

for political agitation. Once more we are reminded that the root of the evil in Ireland is not political but economical. A peasantry in character like that of Celtic Brittany, amiable but thriftless, multiplies recklessly on potatoes in a climate unfavourable to the raising of grain, and is at the same time depressed by a religious system the effects of which on the industrial energy and material condition of the people have been in all countries the same. The case has been made worse by the absenteeism of the landlords, their frequent neglect of duty, and the bad relations existing between them and their tenants; while, to crown the whole, agricultural depression, the consequence of foreign competition, has probably rendered much of the land of Ireland incapable of paying a rent. This malady, or complication of maladies, no political gincerackery can cure. Nothing can cure it that does not equalize population with subsistence, and produce a change in the industrial habits of the people. The people themselves are at heart conscious of the fact, and have never shown much interest in any merely political agitation. O'Connell's Repeal Movement became a standing farce, and Smith O'Brien's rebellion ended in a cabbage garden. Other plots for the establishment of a Hibernian Republic have met a similar fate. The present political movement derives its whole force from its conjunction with agrarian discontent. If the people want the repeal of the Union, it is because they have been led to believe that it would be the repeal of Rent. Of this the political revolutionists are perfectly aware, as they are now showing by their jealous protests against the introduction of any Land measure unaccompanied by a measure of Home Rule. Let Parliament impose silence on political revolution till the economical question has been settled: when the economical question shall have been settled, and the hungry begin to be fed, the flame of political disaffection will expire like that of a lamp from which the oil has been withdrawn. GOLDWIN SMITH.

WINTER IN THE SELKIRKS.

PERHAPS a description of life in the Selkirk Mountains during winter may not be without interest, especially to those who at this time are enjoying all the comforts of modern civilization in towns and cities. The Canadian Pacific Railway crosses the range, and it is on the line of that railway, near to the summit, on the eastern slope of the Selkirks, that the camp is situated where this is written.

Our camp consists of a log house, built in a convenient and sheltering clump of bush. Within a stone's throw flows the Bear Creek, in winter a bright and babbling stream, that sometimes plays fantastic tricks with the miniature icebergs it piles up; and in summer often a roaring torrent, foul with the soil washed down from the mountain sides by the melting snow, and impatient of any obstruction to its progress. To the south of us rises Mount Carroll, his ragged head and jagged shoulders towering up 5,000 feet above our modest dwelling, completely shutting out all sunlight from us for more than four months. His sides are so steep, and we are so close to his base—not more than four hundred feet from it—that one has to look up almost perpendicularly to see his top. To the north lies Mount Hermit, even more ragged and jagged than Mount Carroll. These two steep mountains, with the narrow intervening valley, form as it were a V, in the apex of which our little hut stands. When on a bright winter's day the sun climbs up behind Mount Carroll, and throws his brilliant rays on Hermit's snow-clad summit, the intense glare is reflected down upon us, and the welcome sunshine streams in at our windows. Mount Hermit is our moon, and gives us the sunlight that Carroll would keep from us.

Those who have never spent a winter in a mountainous country in snowy latitudes can hardly imagine the wonderful beauty of the snow-clad peaks lit up by the glare of a brilliant sun. The fantastic outlines of these magnificent Selkirks seem too unreal, even while one is gazing at them, to be actual, solid, enduring rock. But when the strange forms are clothed with a garment of intense white, when they stand against a background of strong, deep blue, when they shine and sparkle in the bright light of a clear winter's sun, the effect is only comparable to the imaginings of fairyland. There is nothing in nature so pure and so white as the summit of a snow-clad mountain in the depth of winter. It is impossible to compare it to anything, for it is itself whiter than anything, and its whiteness is intensified by contrast with the deep blue of the sky. Never have I seen anywhere such sky as we occasionally see at the summit of these mountains. The blue is so deep as to have almost a shade of black in it. Doubtless this is owing to our altitude (we are over 4,000 feet above the sea) combined with the sharp frosty atmosphere which usually prevails. But whatever the reason may be, its effect as a factor in the production of winter scenery is marvellous; and I imagine it would be difficult to find in any country any sight grander than the great congregation of peaks that cluster around the head of the Illi-cilli-waet Pass.

Snow, however, as every one in Canada knows, has its drawbacks. No objection can be urged against it so long as it stays on mountain-tops and looks pretty; but when it lies deep in the valleys, and our communications with the outer world can only be kept open by "breaking trail" on snowshoes, each additional snowfall is deprived of much of its æsthetic interest by the hard and laborious work which it entails. Our mails come to us once a month by dog train from Canmore, on the eastern slope of the Rockies, 150 miles distant; and the Indian dogs, strong and willing though they be, would be unable to haul the toboggans with their precious load if the trail were not kept open for them. It may be understood that under these circumstances trail-breaking is a duty that is attended to in all weathers. But we have our reward for all our trouble, and I think the sweetest sounds to our ears in the whole month are the whimperings of the dogs and the shouts of the drivers, that announce to the camp the arrival of the long-looked-for letters. The mail is carried by dog-train fifty miles beyond our camp to Farewell, a little mining town that, in less than a year, has grown up on the banks of the Columbia River. There are many hard experiences for both dogs and men on a journey of 200 miles over such mountains in the dead of winter. The "trip" takes ten days: sometimes they are over sixteen hours at a stretch between stopping-places, and sometimes have to "hang up" for the night in a deserted log hut, where there are no comforts beyond those that can be extracted from a fire in the middle of the floor. But dog-drivers, as a rule, are not men of luxurious habits, and in spite of snow and storm, cold and exposure, our mails come to us with wonderful regularity.

We have not many amusements—that goes without saying. In spring, when the bears awake from their long sleep, there may be some excitement in making a collection of skins: but a "silver tip"—which is a bear frequently met with here—is an awkward individual with whom to have very intimate relations, and the gathering in, and proper harvesting, of one such hide sometimes affords enough excitement to last a man a whole summer; besides using up a great deal of ammunition. The cinnamon bear is also occasionally found here. He, too, is a large and very fierce beast, and requires much careful and judicious treatment. The black bear is the most common; there is not much difficulty in killing him, and the skin makes a handsome robe. Of "grizzlies" there seem to be very few; indeed, I have not heard an authentic instance of the real "grizzly" having been seen in these mountains. I imagine that their habitat is farther south. Caribou will be plentiful when the herbage begins to appear through the snow in the flats of the valley and bare places, and their magnificent antlers and soft thick hides are prizes worth going after. During the winter they desert such altitudes as we are living at, and remain in the lower and open valleys, where food is more easily obtained. Where the mountain goats go to in winter no one appears definitely to know. It seems impossible that they should remain up in the mountain-tops, above the tree line, at this inclement time of year, for there even a goat would find it impossible to get anything to eat, one would imagine; but certainly they are never seen in the valleys. The dead body of one having apparently fallen over a high cliff immediately above; and this would go to show that they actually live—or try to live—in the mountain-tops all the year round. They are pretty little beasts, these mountain goats, with soft coats of thick white fleece, and sharp pointed horns, much like those of their civilized brethren. On the shoulder there is a thick gathering of skin and flesh that forms a diminutive "hump," somewhat like that of buffalo; and probably this contains the store of fat upon which the system draws in winter when provender fails. Mountain sheep may also be numbered among our neighbours. They are chiefly remarkable for their large curled horns, twisting round over the front of their heads and forming a protection to the forehead. It is said that when they descend from rock to rock they so make their spring as to light upon their heads, and certainly I have seen horns battered and chipped as though they had been used in this way. At present we catch martens and little ermines in traps, and shoot with rice—for lack of small shot—the beautiful little snow-white, black-eyed ptarmigan that feeds upon the buds of the alder bushes.

Our weather has been surprisingly mild. While we hear of places in the far east suffering from blizzards and unprecedentedly low temperature, we complain that frequently it has not been cold enough to prevent the snow from melting on the roof and dripping into our abode. There was one cold "snap" early in January, but by the middle of February we are luxuriating in soft balmy air, the blue-jays are chattering, and the little tits whistling about our camp, and everything betokens that spring is close at hand. One would hardly seek the summit of the Selkirks desiring early spring; and yet—Nature is so capricious—it is here to be found.

G. C. C.