

## SESSIONAL PAPER No. 13

trouble and by a very circuitous route, we at last stood on its highest point only to discover that the view south of it was obstructed by a row of sharp peaks which must be climbed in order to complete the work. These peaks were fully three miles away, and as soon as I had finished the work to be done here we started at once for them. Our progress was greatly retarded, for at that altitude the snow was already several feet deep, and it was after six in the evening before we completed our work. The cold was intense and the night was coming on fast, but it was out of the question to stop, we kept travelling until two o'clock in the morning when we reached the river opposite our camp. But as we could not make ourselves heard, because of the roaring noise caused by the floating ice we had to wait until six o'clock in the morning before the man in charge of our camp came to our relief. Immediately after breakfast we started down stream, knowing full well that no time must now be lost, but we had not proceeded far before we found the river blocked by ice which spreading across a narrow section of the river with high banks on both sides, had filled up several feet high. The temperature had been unusually low for several days, and as a result the river had been carrying considerable ice mostly formed at the bottom of the stream. This blockade had backed up the water for quite a distance and raised its level several feet, as was illustrated by the line of the cakes of ice still strewn along the face of the elevated banks. As the water subsided, a mass of ice was left in such a crumbling state as to render it unsafe to travel over or to attempt to cut a way for the boats through it. In order to get beyond this we decided that to portage the boats and outfit through the bush was the safest thing under the circumstances, though not perhaps a very expeditious one. Once past this obstacle we found the river comparatively free of ice, and the survey of the river was resumed. Occasional stops were, however, made at certain points where the ascent of some prominent mountains was necessary in order to carry on the photographic work. Ten peaks were thus climbed in the basin of the Big Salmon river. 'Last peak,' the last one occupied, is north of the valley of the river, and rises near the western edge of the chain of mountains, whose width measured 45 miles from east to west, and across which the Big Salmon river has cut its way. The slopes of these mountains are as a rule very abrupt; their average altitude is 4,000 feet above the valley. For several miles the valley of the river is flanked by rocky walls so steep as to be entirely devoid of vegetation. West of 'Last peak' the aspect of the country is considerably altered, and marks the termination of the mountains. Those to the south of the river have not those sharp and ragged projections which give to the ones which we had been climbing such a forbidding appearance and rendered their summits so difficult to reach. Their elevation is also greatly reduced, and the farther west we proceed the more curviform their outlines become. The last mountain which forms the western extremity of the range south of the river has numerous spurs or ridges which radiate both towards the Big Salmon river and its south branch. Those facing the valley of Big Salmon river end abruptly at the water's edge, while the spurs which extend towards the south branch eventually break up into low hills before reaching it, and are heavily covered with timber. On the opposite side of the river the characteristics of the country are still more striking. The range of mountains comes suddenly to an end at 'Last peak.' From its foot a plain spreads out in a northerly direction. Several lakes and what appear to be the high banks of an important stream could be distinctly seen through the breaks at several places in the forest. The plain is limited to the west by a high range of hills which terminates abruptly at the Big Salmon river, and just opposite the mouth of the south branch. The top of the hills at this point must be nearly 1,000 feet above the valley of the river, with grassy slopes facing the stream, while their tops are crowned with clumps of pine. The plain extends fully 10 miles towards the north, where one solitary high dome was noticed among a maze of low ridges and hills, through which some narrow paths could be traced, all converging into the plain.

Beyond the second bend there is no stream of any importance for 24 miles, when the south branch is reached. This stream rises near the head waters of Boswell river, a tributary of Teslin river. Its valley is very wide, running north and south, and is bounded on the east by the last contreforts of the chain of mountains, while towards the west low hills not over 2,000 feet high extend as far as the Lewes river.