

CLIMBING MOUNT MACKAY.

I had been to the land of prairie and clear sky, Manitoba, and was on my way back to Toronto and the "moss-backed East," when I found time while waiting for a steamer at Fort William, to visit Mount Mackay. Now this mountain lies about two miles west of the town, is about twelve hundred feet high—straight up, and of course commands a view of the great Lake Superior and all the surrounding country. At its base flowing towards Thunder Bay is the Kaministiquia river, and a distance down its banks stands a pretty Indian village built of log and frame buildings, in marked contrast to the piles of brick and mortar, and the large tinned elevators of the C.P.R. on the opposite bank, farther down. A short, stout, jolly old Frenchman has stationed himself in a neat log hut on the Indian side of the bank, and if you go down and "Hello" loudly enough he will punt over and ferry you across. When I went over he appeared greatly annoyed at some boys who had been fishing from his wharf and boat while his back was turned. They had left fishworms on one seat and on another had stuck a lively catch which left considerable blood behind it. The old ferryman "scatted" them off and we went to his cabin.

While sitting there listening to his directions for climbing the mountain, the C.P.R. steamer, "Manitoba" came up the river in tow of a small tug, and seemed wonderfully out of place in that narrow water. Once when a youngster I induced a cow to enter our kitchen in the absence of its natural guardian, Bridget. Presently Bridget came down and discovered the cow devouring a fresh baking of bread. How big she looked in that kitchen, and what havoc she made with that freshly-scrubbed floor as

her hoofs tore up great slivers in her frantic efforts to get away from the poker! The cow looked big and out of place in the house, and so did the "Manitoba" in that narrow stream.

The river path is followed to the last house but one in the village I have described, and striking back through an Indian neat and well kept garden to the swamp path, which was said to lead to the base of the mountain, I encountered legions of mosquitoes. They are truly able-bodied tormentors. I ran, I slapped, I swished, I smoked and did everything to get rid of them, but couldn't until I had waded through them into higher and open ground where the ascent of Mount Mackay began. The path takes you along the base for a quarter of a mile, and suddenly you turn about and come back on a long running slope until you reach a huge ledge, above which, a hundred yards back from the edge, rises for a space of five or six hundred feet a black wall of overhanging rock. Here stands a pine cross set near the edge, and a few feet back stands a stone shrine, at which the Indian priest passes part of his time. Above this is the stiffest piece of the climb. Finally the top of the mountain is reached.

What a view! Below you the shining river; the puff of a west bound train; over yonder to the north is Port Arthur; to the east Thunder Bay; beyond that the Cape, and after that again Silver Islet and Isle Royale; to the south are islands big and little, some rising sheer from the water to a great height, others wide spreading and flat. Beside you stands a little chapel with stone arched roof to which the whole Indian village, old people and children, make a pilgrimage each year. But now it is time to go down. On the mountain the sun is hot and strong, but below the valley seems shaded. Using the glass I see men leaving the saw mill,

coats on arms and pails in hand, which tells of evening.

Is it not true, whether of a light-house, a Bunker Hill monument, or a mountain, that descent is more difficult than ascent? When I came to descend that mountain I began to have a curious sensation of surprise and alarm. It was not easy—it was not safe. On the contrary it was puzzling, unsettling, scaring, and it was mighty hard on the legs. I slid this way and that in the curious formation, half shale, half pebbles. Fearful to lose my foothold, I gasped and wrenched as a sheer descent of 500 feet appeared imminent below me, "How in the world," thought I, "do the children and old people manage it?" Hot and panting, I pull myself together, make a final run and that big ledge has been reached. This gives a breathing spell and I feel comparatively easy until the cross and the shrine are reached. Here I stopped to have another look at the surrounding country, and here I observed what I thought was a path leading straight up to my feet. Surely, said I to myself, the priest has a short cut, instead of using the long path up which I came. It is getting late, and a short cut is to my mind much to be desired, even if it is down a steep incline of six or seven hundred feet. I climbed gingerly down about fifteen or twenty feet of creviced rock first, and to my surprise a big chunk that I placed my foot upon fell and went bounding and tearing along to the bottom, ever so far below. It was only then I discovered that I had made a mistake and that this was *not* a short cut. What I had taken to be a path was in reality a ditch made by rocks dropping off and loosening up the shale, which when disturbed runs down that vast incline like coal out of a cart. I had reached the point where the shale began and

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