

OUR WILD WESTLAND.

POINTS ON THE PACIFIC PROVINCE.

(BY MRS. ARTHUR SPRAGGE.)

DEVELOPMENTS OF SCENERY IN THE AUTUMN OF 1887—BOATING UPON THE COLUMBIA RIVER—THE DISAPPOINTING MONTH OF OCTOBER—PEGGY AND THE GREY MARE—THE PONY'S UNTIMELY FATE—A WINTER VISIT TO THE GLACIER IN THE SELKIRKS.

X.

At the end of August, in 1887, the mosquitoes entirely disappeared, the cool nights either killing them off or paralyzing their energies. September proved, consequently, the most enjoyable month of the whole season. During its thirty days we played tennis between four and six o'clock, prefacing our games by afternoon tea. I rode immediately after lunch, feasting my eyes upon the new developments of colouring in the Columbia valley, wrought by the glorious golden tints of the autumn foliage, which lent great richness and variety to the sombre mountain sides. Graceful groups of poplars and birches shot up amid dark evergreens, emphasizing the landscape with gilded points, while in some damp localities occasional touches of bright crimson marked the existence of cranberry bushes about some distant spring, arresting attention by their vivid spots of colour. My husband at this time invested in a boat, which was kept below our house, and through its medium we enjoyed some delightful paddles up the Columbia river, which requires the most careful navigation, owing to its low condition in the autumn, when it is no longer fed by melting snow from the mountain tops. The numerous logs and snags that encumbered its course, together with the swiftness of the current, which seemed to me to pursue its way with unabated vigour in spite of the decreased volume of water, always filled my mind with grave apprehensions and prevented my proper appreciation of the beautiful reaches of the river. It is interspersed with picturesque islands to the east, and flows most rapidly, even at low water, between high wooded banks, enclosed by an ever-changing vista of glorious mountain ranges revealed by the different bends of the stream, the varying panorama of snow-crowned peaks and golden bases thrown into strong relief by near and distant groups of conical evergreens, forming a theme of which the eye never tires. Thus September slipped only too quickly away, and October, also, did not prove the month my fancy had painted it, nor the October of Ontario. The first fortnight was bright and fine and we were able to continue our tennis, changing the hours of play from four to two o'clock, thus securing the best light and warmth of the day. I lost my rides, however, owing to the defalcation of the faithless Peggy, who was led astray by a cunning old gray mare, turned out at the end of the season to find her own living as best she could. The two animals consorted together and evidently became fast friends, so much so that the grey developed an amount of cussedness most human in its depravity. She was never, of course, treated to the oats upon which the pony feasted, and had to remain without a fenced enclosure, casting longing eyes at the feed-box, from whose depths certain tantalizing munchings and crunchings were audible. Her revenge for this neglect of her palate was to beguile Peggy away, so that she ceased to come for her oats at all. Then my husband had to go out and catch her. This plan was too transparent, however, for the grey lady, and her next move was to kick up her heels and depart, with Peggy in her train, as soon as any one approached the pair. Next we tried to run them into an enclosure and corral them both, but this scheme failed, as they positively declined to be run in, even by a horse and rider. There were neither cowboys nor lassoes in the town to effect the conquest, and the price of both hay and oats was so high that the feeding of Peggy in a stable would have made her worth her weight in gold, so we were obliged to abandon her to her own devices and acknowledge ourselves beaten by the superior tactics of the grey mare. Poor Peggy, I grieve to relate, met with an untimely fate. She was sold by her owner, the itinerant carpenter,

through the agency of my husband, to a man at Golden City, from whom I contracted to buy her back in the spring of 1888, provided I found her sound and in good condition. Early in the season, however, she was run over by the train and killed, a few miles from the town. Nor have I owned another steed or ridden in the mountains since her demise.

It was not until the 21st of October that the snow laid its white hand upon the Columbia valley. Then more than an inch fell, but quickly disappeared. A few nights afterwards the ground was thickly covered to the depth of half a foot. I had been anxious for such an opportunity to visit the summit of the Selkirks and to see those stupendous peaks in their winter garb. Accordingly the snow having most obligingly appeared on Friday, we made up a party on Saturday and left Donald by the morning train on that day to spend Sunday at the Glacier, where an excellent mountain hotel is kept by the Canadian Pacific Railway Company. It is situated two miles west of the elevation at which the railway crosses the Selkirk range in a beautiful bend of the Ille-cille-waet valley, surrounded by magnificent mountains, among which Sir Donald and Syndicate peaks are conspicuous by their imposing grandeur. In the immediate neighbourhood of the hotel is a fine glacier, to which roads have been made, a huge sea of green, glittering, opaque ice. The Glacier House is a very artistic building of the Swiss chalet type, coloured, externally, chrome-yellow, relieved by dark brown beams and mouldings. The adjoining grounds are well laid out, ornamented by a pretty fountain, walks and lawns—in fact, everything has been done to render the Glacier an attractive summer resort for those in search of mountain air and scenery. The snow gained inch by inch in depth as we left the Columbia valley behind and passed into higher regions. At the Glacier, three hours west of Donald, it measured at least one foot, if not more, in depth. The view from the verandah and windows of the little hotel—which contains, by the way, fourteen bedrooms and a very large dining-room, panelled in stained wood—was one of fairy-like beauty, forming, by the very contrast of its delicate purity, a very different picture from the one my mental vision had retained of the Ille-cille-waet valley as I had seen it last, in the preceding year, flooded with the rich purple and golden lights of early autumn. Then I learnt, for the first time, of that great triumph of engineering skill, the wonderful loop, by whose three tiers of rails the Canadian Pacific Railway descends the western slope of the Selkirk range. Who could believe that but six weeks later in the year such a transformation could be brought about, that all the glorious tints and hues of early autumn could be so completely shrouded beneath the white mantle of winter, that every vestige of colour could be absorbed so utterly in the soft pall that spread its winding sheet over mountain and valley and wrapt all nature in the silence of death? Yet who will say there is not something ideal in these delicate tones of purity, something which tends to elevate the mind to an inward consciousness of moral cleanliness in this transcendent whiteness of earth's vestal garment? Either this or else associations of spotlessness arouse those latent ideas of infinite eternity with which the contemplation of the perfection of natural beauty inspires even the most unimpressible mortals. I am not an admirer usually of the cold garb of winter, as it is familiar to me, in its ordinary urban and rural aspect. The snow of cities soon becomes a dirty, stained covering, a mere travesty of its true loveliness; but in the heart of the mountains, amid the grandeur and magnificence of the Creator's works, it has a significance of its own. I was entranced by the glistening heights, standing out in solid crags of what might have been the whitest marble, against a brilliant blue sky; masses of silver-tipped pines creeping up to the timber line, sparkling in the sunlight like millions of diamonds, while the larger trees in the foreground bowed their feathery heads beneath the weight of masses of soft snow. Far away down the Ille-cille-waet valley, where the mountains form an amphitheatre whose circle joins the sloping shoulder of one of the highest peaks, the same fairylike scene was repeated,

ethercalised still more by the silvery blue of illimitable distance. I was spellbound by the unearthly beauty about me, the perfect silence that prevailed adding the weight of solemnity to the impressive effect. When we returned from the Glacier on Sunday afternoon, the temperature was considerably lower than the preceding day and the earth frozen hard. The same night the thermometer fell at Donald to zero, while in other parts of the Kootenay district it dropped far below, an extraordinarily early cold wave having struck the mountains. It seemed as if cruel winter had us fairly in his grip. The next day, however, the weather moderated and there was a light fall of snow, followed by a heavy one of some three or four inches, after which it became suddenly mild. On Thursday the ground was covered with slush, on Friday with pools of water, on Saturday with mud, consequently walking in a primitive region, where sidewalks and pavements do not abound, is a form of exercise only adapted to trousers and long boots, and I began to realise that a winter sojourn in the Columbia valley might have its drawbacks to petticoats. The melting of the snow at this time produced peculiar atmospheric effects, and for days and days the Columbia valley was enveloped in gloom, the mountains were shrouded in mist, and though it did not actually rain, the sun never shone, and a general sense of dampness and discomfort prevailed, which, combined with the absence of sunlight, was decidedly depressing in its tendencies. What in Ontario is known as the fruitful season of October might be described in the mountains two years ago as the final season of October, when the serviceable cow and useful chicken were sold away into bondage, owing to the expense of their winter provender, the days of fresh milk and eggs were no more, and housekeeping began to present problems of construction to be solved only by the law of substitution. The decree then went forth from conjugal lips that the mountain season was over and that I must "go east" and possess my soul in patience till spring should again develop the resources, natural and artificial, of Donald, B.C.

VATEL.

The fate of Vatel is intimately linked with all memories of Chantilly, as it has come down to us in the piquant letters of Mme. de Sévigné. The Prince was giving a great *fête* to his monarch, Louis XIV. The formal splendours of Versailles were cast in the shade by the rural delights of Chantilly. The tables were spread in the open air, the ground being thickly strewn with jonquils. Vatel had surpassed himself in the *menu*; the wines and *liqueurs* were of the choicest; the King was in the best of humour, and all went merry as a marriage bell. But to the eye of the *chef* all was not well. The roast had fallen short, and at two tables, out of twenty-five or more, it had been wanting altogether. Vatel felt himself overwhelmed with shame. He retired to his chamber in despair. The Prince himself hastened to comfort him and restore his artist's pride with words of pride and appreciation. But it was of no use. His Highness was full of goodness, said the dejected *chef*; but there remained the melancholy fact—the roast had failed. And the strain of preparation had been too great for the unhappy Vatel; for nights he had not slept—nor could he sleep now—and in the early morning he wandered forth to seek rest for his perturbed brain in the coolness of the morning air and the freshness and verdure of the park. On the way he met one of the purveyors of the household, who had arrived with a meagre supply of seafood. "Is this all?" cried Vatel, overcome with despair at the sight. "It is all," was the reply. And Vatel went back to his room with death at his heart. To the fiasco of the roast had now succeeded the disaster of the fish. He could not survive the disgrace, and so threw himself upon his sword. And, after all, the fish arrived, seafood from the Norman coast, fresh fish from the rivers, fish enough and to spare, in ample time for the table, but too late to save the *chef*. The Prince wept bitter tears over his body—as much for the cook as for the man—for his loss was irreparable.—*All the Year Round*.