

Educational Men and Matters

AN OUTING WITH THE VANCOUVER NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY AND JOHN DAVIDSON

(By Wm. Clark)

It has recently been enunciated in academic circles that Time and Space are relative things. If we stood back far enough, so to speak, we would see happening what really occurred years ago; or if we travelled with sufficient speed, we could look back and see ourselves coming.

While not quite able to Einsteinise to this extent a party of thirty-five members of The Vancouver Natural History Society, under the leadership of Professor John Davidson, F.L.S., of the University of B.C., accomplished that which was the virtual equivalent—from the botanical viewpoint—of a journey of several hundred miles up the coast, or the rolling back of the Summer to early Spring, by the simple, if slightly arduous, expedient of ascending some 3,200 feet to the top of Hollyburn Ridge, just above Dundarave.

It was most interesting, especially to the new members, to notice from the time the cool shade of the tall trees was entered, until the sub-alpine lakes on top of the ridge were reached, the gradual changes in the flora. Plants which long since had passed their flowering stage in the lowland were found in full bloom on the mountain top. The bog-bean with its beautiful white waxy reflexed petals, the mountain laurel (*Kalmia*), the cotton grass and the swamp violet, all found at Burnaby Lake on an excursion in early May, were displaying their blossoms, regardless of the fact that the calendar said July. The herbaceous bracken and shrubby sallal gradually gave place to the blue-berry, to the false azalea (*menziesia ferruginea*) (so easily mistaken by horticulturists for its relative the true or garden azalea), to the white rhododendron, and to the copperbush, until the top was reached, where on opener ground was spread a beautiful carpet of red and white "heather" sprinkled with the bright chalice-shaped flowers of the marsh marigold (*Caltha*).

The dominant vegetation also changed from the familiar Douglas Fir, Hemlock, Red Cedar and Grand Fir to Mountain Hemlock, Yellow Cedar (*Chamaecyparis*), Lovely Fir (*Abies amabilis*) and Western White Pine.

The more experienced members as they bent to the steep ascent, without even looking up could tell by the cones and leaves and needles and hums they trod on the changes that were taking place.

To some it was surprising to find a typical bog flora on the mountain top; but it was explained that there were many hollows without drainage, that the decaying vegetation had been accumulating for ages, and that a slowly melting mantle of snow lay on the mountain for many months of the year.

During the climb many interesting and instructive comments by the leader were listened to with keen attention by the group gathered round. Not only did he deal with the wide aspect of adaptation of flora to change of condition and environment, but also matters of more detail, such as the similarity of the devices evolved by plants far apart in relationship, to prevent excessive transpiration and conserve the water in their tissues.

A student from the University out for field experience would have the memory of some plant indelibly impressed by being asked to classify it.

What family does this plant belong to? Run it down in classification as far as you can go.

"It is a Monocot."

"Give your reasons."

"It has parallel veination and its floral parts are in threes."

"Proceed!"

"Its perianth has two whorls of three segments each, also its stamens; it has a three celled superior ovary and therefore belongs to the Lily family."

"Quite right; this flower is Queen's Cup of the Liliaceae." And the company would go on to the next point of interest.

A magnificent panorama was presented to the climbers on the far side of the ridge. Through the clear air Grouse and Crown Mountains seemed close at hand; farther off lay the massive dome of Cathedral, and in the distance could be seen Mumquam and the glaciers of the Garibaldi region. On the return journey, to the perspiring botanists, Mount Baker stood out like a huge ice-cream cone, while at their feet lay the inviting waters of the Gulf and English Bay.

That large and increasing section of the public, keenly interested in the flora of the province, will be glad to know that many less common specimens were found, such as: The Coralroot Orchid, the Twayblade Orchid, the graceful Queen's Cup (*Clintoria*), Bog Asphodel, and Yellow Pond Lily; the so-called "Flowering Fern" (*Coptis asplenifolia*) with its "gold thread" roots—but of course ferns do not flower—tall graceful saxafrages and creeping sallal, that interesting saprophytic plant the Indian Pipe (*Monotropa multiflora*) the sitka club moss, and several slime-fungi.

I held it truth, with him who sings
To one clear harp in divers tones,
That men may rise on stepping stones
Of their dead selves to higher things.
—Tennyson.

Meeting Provincial Needs

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