed upon them. We started off early in the morning, up the sun-flecked valley of the Miette, and on through Yellowhead Pass. Standing on the rear platform, looking across to the heights of Mt. Fitzwilliam, we were startled by a crashing and grinding. Jumping off, we saw that a spread rail and a buckled truck had wrecked the whole train ahead, and that several huge loads of groceries had spilled down the embankment of the Fraser River, with more than one car slanted out on a precarious angle and threatening to follow.

So the engineer wired for a wrecking crew, and the trainmen got out their fishing-tackle. We were only half-way to Robson, and I walked back along the tracks to Lucerne to await another train that was due on the Canadian Northern road. It was a pleasant stroll; there was no reason for hurry—a small boy informed me that the train was four hours late—and the time was passed on the lake shore, where duck were swimming and the placid water mirrored the peaks of Yellowhead.

It was again dark when we started westward. The night was calm and clear, and a red, waning moon rose over the hill-tops as we neared Moose Lake and the Rainbow Range. As for Mt. Robson, we had seen it from Tete Jaune, and knew that the mountain lay N. of the Fraser; but of the trails through the intervening valleys and forests we had no knowledge. Still we were determined to go as close as possible to that loftiest of mountains.

It is an interesting little adventure to look back upon. In those days we were quite unfamiliar with the ways of the trail; we had no equipment save a rucksack filled with provisions; it was late in September. The train slowed down to let me off by the box-car filled with hay, which then served as Robson Station. It was midnight; I was alone, and a cold wind blowing from the W. and the rising moon were my sole companions when the train had passed around a bend and out of sight. And so I started off along the tracks in the semi-darkness, scarcely able to restrain my eagerness for a sight of the mountain. Youth does such things!

The vision appeared! Mist and vapour play strange tricks with one's judgment of size and distance—moonlight affects it in perhaps an even greater degree. There it was: Robson, 'the mountain of the spiral road,' seeming to touch the very heavens, flooded with soft light and gleaming like molten silver. Nothing since then has quite equalled the impression of stupendous height that Robson gave on that starlit night of years ago. It seemed to me then as if I were gazing up to the throne of some Divinity, although maturer years have somewhat tempered this idea to the thought that there is merely a feminine quality in some mountains, which makes them best seen at night.

But certainly that did not enter my head at the time. I sat down on a trestle and dangled my legs over the side, and looked and looked. But even contemplation of the sublime cannot maintain the body temperature on a freezing night. I got up and moved slowly along, rubbing my eyes and still half afraid that they were deceiving me. And then a piece of luck: a bobbing twinkling light along the rails ahead. It was carried by an outfitter who still had some horses down in the Grand Forks; and in a few minutes we had arranged for a little trip to Robson Pass. I was glad at the thought of company who knew the way.

The keeper of a section-house put us up for the night, and next morning we went down for the horses. There was then no bridge over the Fraser, but a log-jam, long since departed, afforded a place of crossing. We rounded up the cayuses, and finished off a tremendous breakfast of bear meat and potatoes. On the preceding day a large black bear had been ambushed on a nearby berry-slide, and the hide was now nailed up on the door of the shack. A 'homesteader,' whose section is in the angle of the Grand Forks, came over and joined us as cook. We were off shortly after seven o'clock, three riders and two pack-horses, not long after the first sunbeams reached us across the high hills bordering the Fraser.

The trail is unforgettable in its beauty, with spruce and cedar trees straight and perfect above a carpet of berries, fern-brakes, and devil's club—tropically luxuriant. The stream descends in cascades and rapids, with the southern cliffs of Robson almost above one's head. Far behind, in the direction of Tete Jaune, rises the multicoloured ridge of Mica Mountain in the Cariboos. We are soon in Robson's shadow and the top is no longer in sight. Turning a corner we come out on the shore of Kinney Lake, with the slopes of Little

Grizzly and the pinnacle of Whitehorn far above. Just now there is not a cloud to relieve the deep blue of the sky, nor a ripple on the lake to disturb the images of tall trees and soaring peaks.

Rounding the northern shore of the lake, through the trees along the water's edge, we cross the expansive delta of glacial silt at its western end and take up the trail again in the Valley of a Thousand Falls. There is a beautiful glacier and a rock-spire at the valley head, and if not quite a thousand falls come streaming down from the cliffs on either side, the number is at all events most satisfactory and surpassed only by the beauty of their unbroken height. We cross through rushing streams, and slowly climb up the 2000 ft. of zigzag trail, cleverly engineered with wooden trestles, to the upper levels where the roar of Emperor Falls is heard—dissonant to our vocal efforts in urging the horses along.

Across the deep valley-trench, Whitehorn is magnificent with its icy arête and hanging glaciers, above a black precipice streaked with thread-like, silvery waterfalls. Beyond the misty rainbows formed in the cauldron of Emperor Falls, above tier on tier of horizontal strata and cliff-belts, rises Mt. Robson, steep and snowless, into an enormous wedge. Skirting a burned-over, level area, and emerging from the woods, we reach the marshy flats at the western end of Berg Lake, with distant views to Robson Pass. The northern side of Robson is sheer, but snow again appears. The little basin at the foot of the snowy Helmet gives rise to the 5000 ft. of ice-fall known as the Blue, or Tumbling, Glacier. There are few places in the world where lake scenery can equal this prospect; as we ride along, bits of the ice-front break off with a crash, and the fragments add to the number of floating bergs already sparkling on the dark blue water.

. . . . . .

It was not for a number of years—the Great War had come and gone—that we could come back again; not until the summer of 1924. We had been to Athabaska Pass, to the peaks of Tonquin, and on to Yellowhead. It was a July day, the 17th, and cloudy, to be exact, when Ostheimer, Conrad Kain, and I unloaded our packs before a crowd of curious tourists at Robson Station.

How changed things were! Cabins had sprung up like mushrooms; there was a broad trail, leading to a well-engineered bridge spanning the Fraser Canyon; permanent camps on the summit of Robson Pass made it unnecessary to

use horses, or even carry provisions. It was getting altogether too civilized!

At Kinney Lake we met the Oberland guides, Hans Kohler and Alfred Streich, employed by the Canadian National, and next morning all went up to the cabins on the pass. We were quite ready to believe the Indians' statement that the top of Robson is rarely beheld by human eyes; the weather seemed to be getting worse, fog hanging in the valley and blowing in from the Fraser and back again from the Smoky. The mountain rises so much above its immediate surroundings—scarcely a peak nearby approaches within 2000 ft. of its elevation—that, by its very isolation, it becomes a storm centre. I thought longingly of the cloudless September days in another year.

On July 20, although it was cloudy and a high wind blowing, we all decided that something must be done. It occurred to us to try Resplendent (11,240 ft.), and go up as far as we could. So we started off at half-past six, and made our way to the Robson Glacier, wandering up to the séracs and through a portion of them, killing time in the hope that the wind would die down. The glacier originates in the high saddle and extensive névé fields between Robson and Mt. Resplendent, an extensive area of sérac and crevasse running eastward to a curious buttress, resembling a candle-snuffer and known as the Extinguisher, whence the level and nearly unbroken glacier runs northward for three miles to the pass.

It was amusing to try the rocks of the north arête, the crest of which, as far as we knew, had never been followed throughout. Roping a little below the schrund, we were as well guided a party as has ever tackled a Canadian mountain. Ostheimer, with Kohler and Streich, made one rope, while Conrad and I followed behind, showing wisdom therein, as we could use them for a wind-break while they cut the steps. Streich had quite a job of it; terribly cold, with the slopes below the rocks steep and hard. However, in an hour we were in the lee of a rocky pinnacle and enjoying a second breakfast of bread and sardines. Conrad and I then went ahead and found some quite delightful climbing in a short stretch of chimneys and slanting slabs, where handholds were few and body friction alone kept one from swinging sideways on the rope. At one o'clock we were on the upper snow-level below the peak; everything was enveloped in swirls of mist, but the wind had lessened in force and we could occasionally see for a short distance ahead. Resplendent is not an easy mountain on which to lose the way, and though there was no view to

be had, Conrad led us through the fog to the steep-corniced summit in another ninety minutes. There was still enough of a gale, so that the last portion had to be done carefully; Streich cut up to the cornice, while the rest of us crouched down in the driving snow and anchored. Each of us had a look over the edge, and then we beat a retreat to the western snow-col.

Under the edge of the fog-level we looked far out across the Fraser Valley to the Cariboos and peaks beyond. There was a momentary glimpse of Robson's Peak, rising like a sword-point, vanishing again in the veil of billowing cloud.

On the 22nd, although clouds hung low, a large party of the Alpine Club of Canada, on three ropes, ascended Lynx Mountain (10,471 ft.), an attractive peak of the Robson cirque, commanding a widespread view of Coleman Glacier and Resplendent Valley. One ascends snow slopes, with a few steps to be cut, nearly to the south-western saddle, whence a broad highway of rising shale leads to the summit. (Ascent, 9.00–3.00.) Resplendent and Robson appeared several times, never quite clear, but moist and shadowy in the mist.

Professor Coleman [5] may be considered the first to approach Mt. Robson with the idea of climbing it. As early as 1907, he and his companions had come over the Saskatchewan and Athabaska trails from Laggan, and had reached the head of Grand Forks Valley. They returned again in the year following, going in from Edmonton and gaining Robson Pass by way of Moose Pass and the Smoky. After several attempts in bad weather, a final climb from the glacier broke down at 11,000 ft.

In August 1909 Rev. G. B. Kinney and Donald Phillips [6] attained the summit crest by way of the N.W. arête and western face. It was a fine, sporting effort and deserves the credit of a first ascent. Later in the summer a party of distinguished British mountaineers—Messrs. Amery, Hastings, and Mumm, under the guidance of Moritz Inderbinen—had a further try at the eastern face,[7] but desisted after a narrow escape from an avalanche. The very highest point was not attained until A. H. MacCarthy and W. W. Foster, with Conrad Kain, reached it during the summer of 1913. Their route was also by the dangerous eastern slope, but descent was made in a south-westerly direction, with a night out, to Kinney Lake.

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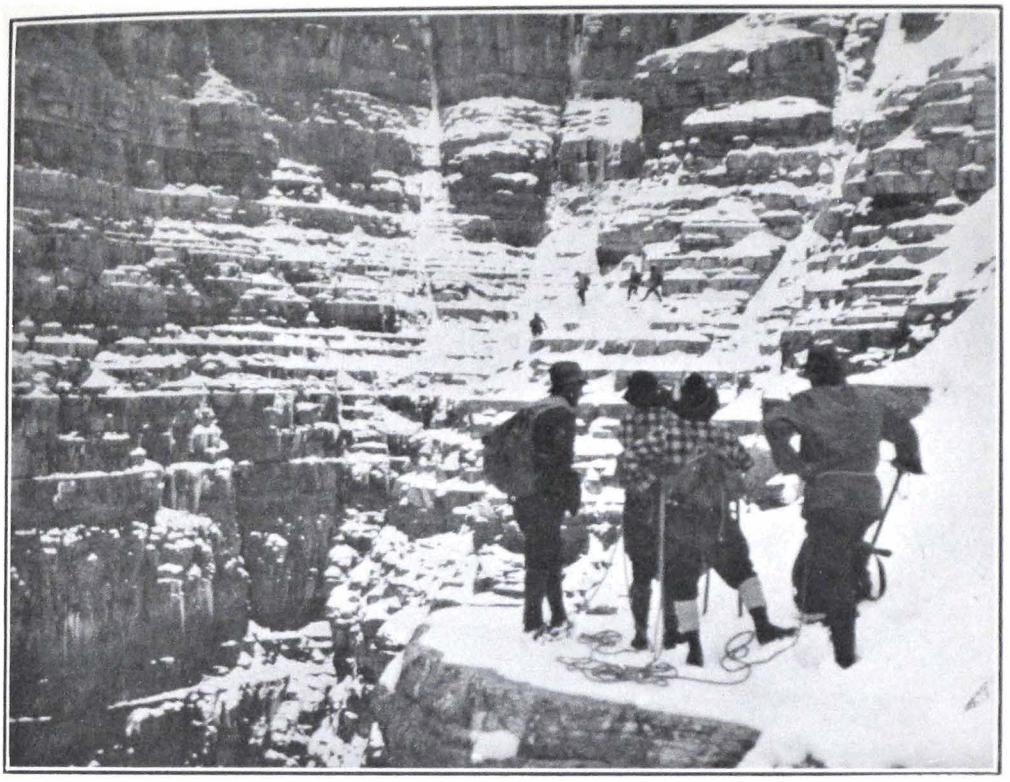
[5] *The Canadian Rockies, New and Old Trails*, A. P. Coleman (T. Fisher Unwin, London, 1911), p. 313 *et seq.*

[6] *C.A.J.* vol. ii. No. 2, p. 21.

[7] *A.J.* xxv., p. 302.



TRAVERSE OF THE GREAT COULOIR.

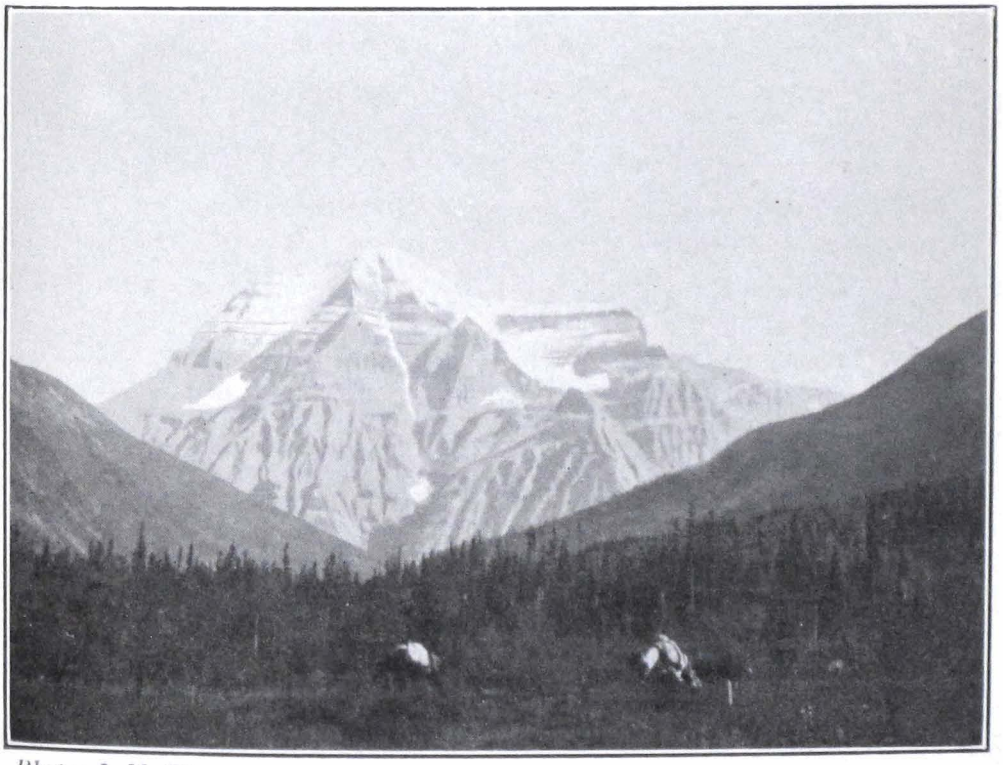
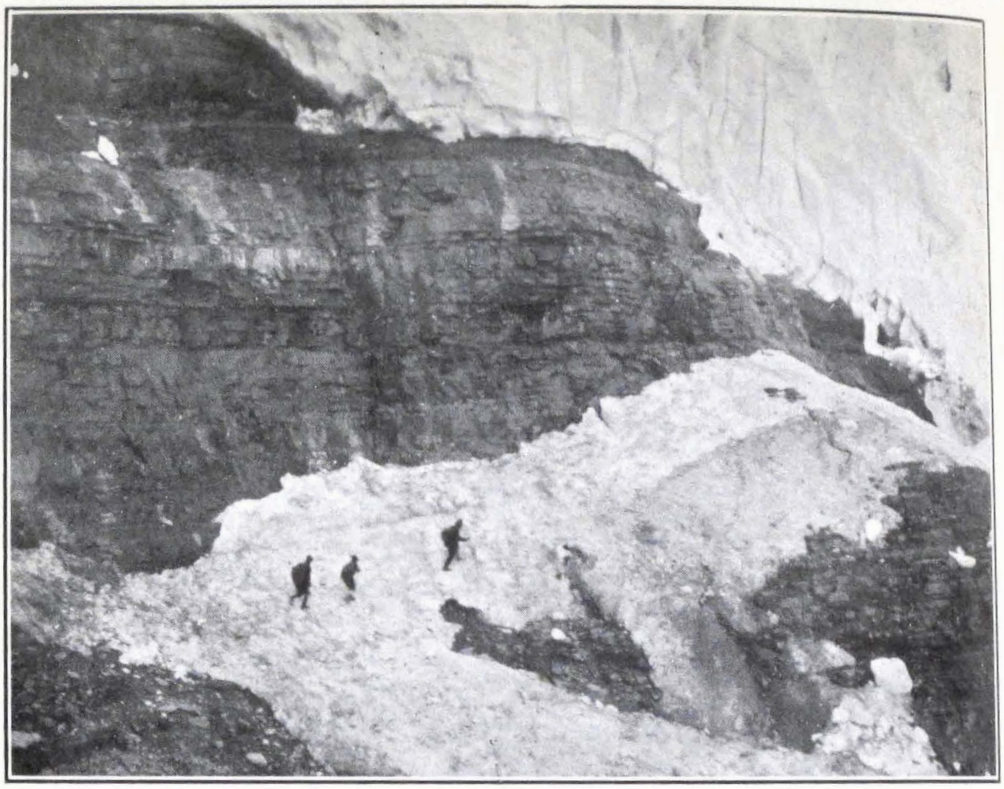


Photo: J. M. Thorington.

MT. ROBSON
from Grand Forks Valley.



LOWER ICE-FALL
between Arête and Breakfast Place.

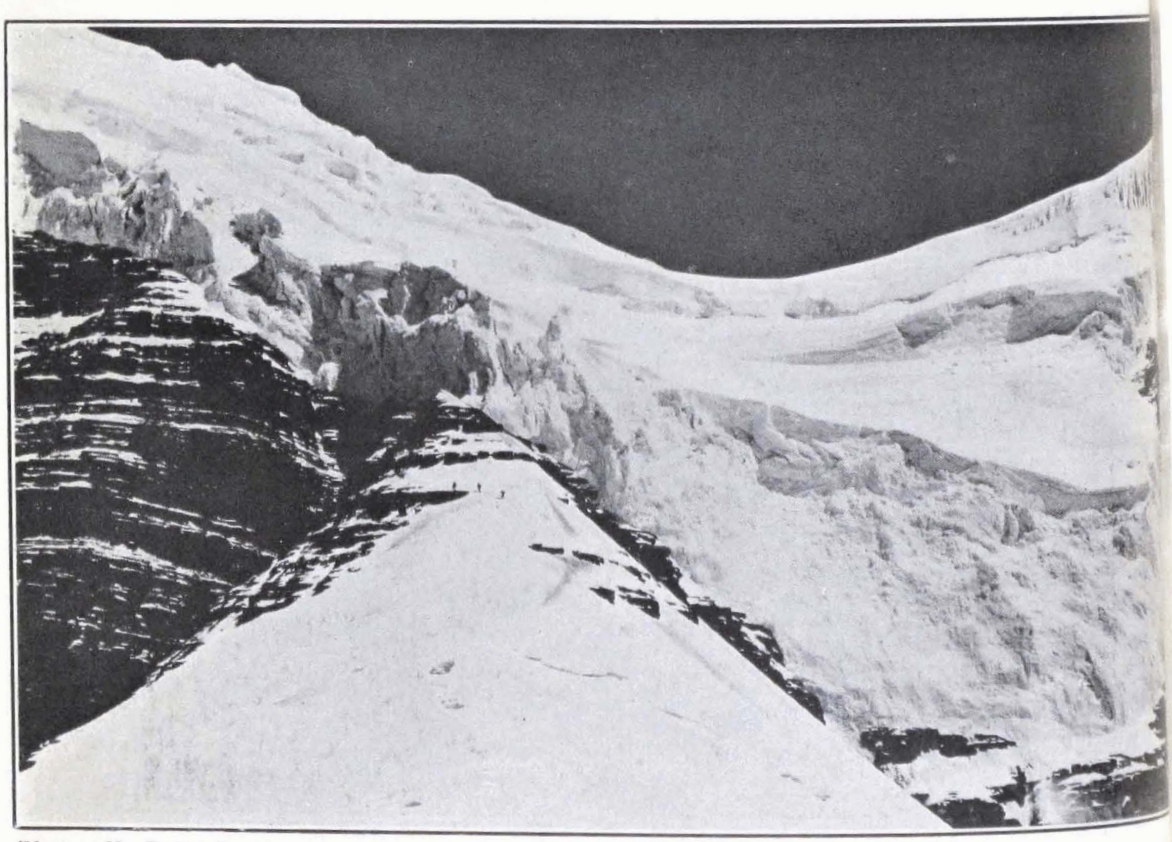


Photo: H. Pollard.

JUNCTION OF S.W. RIDGE WITH SUMMIT ICE-CAP.
(Party about to traverse below ice-fall.)

Conrad then said of the south-western ridge:[8] 'There is no doubt that this ridge will be the future route to ascend to the summit of Mt. Robson. But the climb cannot be done from Lake Kinney in one day. It will be necessary to build a hut at the head of the Lake Kinney Valley. The snow conditions on the highest peaks of the Canadian Rockies can never be compared with those in the Alps, as there are more avalanches in the Rockies on account of the dryness of the atmosphere, which leaves the snow powdery and unpacked. And so I may say that Mt. Robson will always be a risky climb, even on the easiest side, on account of avalanches.'

He stated further:[9] 'In all my mountaineering experience in various countries, I have climbed only a few mountains that were hemmed in with more difficulties. Mt. Robson is one of the most dangerous expeditions I have made. The dangers consist in snow and ice, stone avalanches, and treacherous weather.'

During the ten years since, Conrad no doubt modified this opinion of the mountain; but his view in regard to the length of the climb was unchanged. And so, although we had come to the foot of the all-highest, I had very little idea of doing more than look up at it from lesser heights. But the wretched weather had most of the time effectually prevented even that much.

Vacation time was drawing near a close, and we realized that the trial must be made now, or postponed for a long time. With Messrs. Geddes, Moffat, and Pollard—fellow-members of the Alpine Club of Canada—we packed down to Kinney Lake on July 23, pleased to be chosen for an attempt.

Mt. Robson may be considered as a gigantic wedge, rising—although structurally the lowest point of a syncline—in buttressed heights to the summit ice-cap, 10,000 ft. above the Grand Forks Valley. On its northern slopes, exposed for only 7000 ft., it presents a spectacle of snow and ice; but the western and southern slopes, above timber-line, are comparatively bare and rocky. It was this southern aspect that we had beheld from the mountains of the Whirlpool, when we marvelled at the lonely isolation of the great peak. From that point of view the precipitous south-eastern shoulder had been so foreshortened as to be almost indistinguishable; but now, from the shore of Kinney Lake, it was the lower cliffs and couloirs, with their lines of horizontal strata, which attracted our attention.

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[8] *A.J.* xxviii., p. 38.

[9] *C.A.J.* vi., p. 28.

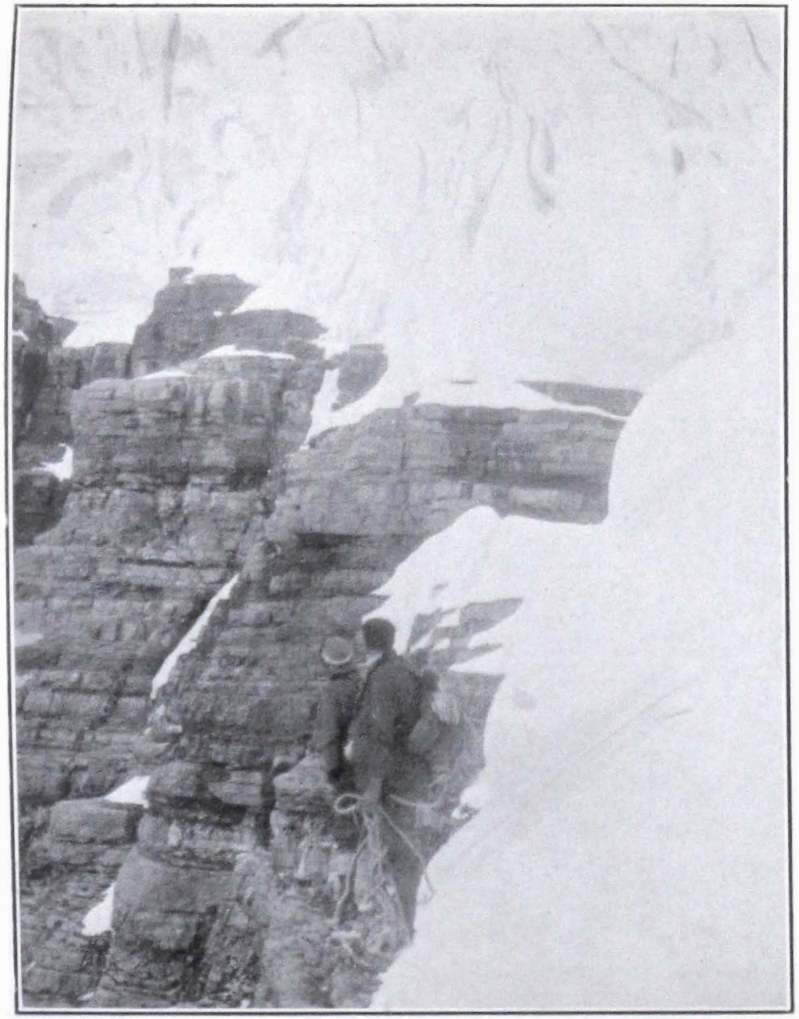
It took us five hours next day to mount the steep trail through the woods to the high climbing camp that had been placed, for the Alpine Club of Canada, near the last trees on the margin of a gully above Kinney Lake. Conrad had the heaviest pack of all—only slightly smaller than himself—and was forced to ' build a fence ' of willow-twigs to accommodate a pail and several loaves of bread on top.

Above the cliffs, a little to the north of our tents, we could see rolling clouds that hid the crest of Robson, but which lifted enough to show us the green séracs of a lower ice-fall, from which two crashing avalanches came down just before we started supper.

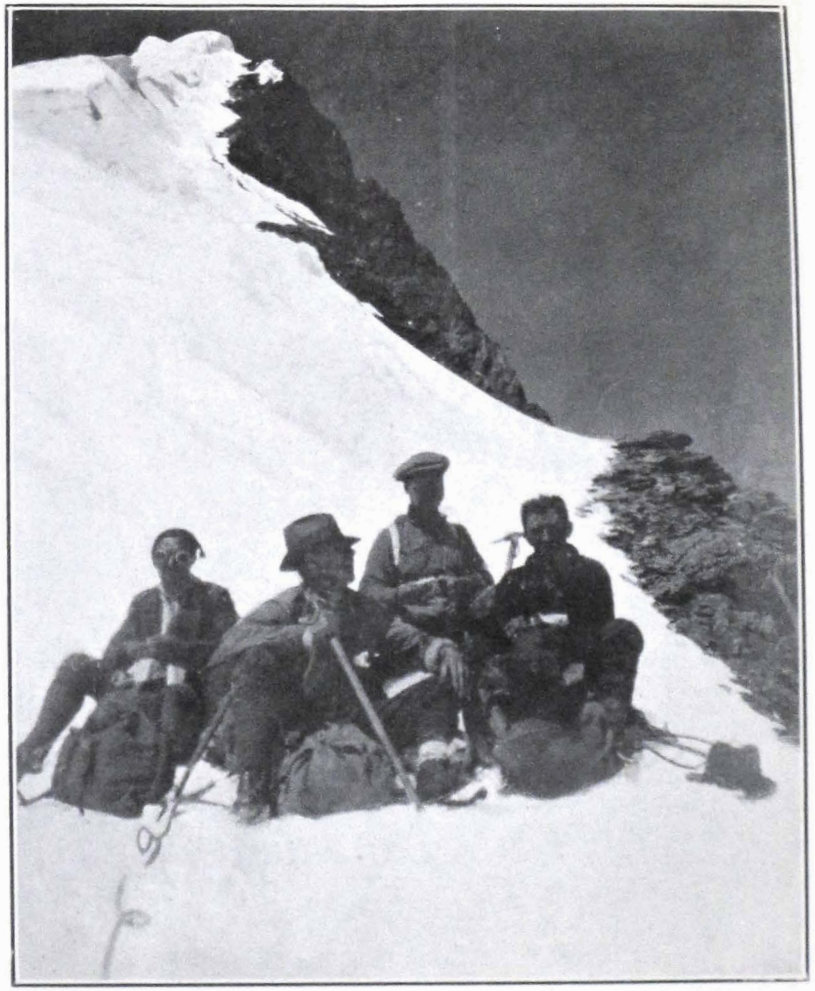
Sitting on the limb of an ancient, storm-gnarled tree, one felt that it would be quite possible to throw a stone into the grey waters of Kinney Lake, 3000 ft. below. The lake was now in shadow, but the sun breaking through the upper levels flooded Whitehorn with a luminous red-gold light. To the S.W. we could see across the bordering hills of Fraser River, almost to the head of Canoe and North Thompson Rivers, and beyond to the Cariboos, whose winding central glaciers were steeped in lavender and heliotrope—last pale colours of evening.

During the night the clouds rolled back, and we started out at four o'clock on the finest of clear mornings. In two hours we had climbed over long slopes of shale and scree to the limits of vegetation, in the top of a small cirque near the lower ice-falls. These ice-falls, two in number and separated by a narrow partition of cliff, owe their formation to a reconsolidation of the avalanche ice that breaks off from the summit ice-cap. Walled in on one side by the south-eastern shoulder, it is forced, for the most part, into the couloirs bounding the head of Kinney Lake Valley.

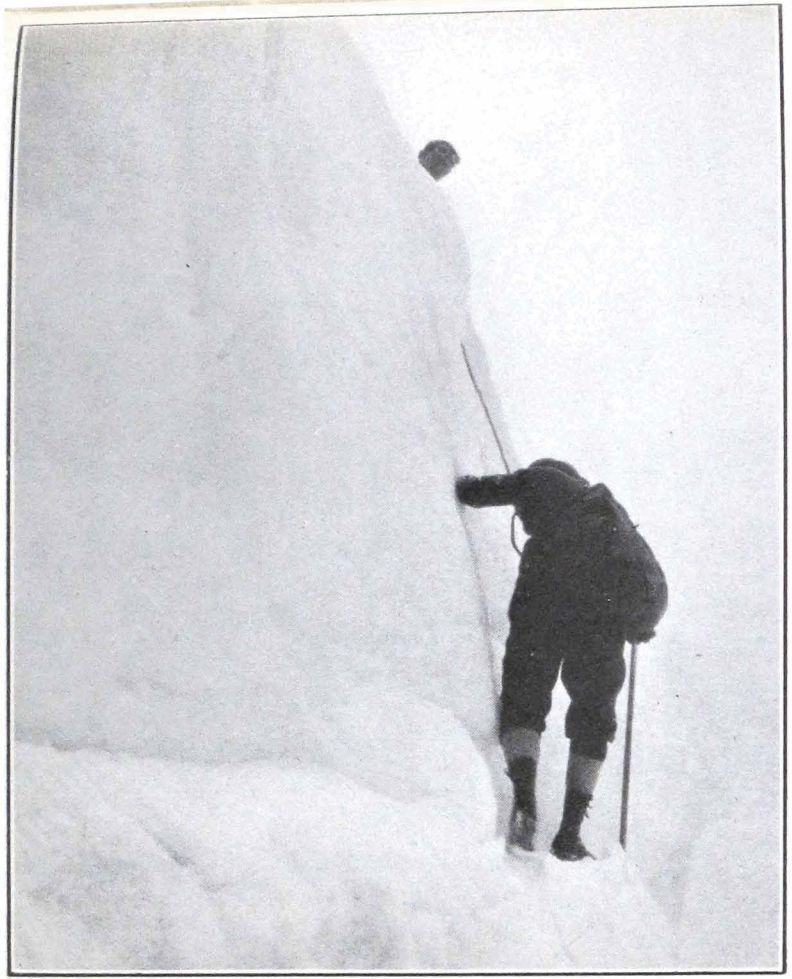
Early in the morning it was quite safe to cross below these falls; we were quickly through the short distance, floored with shattered blocks, without a sign of anything giving way above. Then up and up the crest of a long rocky ridge, where the sun met us, to a flat ledge with a trickle of water that met the requirements of a breakfasting place. We sat there, eating bread and jam, a little below the first snow, and looked across to the shoulder. Above the ice-falls, under which we had just come, is a level of hardened snow swept by tracks of immense avalanches that had come from the great furrowed ice-cap that gleamed above us. The cap itself, from the western crest of the mountain to the south-eastern shoulder, is guarded by a veritable barrier of ice, some hundred feet high.



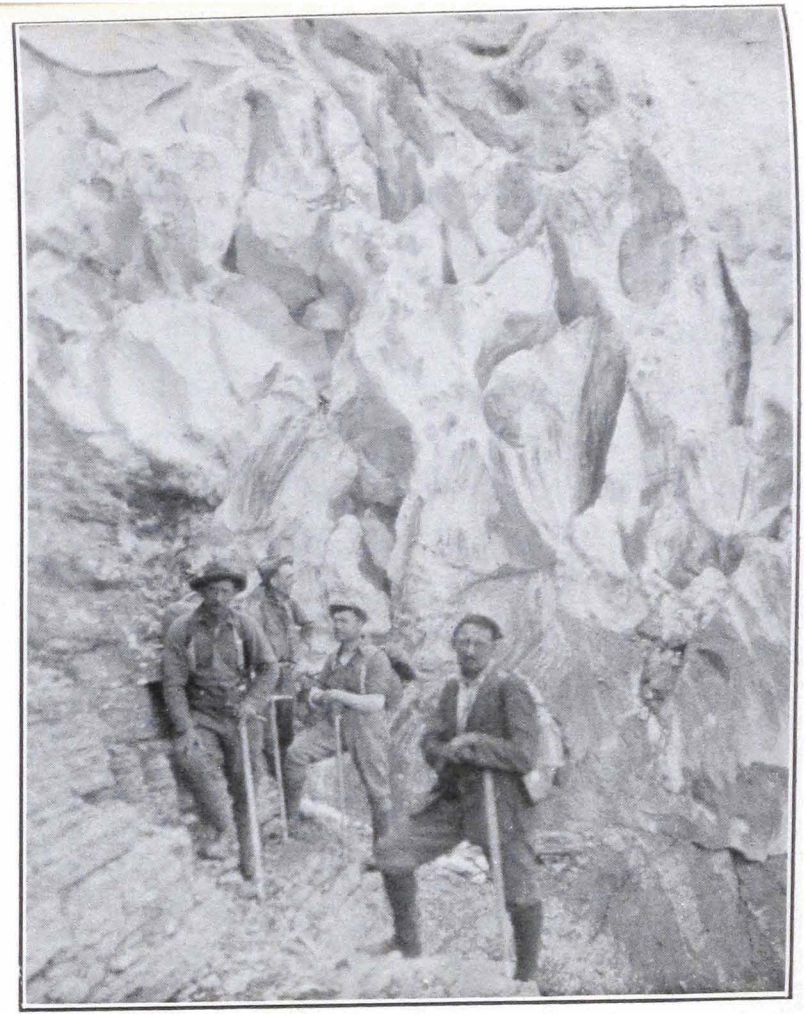
ABOUT TO CROSS THE GREAT COULOIR.
(Miss Bush with Streich.)



ON THE SHOULDER
Summit in view.



THE ICE-FALL.
(Miss Bush with Streich.)



WAY TO BREAKFAST PLACE.

This is the real danger of the south-western route: the rock ridge runs into the ice-cap; one must work through this upper fall after traversing under a portion of it toward the western arête. The possibility of falling ice cannot be ignored.[10]

We were soon on the snow: Conrad, Ostheimer and I on one rope, striking up a sharp snow-crest that connects the rock ridge with the base of the ice-cap. We stopped to reconnoitre, while the second rope came up. In the ice-cliff there was a choice between a frozen chimney, nearby, blue and steep, which Conrad pronounced hazardous for the leading man, and a lateral traverse on horizontal, snow-powdered ledges, below the séracs to a break that seemed to afford access to higher slopes.

The traverse seemed the only course, and not a very good one. It involved an exposed crossing through the head of the great S.W. couloir, so conspicuous from the Grand Forks Valley. It was past the noon hour, the ice was in the full light of a hot sun for the first time in a fortnight; and the summit of the mountain, although less than 2000 ft. above us, indicated plainly enough that to go on meant a night-bivouac. Not much more than two weeks before we had had two long nights of shivering in the caves of Mt. Hooker, and Ostheimer and I were not keen for an immediate continuance of that mode of existence.

Just then there was an ominous cracking, and Conrad shouted 'It's coming down,' and we all ducked under the nearest ledge. Fortunately only a few small cakes fell, and these not near us. Still it does not take a very big piece to put one *hors de combat*, and the business might not yet be done with. I made up my mind that the amateurs on our rope must turn back. Everyone has his own standard about what is to be done under such circumstances—mine is that there is plenty of good mountaineering to be done without knowingly placing oneself in an exposed position, requiring time for its passage, where ice or snow *may* come down. I sometimes subject this to a very liberal interpretation; but on this day, toward the end of a long and successful season, it did not seem

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[10] Mr. V. A. Fynn supports this view, in stating (*A.J.* vol. xxxvi., No. 229, p. 321), '. . . This ridge runs *into* the ice-cap of the mountain, as above stated, and in its highest portion is absolutely dominated by part of that ice-cap. All the parties passed under and over hanging ice-walls, or séracs, and were exposed to ice-falls for at least half an hour. It seems to me that this route is unnecessarily risky.'

worth while taking a chance on the behaviour of those ice-pinnacles.

The others felt differently about it, and inclined to go on. Conrad said : ' Gentlemen, it is risky. I am willing to go on if you wish.' So we decided that Conrad should rope with them and continue, while Ostheimer and I on the rope remaining should descend the ridge below and continue to the high camp. We parted, wishing each other the best of luck.

The four were immediately lost to sight behind a hummock of snow, while we descended in the steps cut on the way up. We were near the level of Whitehorn, with a widespread view across the Fraser Valley. It seemed to us worth while to ascend the little rock-point which forms the very apex of a buttress just S. of the main couloir. From near Kinney Lake it seems to rise as a sharp spire ; but from below one does not see the snow that extends behind and toward the ice-cap. We built a little cairn and sat down to watch the climbers' progress. All at once there was a grinding crash in the direction of the couloir and some large blocks of ice came tumbling down. The men were still out of sight, but we could tell that the shower of pieces had been close to them. They were untouched, however, and a little later we saw them gain the ice-cap through a break in the séracs. Still later, as we descended, we saw them high up on the snow, half hidden at times by veils of mist.

We had come down nearly to the lower ice-falls : we stopped to finish off some sardines and coffee, seating ourselves on a broad ledge that seemed almost to overhang Kinney Lake. Then something—there was not a sound—made us turn our gaze to the lower ice. The entire front of pinnacles began to move, the green wall tottered slowly and sank, splintering laterally and sweeping the path through which we had come in the early morning. Then came the crashes. We sat as if petrified, until the last echoes died away. Conrad heard the noise on top of Mt. Robson, telling me later that they spent the night near where we had been, and thought the avalanche had caught us.

But no such misfortune overtook us, and although we made a roundabout descent, we were in our blankets before dark. Conrad and his successful party came in at four o'clock next morning ; their night on the rocks had not been restful.

It is not fair to the mountain to say that conditions are always such as have been described. Later on, within a couple of weeks, in 1924, a total of twenty people had reached the

summit without mishap. Perhaps after a few days of sunlight the ice conditions were more stable. But there is always a potential menace in those westerly-exposed séracs. If enough parties try the route, there will at some time be an accident from avalanche. One will do well to remember what Conrad wrote after the first ascent in 1913: 'I do not know whether my *Herren* contemplated with a keen alpine eye the dangers to which we were exposed. . . .'

So, although I have not climbed Robson—yet—I would not be one to dwell on defeat; there is happiness in having tried with such good comrades. Perhaps it were best that I should never stand on that height; I might think the less of it. For, to me at least, it would be nothing short of sacrilege to stand on the very summit of the majestic mountain that, when little more than a boy, I went hunting for—and found—in the pale splendour of northern moonlight.

(*To be continued.*)

A Note on Mt. Robson.

LAST summer the Canadian Northern Railway sent out for the climbing season, Alfred Streich, an experienced and competent guide of Zwirgi, near Meiringen, son of Kaspar Streich, who perished with Donkin, Fox, and Johann Fischer in the Caucasus in 1888, and Hans Kohler, son of Melchior Kohler of Meiringen. Melchior is in the very front rank as a guide and possesses a very melodious voice. So many opinions have been expressed as to the technical difficulties of Robson that I was curious to hear what Alfred, who has had a wide experience of the higher Swiss expeditions, would have to say. He made the ascent of Robson twice, once in the company of my old friend Conrad Kain, a redoubtable little man who was the first to conquer the mountain, and the second time with his neighbour, Kohler. He writes as follows (translated):

'I am glad to tell you how I found Mt. Robson compare with a Swiss mountain. . . . When I first got to Jasper Park I heard so much of the mountains there that I said to myself, can they really be so difficult and almost impossible? . . . We made a few expeditions in Jasper Park which were very nice, and then, mid-July, we moved up to the Valley of a Thousand Falls to make expeditions with the members of the Canadian