

Looking Over The Top

Mountain Climbing as Out-Door Sport for Canadian Women

By FRANK YEIGH

MOUNTAIN climbing for Canadian women? Why not? If it has been called the king of sports for men, why should it not be for women also? Why should not the daughters of Eve share the glorious pastime with the sons of Adam, for the latter have no inherent rights to the hill tops?

All these interrogation marks are their own answers. Each calls for an affirmative reply. Mountaineering for and by women has long passed the experimental stage, and some of the exceptional feats in this realm are to be credited to the skirted sex, though skirts are taboo when cliffs are to be scaled and ice walls negotiated. Women climbers have over and over again proved themselves to be, in all parts of the world, as successful in overcoming nature's obstacles, as sure-footed and clear-headed and as resourceful in the face of danger, as the most successful Alpinist of the male sex that ever scaled a towering cliff or surmounted a cloud-wrapped peak. They have, too, exhibited the same high quality of nerve that is such a vital requisite if success is to crown the efforts of the mountaineer.

What are the compensations or rewards for the exertion involved in mastering a mighty peak? Those who have experienced the effort will have many replies to the inquiry. There is, primarily, the physical well-being as one of the by-products for those who are physically fit, for care should be taken to make sure of the physical fitness. It is a case where heart and lungs must be free of any impediment and where the climber must be sound of wind and limb. Then the sheer physical joy of a climb is its own adequate reward. But there is, too, the mental and spiritual tonic that comes with the ascent, the thrill of the Excelsior spirit as the heights are gained and the valley floor recedes; the uplift of mind and soul as the vision enlarges and the panorama takes in other ranges and ranks of serried peaks until the climax comes when the summit is achieved, when the Alpinist stands on the roof of the world, and the eye drinks in such a view as will never fade while memory does its work.

Under the spell of the rare and ennobling sight, the lines of Goldsmith are recalled:

"Even now, where Alpine solitudes ascend,

I sit me down a pensive hour to spend;
And, placed on high above the storm's career,
Look downward where a hundred realms appear;
Lakes, forests, cities, plains, extending wide,
The pomp of kings, the shepherds' humble pride."

But the beatific vision, from the crest of a Rocky or Selkirk giant, does not include cities where men are



On the summit of Aberdeen Peak where range after range spreads out before the eye and the deep clefts between vaguely vision the busy world which lies beneath.

cooped up and life is so largely artificial, but valleys stretching into the misty distance, winding streams of silver, hurrying from their birth-place at the foot of a glacier to a river and the ultimate sea, and of deep-hearted forests that look like carpets of green in perspective.

And what overhead? "I to the hills will lift mine eyes," runs the old psalm, and lifting one's eyes from the cairn of rock on the highest point of the peak, with all the world at one's feet, there is another wonder world revealed in the passing procession of the fleecy clouds on a summer day, or the wild swirl that betokens an approaching storm and that brings its own warning. Audacious and defiant of nature as man is, it is not always wise to flout her anger or treat her admonitions lightly.

Ascending Mt. Tupper

AGRAPHIC recital of the climbing experiences of a Canadian lady, Miss Jean Parker, of Winnipeg, in ascending Mount Tupper, in the Selkirks, affords another interesting glimpse.

"Then the first really serious work began—the rounding of the sheer foot of the Hermit, a pinnacle that occupies the whole of the narrow neck that separates the arete from the Tupper peak.

There is no getting out of it. You cannot climb over, for it is too sharp; you must go around it. There are few footholds and there is a great drop beneath, but by doing exactly as we were told and with the help of the wind which blew us tightly against the rock, we passed safely.

"From the couloir we had a good view of the climb before us. Immense blocks of rock were piled upon each other, leaving very scanty footholds, and in some places long faces without a single jutting rock. We had to ascend a chimney fourteen feet high, in which rocks fell continuously. But with the help of the guide and a hand from above I managed to get up. We passed another very rotten chimney that barred our way to the next ridge, and then crawled up a long smooth face of rock to an overhanging shelf, along which we crawled. Our surprise was great when a short climb brought us suddenly to a small plateau upon which was a long rock mound holding a stoneman or cairn. It took several seconds to realize that we were actually on the top of Mount Tupper."

Another woman climber in the Canadian Alps, Miss Mary E. Crawford, thus writes of her experience from a woman's point of view:

"She is going to know herself as never before—physically, mentally, emotionally. There comes the infallible instinct of self-preservation. She gains confidence with every step, finds the dangers she has imagined far greater than those she encounters and arrives at last upon the summit to gaze upon a new world. Surely not the same old earth she has seen all her life? Yes—but looked at from on top—a point of view which makes an indelible impression upon her mind.

"This woman returns to her round of daily duties in the work-a-day world, but she has only to close her eyes for a second and she is transported to her mountain top. Brain fag? Nervous exhaustion? Asthenic muscles? They have lost their dread meaning. Time cannot drag now, for to the mountaineer the year passes quickly looking back and looking forward."

"If mountain climbing is a suitable pastime for Canadian women, have any as yet taken

advantage of it?" might be asked. Again the answer is decidedly in the affirmative. Of the seven hundred members of the Alpine Club of Canada, no less than two hundred and twenty-five are women, and a majority of these are Canadians. Not a few of them have achieved distinction as mountaineers, in first ascents and in surmounting some of the highest peaks in the Rockies and Selkirks. Among those qualifying every year for active membership, at the annual camps of the Alpine Club, there have always been a goodly number of the women members, the qualification required being the ascent of a peak at least ten thousand feet above sea level. A different qualification operates on the Pacific coast. Scarcely a year passes that many lady climbers do not win for themselves admittance to the inner ranks of the climbers in this unique School of Mountaineering.

As a result of these annual camps, the questions of camp equipment and camp attire, so far as they affect the ladies, have long since been solved and, as the illustrations will show, what might be called, in the words of the fashion papers, "prevailing styles" now operate as to what should be worn in the actual climbing and also in camp life itself.

What should these styles be? It is certainly not for a mere man to dare suggest, but even a mere man can pass on the opinion of expert women campers and climbers.

To begin with, a good tent is a prime requisite, with plenty of warm blankets (it's awfully cold at 3 a.m., even in mid-summer, in a tent 5,000 feet above sea level); a canvas sheet to spread on mother earth, or on the bed of balsam boughs, for dampness must be guarded against—a little pillow will come in handy, as it will be far more conducive to sleep than one's shoes!

As for the feminine attire, rational clothing is a prerequisite, and the term includes knickerbockers, flannel shirtwaist, a necktie, substantial hobnailed boots, laced high, or arranged for puttees, woollen stockings are de

rigueur, and a hat of felt with a generous rim. A sweater for low temperatures, and a waterproof coat for rain—for both will be experienced—are also among the necessities.

Old-timers in camping would further provide themselves with an extra pair of shoes, a short skirt for camp wear, a bit of mosquito netting, a hot water bottle and a few emergency medicines that will readily occur to one.

U. S. Ladies Were Pioneers

AMONG the first to discover the pleasures and delights of climbing in the Canadian mountains were several United States ladies and due credit should be accorded them for their pioneering contribution.

Outstanding among these American ladies was Miss Mary M. Vaux, of Philadelphia, now Mrs. Charles D. Walcott, of Washington. She was the first lady to conquer Mount Stephen, making the ascent in 1900 with her brother, George Vaux, Jr., and two Swiss guides, Chr. Hasler and Edward Feuz. Let Mrs. Walcott tell her own interesting story:

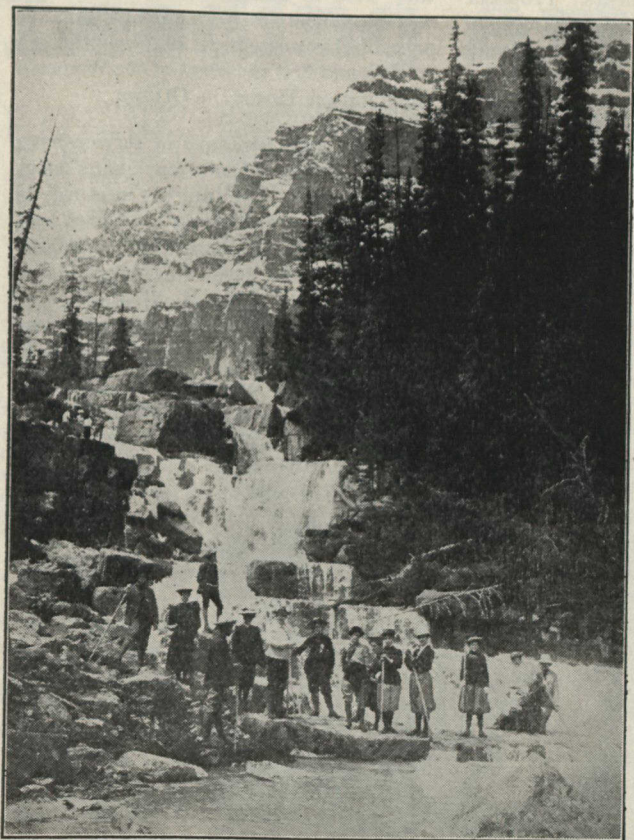
"A cloudless sky and a perfect temperature were the reward of several days of waiting, and as we followed the trail to the fossil bed, the early morning lights over the mountains were most striking, while the ground was carpeted in places with the dainty vines and blossoms of these upper regions. After leaving the trail we followed the fossil bed up to the arete, where a large rock afforded shelter from the sun's rays and where we partook of our second breakfast.

"The real climb began when the pillared top of the mountain was reached. The rocks were very treacher-

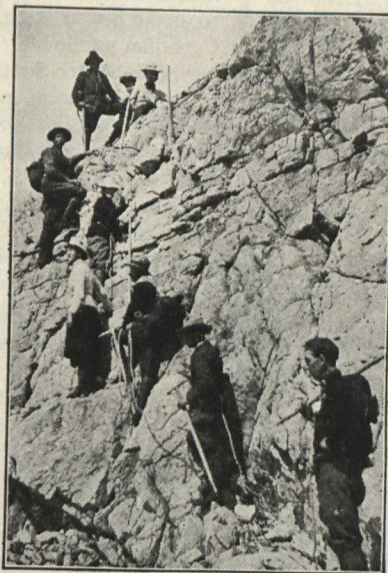
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On the brink of the Crevasse.



Ready to scale the heights to the world that above the distant clouds.



A tricky bit of rock work