

THE TIMELESS TRAVELLERS

By
Isabel Ecclestone Mackay

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To Mr Pound who likes an envelope
almost as well as I liked Duke Louis!
Isabel Ecclestone Mackay.

THE TIMELESS TRAVELLERS

BY ISABEL ECCLESTONE MACKAY

AUTHOR OF "UP THE HILL AND OVER"

IT was rather cheery, as the Imperial Limited steamed out, to find that nothing had been forgotten save a time table.

"And a time table," I said, "can always be obtained from the porter."

"It can," agreed Una, "but let's not obtain it. Let us be timeless—'timeless and content', that's a quotation from something."

It sounded restful.

"Besides," continued Una, "I see already, half-way down the car, my old friend the Obliging Traveller. Wherever I have been I have never yet failed to meet him. His pockets gape with guide books and his lips smile with smiles. If I am not mistaken we shall not only achieve information, but have much information thrust upon us."

"As a perfect stranger he can't—"

"But he can. Also he can talk about the scenery. He will talk about it in a loud voice. Did I tell you that I do not intend to look at the scenery? I hope you don't mind my telling you just how I feel about it."

"Why should I? It's not *my* scenery."

"There! I knew you would be huffy. For, of course, it's your scenery. Your own beautiful made-in-B.C. scenery. That's why I am not to look at it. The doctor has ordered me to avoid all excitement."

"Then perhaps you will move and let me sit next the window."

"No. I can't do that—sorry! I need a good light for my knitting. Besides, I may be able to allow myself to glance up occasionally."

"In that case I shall retire to the observation car—"

"And I can put my work-bag on your seat, thanks so much. As for berths, I will take the upper one, because—well, just because."

"You may take the upper one," I agreed kindly, "but not because you are slimmer. You are not slimmer, don't dream it!"

It may be guessed from the foregoing that Una and I, in setting out across the continent, had decided to ignore the more hampering courtesies. We had agreed to be cheerfully selfish. Unselfishness en route is a strain under which any companionship may crumble. I have Una's word for this. She says she tried it once.

The observation car was not yet full and, thoughtfully avoiding the Obliging Traveller, who had preceded me, I sat down beside a pleasant elderly woman—the comfortable kind which still wear bonnets and black silk. We smiled at each other; that smile which is the beginning of one of those traveller's-sample friendships which belong to the pleasant chances of the road. Mrs. Smith (we found later that she belonged to the goodly fellowship of the Smiths) was knitting a sock, and at once I noticed that it was different from the sock knitted by Una. I noticed too that, while it occupied her fingers, her eyes were free to follow



Along the Trail to Lake Agnes

the swiftly passing beauty beyond the windows. "A new system," I thought, "like touch typewriting." She used steel needles, too, which clicked. I noticed the click even through the swinging rhythm of the train and wondered as it grew faster and faster, furiously fast, until presently the knitter let the sock fall in her lap and laughed.

"I will get the rheumatism if I go on that way," she confided, "but I can't help it when I look at the river. Did you ever see a river run so fast? It gets me all breathless, I keep trying to catch up."

I nodded. "It is like that all the way. Even at the very mouth the ferries need all the pull of their engines to keep their course. And once I saw it away up north—it turns you dizzy there. It's like some great live thing tearing at the barges fastened to the wharves. They load them up and let them go, like chips on a torrent, with a bargeman or two, absurdly small and human, to ward off destruction."

"And they tow them back?"

"They don't come back. It is strictly one-way on the Upper Fraser."

"I would like to see that." Mrs. Smith's eyes were reminiscent. "I remember—but here comes your friend. It looks like she's had some trouble with her knitting."

"I don't know what's wrong with it, I am sure," sighed Una, holding up a sock which was certainly not blameless. "I just glanced up once or twice to watch the river and now it's all crooked."

With her true instinct for getting what she wants, Una spoke to me, but glanced at my companion, a glance which lingered wistfully on the well-ordered sock upon her lap. Nothing more was necessary. Mrs. Smith held out a kindly hand.

"If you'll just let me see it for a moment, my dear, I think I can put it right for you. Yes. We'll only need to rip an inch or so. You've been knitting backwards instead of around. It's an easy thing to do."

"Fatally easy!" Una sank into a chair with a relieved sigh. "But do



Mirror Lake—"In its fringing trees, quite hidden and aloof"

you know I don't believe I want to knit. I am going to take a chance on getting excited. It seems worth it. Did you ever see anything so fascinating as that tinted hill over there? And to think that I never realized before that B.C. wears colours! Somehow, I've always thought of her as clad in fadeless green; but out here she has taken to russet and wears red shoes."

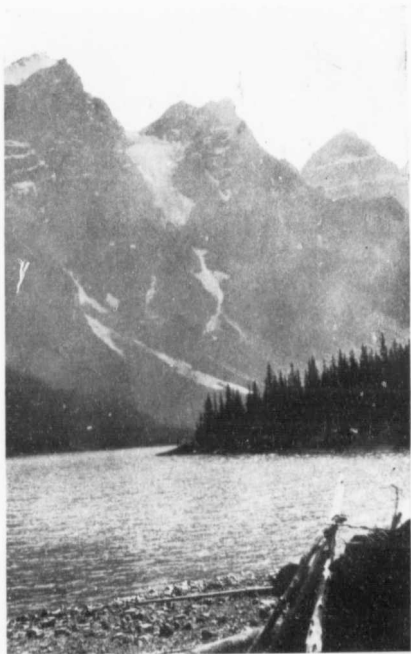
I saw at once that she was right about the shoes. It put into words a difference which had often puzzled me. In the East the autumn turns red from the top, while here it grows red from the bottom. There the gorgeous maples flame against the sky, but here the colour is lower almost on the ground. Low bushes, trailing vines, brown rocks around which creep little flames of pure bright yellow; while above and behind rise the solid, unchanging green of the British Columbia forest.

The impalpable veil of autumn lay between us and the more distant hills, a veil which might well have been woven of the far blue spirals of mist

which rose like fairy fires from the mountains' unseen hollows.

"Injun fires," said Ma Smith, dreamily. (She told us afterwards that "up where she came from," everyone called her "Ma".) "It doesn't take a very big effort of imagination to believe that they are still there with their signal smoke curling up so straight and blue—with not a white man's foot upon the hills and the river rushing on just like it is now."

Una and I mover our chairs a little closer. Ma picked up some stitches in Una's sock and went on. "I hope we don't go for to spoil the country when we get right holt of it. But it will take a whole lot of spoiling. Nature's seen to that. Now, farming country and grazing land she don't take much trouble over. She lets them lie like they be, because she knows man will come and plough them up and build on them. But when she wants a bit of the world for her own, she just makes it so slippy that man can't sit on it and so rocky he can't dig. If he



Moraine Lake

"Snow lay almost at the base of its farther slope"

makes mines, they've mostly got to be underneath where they don't show."

"Somebody's been growing something over there," I said, nodding to a patch of lighter green which lay like a gay handkerchief in a hollow of the sloping hills."

"Cabbages!" Ma Smith's tone was the tone of an expert. "Do you know, I'd kind of like to live up there."

We looked at the tiny home, hanging like a bird's nest by its patch of man-made green, and from it up to the flying clouds and down to the plunging river. Even as we looked, we left it far behind. Who lived there, we wondered, and did they find the mountains good company?

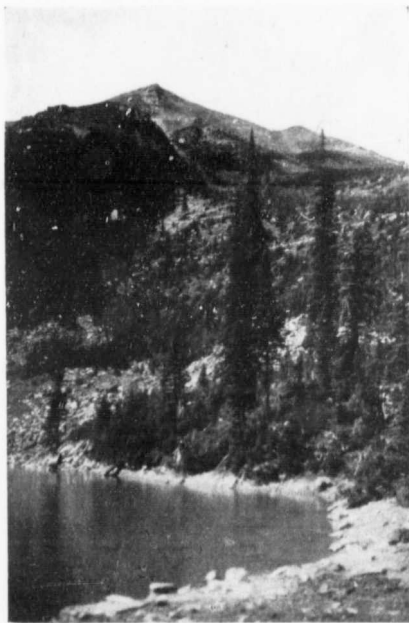
"There's plenty like it," said our companion, smiling at our doubt, "how else would countries ever be settled?"

A nervous-looking young woman with a high voice came through the car at that moment and paused to glance over the backs of our chairs.

"Can you tell me," she asked, "whether these mountains are the Selkirks or the Rockies?"

She addressed Una, probably on account of her eyeglasses. I don't know why one who is short of sight should be supposed to be long on knowledge.

"Both, I think," replied Una, not to be found lacking. The lady thanked her and passed on.



One facet of Lake Louise
"The topmost jewel in this mountain diadem"

"Is it or aren't they?" asked Una fearfully. But Ma Smith was plainly shocked.

"Land, my dear, don't you know your geography? We won't be in the Rockies for a long time yet; though I never was one to set store by names," she added musingly. "It's all just mountains to me."

It was all just mountains to us also, but the face of them was rapidly changing. The forests were diminishing; bare brown shoulders of the hills were pushing through. The intimate, almost fairy-like beauty of gorge and wooded slope was being left behind. It was as if nature in a sterner mood were casting off her fripperies. The hills were tumbled now; thrown here

and there in curious masses; piled one upon another in vast confusion.

The day was one of flying clouds with bright sun behind them, and as the drifting shadows fell and lifted, strange shapes appeared and disappeared, half seen—

"A cinematograph of the gods!" said Una suddenly. "See, the shadow of a great hand! and there—a giant's face—don't you see it?"

We saw it plainly. For a moment it lay there against that fantastic medley of hills, clear-cut, the profile of a great strange face with blind eyes.

"Perhaps they played here sometime—the giants?" I ventured. "It looks like giants' country. That mass of rock so curiously round, it may well

be a ball which one of them let drop. And see the huge pudding-bowl—surely Mrs. Giant may have stirred her porridge there, ages and years ago.”

“Not so long, either,” mused Una, “for one has left a footprint. Don’t you see it there, high up, that foot-shaped hollow, big enough to hide a city? But how bare it all is—how stark. There is no ‘Injun smoke’ here. The giants have stamped all the camp fires out and scattered the embers.”

But Ma Smith was nothing if not practical. “It isn’t as barren as it looks,” she told us. “There are orchards and fruit farms down in there, irrigated fruit; and the country around is fine for grazing. We will soon be into Kamloops. Don’t tell me,” sternly, “that you don’t know anything about Kamloops.”

It would have taken someone braver than Una to admit ignorance.

“It’s a grand place for lungers,” went on Ma Smith cheerfully. “Mr. Smith’s second cousin on his mother’s side got better here. The air’s so dry and pure it tingles in your fingers.”

“How high is it?” asked Una, and as the train stopped just at that moment, her voice was audible through the car.

“Now you’ve done it!” I muttered.

For immediately the Obliging Traveller looked up from his annotated guide and prepared to diffuse knowledge.

“This city,” he said, with unctious, “is just 1,151 feet above the sea. It is the most important city in the Valley of the Thompson. Its population is approximately 5,250—”

“Did you say ‘and fifty’?” asked Una, as if sincerely anxious about the odd number. “Thanks so much.”

The thanks sounded final, so final that the Obliging Traveller, looking slightly dazed, moved on. And we turned our attention to the busy little station, with its masses of autumn flowers, until the train followed his example. It was getting towards sunset now. The shadows of the giants’ hills fell sharp and dark. The broad, beautiful

Thompson lay like an anklet of gold about their feet. The mountain air blew cool and sweet; and soon, almost startlingly soon, the long stretch of shining track behind us vanished into the blues and the grays of evening.

“We’ll not see much more to-night,” said Ma Smith regretfully. “But here is your knitting quite put to rights. You’ll get on nicely now until you strike the heel.”

“‘Strike’ is good,” said Una, laughing, “but it does seem a shame to go to bed. I shall simply lie awake and think of what we’re missing.”

“Only scenery,” I hinted slyly, “my scenery which you weren’t going to look at.”

In the offended pause which followed, the nervous lady from farther down the car passed by us again, and again she asked Una’s eyeglasses for information.

“I suppose,” she observed, tentatively, “it isn’t quite as dangerous as it looks?”

But Ma Smith was not going to let Una prove a broken reed a second time.

“Don’t you get to thinking of danger, my dear,” she told the nervous one. “It’s the dangerous places that are the safest always. This track is watched like a week-old baby. It’s the places so safe that no one thinks of them where the accidents are. Mr. Smith’s first cousin was like that,” she confided to us, “terrible nervous. The time she came to visit us through the mountains she wouldn’t look out of the window, just missed it all. And she sat up all night so as to be ready.”

Una laughed. “It isn’t because I’m afraid of dying in my nightie that I don’t sleep,” she said. “But did you ever notice how uncannily clever railroads are in arranging stops at night? It could only be done by experts, specialists who understand the laws governing sleep and know to a moment when the normal mind becomes dangerously drowsy and can put their finger unerringly on that magic interval between first and second sleep and that illusive second when the sleep

curtain lifts a little just at dawn. If they cannot arrange for these and other moments by stops and stations, they can always test the wheels with sledge hammers and try experiments with the brakes. The last time I travelled from Buffalo to New York by night the perfection of the thing was diabolical.

"'Porter,' I said, 'can you tell me what expert psychologist arranges the night traffic on this road?'

"'Doan you go blaming him, mam,' said the porter. 'Govenment's runnin' this road now and what it doan know about runnin' it is plenty.'"

We laughed at this, and Ma Smith, practical as ever, hastened to assure us that the "gov'rment" wasn't running the C. P. R. yet. Also that kindly nature had provided that the stops were few. We would sleep, she assured us, like tops.

How a top sleeps, I don't know, but it could hardly do better than I did that night. The swaying of the long train, the mountain air through the open window of my berth, proved the best of sleep inducers. But just at dawn I woke with no desire for further slumber. The lights in the car still burned and no one stirred, but outside, pressing against the misty window, was a kind of light-soaked darkness through which great forms of solid darkness gloomed.

The train swung on, taking no account of these, but, as the light grew stronger, a curious feeling grew—a feeling that we had come far, very far, indeed. Things had happened in the night. While we slept the mountains had crept closer. They had closed in. They were behind, before—everywhere! We who had assayed the heart of their fastness proceeded now at their pleasure. Uncaring and austere, they towered above our puny, puffing train, or bent with frowning tolerance to see it pass. How long would this indifference last? With stealthy pressure from behind they urged us forward, now engulfing us in black tunnels, now shouldering us along the edge of sheer destruction, now disdain-

fully permitting passage over some dizzy man-made bridge; but never for a moment letting go their hold or forgetting that we were there—crushable atoms of unparalleled audacity!

I had a feeling that if the train stopped—but when it did stop nothing happened. We were even permitted, those of us who were up and dressed, to promenade along the platform of the busy little station. I, for one, desired to go softly, but not so the Obliging Traveller. He was in great form, and his voice was louder than ever.

"You will soon see something very wonderful, ladies," he began. "We will presently enter a system of spiral tunnelling unsurpassed on this continent. The track doubles back upon itself twice, at an approximate cost of work one million five hundred thousand—"

"I wish he wouldn't be so cocky about tunnels," whispered Una uneasily. "The mountains may not like it."

"He might at least wait until we are safely out."

We edged away, but the booming voice followed us. "The amount of dynamite alone—"

"Well, let's get breakfast before they fall on us," said Una resignedly. "That big one over there looks distinctly annoyed."

But the Obliging Traveller wanted breakfast, too.

"You ladies stopping off at Louise?" he asked briskly.

"Yes," said Una, "but we don't feel that we know her well enough to call her by her first name."

"Pardon? Oh, I see. Your first trip, I suppose. Well, you won't be disappointed. That lake—"

"Please—" said Una, "we don't want to know about it beforehand. We want it to be a surprise."

"Well, that's just what I was going to say. That lake will be the surprise of your life. Height above sea level 5,032 feet, and the other two are higher still. The altitude of Mirror Lake—"

"I am sorry," interrupted Una firmly, "but my doctor has forbidden all excitement."

We left him looking east down, but not destroyed. Unfortunately, we had to leave our coffee, too.

Now, for anyone who wants a description of the scenery between Field and Lake Louise (including the spiral tunnel), there are guide books available, and English is not the poor thing which some wordless ones would have us think it. But for us to see these unveiled splendours and then to write of them would savour of indelicacy. We looked, but we said little. Always there seemed a danger that the mountains might hear. Why trade on their exhaustless patience? We were there on sufferance. Even those tunnels (marvels as they are of the skill and intrepidity of humans like ourselves) were there because the mountains did not yet forbid. And lest we boast a shade too loudly, we had but to look at the smoke of the engine as it curled in lazy circles from the tunnel's mouth, gone in an instant, lost in the blue mist-wraiths which rise eternally, the life-breath of the everlasting hills.

Lake Louise, too, found us silent. Can one describe sheer beauty? Convey, to one who has not seen, the thrill, the warmth, the deep content of something so perfect that its loveliness sinks into the soul and forms a secret treasure there?

Lake Louise we saw, and from that moment some of the glory of the hills was ours.

When we left the open car which had brought us to this paradise, we did not go at once into the Chateau which obligingly received our travelling bags and most of our fellow-travellers. We scarcely noticed it, save to feel thankful that its flower-decked front and popped lawns were part of the beauty and not foreign to it. Later, we were to appreciate the comfort of its charming rooms and careful service, but at first we had eyes for nothing save the gracious sweep of the lake shore, the lifting snow-covered mountains, the dazzling glacier, the

lake that lay like a bit of mislaid heaven.

"Well, now, I never saw a lake like that," exclaimed a high-pitched, familiar voice behind us. "What a funny colour! Jim, just run and ask that man what makes the water that queer blue——"

"Hurry, hurry!" muttered Una, seizing my arm, and together we ran along the curving path, our one desire to escape the hearing of those fatal words of knowledge which would reduce to a formula that magic water of undreamed-of blue.

We did not pause until we were safe in a rustic summer house, where the only sound was the water lapping against the cedar logs. Along the bank behind us a sloping trail climbed gently—up, up into the green mystery of the trees. The breathlessness, the lightness of the air was a new surprise until we remembered that we were almost on the roof of the continent.

"And there are other lakes still higher!" Una quoted the Obliging Traveller musingly. "And the air will grow thinner and purer, and sweet with a terrible sweetness, and, if we could climb high enough, presently there wouldn't be any air at all! I hope you realize what a worm you are."

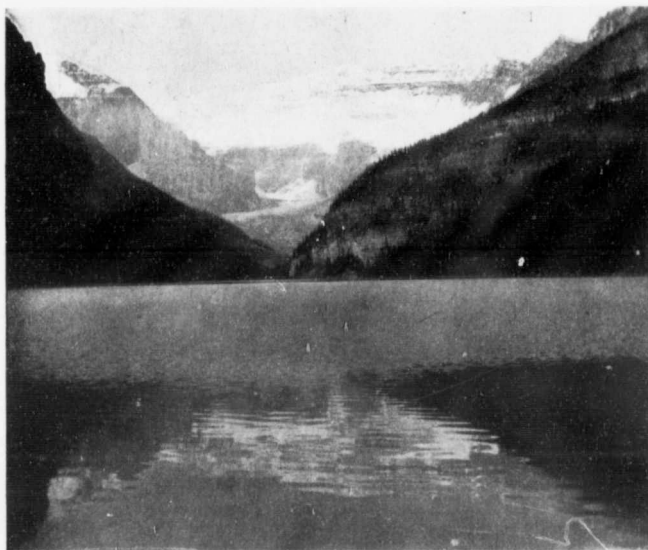
We did, I think, feel very worm-like, but quite content. Una even declared generously that she didn't grudge mountains a bit of dignity. They have a position to keep up, she said, and it is necessary also to consider their age. Even at a conservative estimate, they must be getting on.

Ma Smith, to whom this remark was made, looked over the tops of her glasses and her mild eyes held rebuke.

"You're not really thinking of it, my dear, or you wouldn't be frivolous," said she. "I reckon it's the one thing that makes me sort of fidgety. I get looking back and back and——"

"Yes?" prompted Una.

"Well, I get so far back and so little that I lose aolt of myself. There doesn't seem to be any Ma Smith."



"A mislaid bit of Heaven"—Lake Louise

"Who's afraid?" cried Una. "I am going right down now to pick out a pony and to-morrow I am going as high and as far as I can go. I'll pick out ponies for you, too."

Una knows nothing of ponies, but she has plenty of confidence. Yet when she rejoined me later in our room her countenance was troubled.

"What," she asked, "does 'skookum' mean?"

"In what language?"

"Don't be silly. You've lived long enough in B.C. to know the meaning of a simple word like that."

"But it isn't a simple word," I protested. "It all depends on how it is used."

"It was used by a guide down there. A guide named Pedro; at least he should be named Pedro, for he's the most Pedro-like person I ever saw outside of a cigar box cover. He wears a beehive hat and a red handkerchief.

He wouldn't let me choose my pony, or yours either. There was a white one I wanted called Stovepipe, a dear thing, but Pedro said, 'No, too skookum!' What is 'skookum'?"

"Was he—er—was he looking at you or at the pony?"

"At me—I suppose. Why?"

Now Una is really sensitive about her weight. To tell her the real meaning of "skookum" would have been most unkind.

"Oh," I said briskly. "In that case 'skookum' means—er—dangerous. The guide means that you—I mean that Stovepipe was too dangerous for you."

Una looked relieved and I hastened to close the subject with, "He probably knows best."

Nevertheless, she glanced somewhat doubtfully at Pedro next morning as he mounted her upon a stout brown pony very different from Stovepipe, who was given to the nervous lady,

who was almost as thin as her voice.

"Isn't he too skookum for that lady?" asked Una anxiously. But luckily the guide did not hear.

We started off, a procession of six, headed by an arrival of the night before, a horsewoman evidently, and the only one of us all who had brought her own riding skirt.

"It's too annoying that I didn't dream I should need my habit," complained Stovepipe's rider languidly, and both Una and I tried to look as if we also owned a riding habit and had neglected to bring it.

The pace of the ponies was easy to a degree, and as we walked them—I mean as they walked us slowly along the level drive, we all felt what an absurd fuss is made about horse-back riding. Anyone, we felt, could ride a horse!

It was a little different when the trail narrowed and the slope began to ascend, but still the main thing seemed to be to stick on. Una's brooding eyes were on Stovepipe.

"He doesn't *look* dangerous!" she murmured. But again luck was to vindicate my rendering of a foreign language, for at that moment Stovepipe stopped. Anyone who has been behind anything which abruptly stops in the middle of a narrow trail knows what happens.

"Keep back!" cried Stovepipe's rider needlessly.

"But I can't keep back! My pony won't stop. Whoa!" Una tugged wildly at the rein.

"And mine won't go. Guide!"

"Slap him," I suggested helpfully.

Una suppressed a shriek. "No, don't slap him. He may not know what you mean. He may go backwards. Guide!"

A shrill whistle sounded from the rear. A whistle which miraculously restored Stovepipe's powers of locomotion. Once more we began our slow ascent. But from that on some of us had our doubts about horses.

"If we were elephants," said Una, "I mean, if the horses were elephants, they could hang on to each other's

tails. It would feel safer. Do you suppose it's necessary for Bingo to walk right at the very edge and a little over? Does it make any difference to yours when you pull the rein to draw him in nearer?"

I tried and said that it didn't.

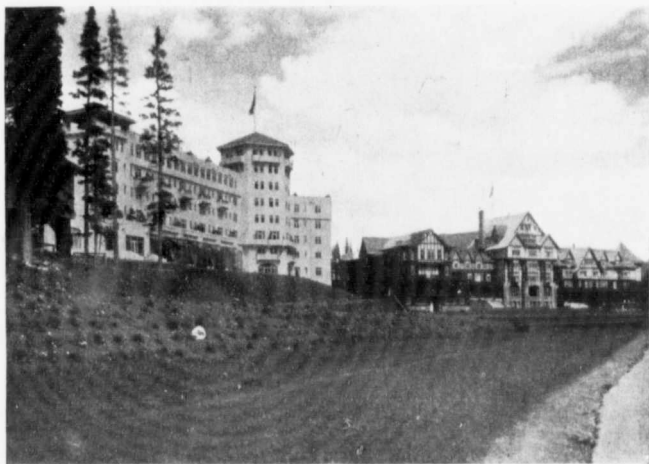
"They are creatures of experience," mused Una. "They don't want to scrape their sides against the rock. They have done it before and know that it is unpleasant. Their preference for the outside edge is based on ignorance. The experience of those who have fallen over," she added darkly, "is not available."

"Oh, *don't*," wailed the rider of Stovepipe. "I know it's perfectly safe. The guide said so. The ponies go up here twice a day every day all summer and never—oh, gracious heavens!"

The forward ponies had stopped again. This time they paused simultaneously because of a crook in the trail. Just ahead the narrow path grew suddenly steeper and turned upon itself as if wishing to look back to see how it was coming along.

The leading pony, after a moment of thoughtful contemplation, began to twist itself around this angle, while the other ponies waited. The wait gave their riders time to admire the view. Far, far below lay the lake, far—far—I tried my best to forget how far. I tried to think only of what a capable looking person Pedro was and of all the travellers, still living, who had daily come up this delightful (and perfectly safe) trail, also of the undeniable fact that no corpses lay in the blueness of that far-off lake or hung in festoons upon the foliage which clothed its picturesque (and somewhat precipitous) sides. If previous adventurers had been borne around that angle in safety, why not we? The deduction seemed reasonable and I clung to it, and also to the saddle, as my pony moved forward in its turn.

"Guide!" called the shrill-voiced one. "I want to get out, down, I mean, and walk."



The Chateau, Lake Louise—"Part of the beauty and not foreign to it"

"You can't," said Una, with grim firmness. "There's nothing to walk on and if there is Bingo needs it all. If he should stumble over you, where would I be?"

The nervous lady didn't care where Una would be and said so, but Stovepipe seemed quite undisturbed by her evident distrust. With nose resting peacefully upon the trail of the pony preceding, he followed the direction of Pedro's whistle and took the angle with all the calm of a true fatalist.

We had turned aside from the lake now and our way wound through the mountain woods, a steady climb up an easy slope, till Pedro's voice, sounding cheerfully from the rear, announced Mirror Lake in the near distance.

Who found it first, I wonder, this wonderful mountain looking-glass, when no one knew the way save the birds and the mountain beasts who came to drink; when there were no trails, no ponies, no tourists? It is not blue like Lake Louise. Its waters are sadder, darker. It lies there in its fringing trees quite hidden and aloof.

Beside it rises a domed mountain curiously like the bee-hive for which it is named. The trails wind up to the very summit of this, trails easily climbed by the sure-footed ponies, and providing the highest point on the continent reachable by pony travel. To our right hand the trail by which we had come sloped steeply up and, having allowed us a sufficiently long interval for breathing space, our leading pony turned resignedly to his unfinished task.

"I'm getting used to it, I think," said the nervous lady, "or else I feel safer because I can't see the bottom."

"Yes," agreed Una, "the most pressing danger now is that of sliding off backwards. The bridles seem strong. Let us hope the man who made them had a conscience."

He probably had, for even Una's weight did not trouble the good stout leather. The ponies bent to the stiff grade, heads down, disdainfully unheeded of the wriggling humans upon their backs; their twitching ears attentive only to the whistle of their guide.

We were getting above the forest now and out upon the barer mountain-side. Gravel rattled under the ponies' hoofs and once in a while a larger stone rolled down with an echoing crash. The trail ascended in a leisurely zig-zag and through that clear, still air the eye could follow other trails hanging like eyelashes on the mountain's face. The second part of our journey was the shorter and soon the sound of falling water told us that we neared the water-fall which is the overflow of Lake Agnes, the highest of these lakes in the clouds.

Pedro, who had appeared in front of us without anyone realizing just how he got there, explained that our small remaining climb must be made on foot.

"Ponies wait here," he said, pointing to the steps which would take the rest of us to the level of the small plateau above. "Steps very easy," he added patronizingly.

It was astonishing how safe and dependable one's own legs felt. We all tried to look as if we noticed no difference, but the manner of the whole party became perceptibly easier.

It was very pleasant on the plateau above the waterfall. Lake Agnes lay there, sun-steeped, open to the nearer sky, the top-most jewel in this mountain diadem. The trees were thinner here with open vistas through which the descending valleys lay spread out beneath us; Mirror Lake, dark and tiny now; the flash of blue so far below which was Lake Louise. Yet still the mountains held and shadowed us, their unreachd peaks serene and distant through their drifting clouds.

There were other climbers here; climbers with perhaps more right to the name, since they had taken the trail without the aid of ponies. Very content they looked resting on the smooth and sun-warmed moss of the rocks, close to the pleasant music of the waterfall and with some of the most beautiful scenery of the world their own for the trouble of looking at it.

"It is lovely, lovely, lovely!" sighed Una. "And oh, see! a darling cloud—a tiny, baby cloud. Perhaps this is one of their nurseries? If we walk over there we can touch it. Fancy, shaking hands with a cloud!"

Unfortunately Una's voice carries well and the Obliging Traveller was just around the next rock. Very kindly he explained that what we beheld was more or less of an illusion. If we walked over there, he said, the cloud, as a cloud, would exist no longer. We would walk through a slight mist merely. "We are now," he declared, "at an altitude of 6,875 feet and mist of a cloud-like formation is to be expected. At a still higher altitude of—" but why bore you as we were bored.

As soon as we could we excused ourselves and walked sadly away, reflecting upon the limitations of civilization.

"I wonder," mused Una, "if when stout Cortez stood with eagle eye 'silent upon a peak in Darien' he had someone near to remind him of the altitude."

"If so," I answered, "knowing Cortez as I do, I feel sure that no one would have regretted the altitude more than the man who mentioned it. But those good old days are gone."

"And now that the romance of the scene is dissipated," went on Una, "what really worries me is getting down again. If Bingo is as perpendicular downwards as he was upwards, what is to prevent me sliding gently off his neck? I can hardly embrace his tail. I feel it is not done in equestrian circles."

"Perhaps," hopefully, "they are trained to go down backwards."

But they weren't. One of our party was already engaged in a heated discussion with Pedro over just this point. Pedro smiled his flashing, yellow smile and was gently firm.

"Pony use to go down head first" he explained. "Very safe pony. No stumble, all *cushy*—yes."

"I wish I understood foreign languages," fretted the nervous lady.



"The highest point on the Continent reachable by pony trail"

"What is this guide supposed to be—Swiss?"

"The Swiss may speak like that in moments of excitement," said Una. "I've never heard them."

"Guide," called the lady, "I am going to walk."

Pedro was agreeable.

"You walk? You lead um pony? Very well, yes."

"Lead the pony? Certainly I shan't lead the pony. I—"

But perhaps Pedro didn't understand English.

"You lead um—very safe—all *cushy*, yes." And slipping Stovepipe's bridle into her reluctant hand, he whistled. The head pony started and with that, further argument was impossible.

"If I were you I'd risk the pony," advised Una. "They must be safe. The danger is only apparent—mortal mind, you know. See how carefully they place their feet."

"I place my feet carefully, too, and I have fewer feet!"

We had passed the steepest parts of the trail now; passed Mirror Lake, darker with the dark of lengthening shadows; passed the angle where the trail looks back and passed the rustic summer house which is halfway down

the lower slope. The light lay long and slanting; the coolness of the rocks stole out across our heated faces, and as if by common consent we had all grown silent. Even the guide-book man's brisk eye was fixed and dreamy. Not until we trotted up to the Chateau with dinner in the middle distance did we return to our accustomed and commonplace selves.

We told Ma Smith about it that night, sitting before a blazing log fire in the lounge; and while her clever fingers put Una's knitting straight for the seventieth time, she gave us another bit of her homely philosophy.

"It's clear you feel like I do," said Ma Smith. "There's something terrible religious about mountains. 'Twas the cities of the plain that got too wicked for the Lord to stand them—not but that He stands a lot. But mountain folk see clear and have steady hearts. There's a strength in them. 'I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills'—David knew."

"This isn't your first visit then, Mrs. Smith?"

"No, my dear, not by several. I've got the mountains in me, for my folks were mountain-born. But I've lived mostly in a flat country. When I come here it's like I was coming home. But

I arrange not to come in the season. September's the loveliest month, you can see that."

We did see it. We saw it all through the dew-washed, sun-bright days that followed. Summer with its bluer skies and greater heat was gone; there was a tang, a crispness in the breeze, but all the more delightful for that were our drives and rambles; all the more cheering the fires in the softly lighted rooms at night, all the fresher and more intoxicating the heady air of early morning. We climbed, we rode, we drove, as desire took us, or, when weary, spent long afternoons doing nothing at all.

Ma Smith did not try the ponies, but she could outwalk both of us, and she enjoyed the tally-ho with the eager appreciation of a child. She came with us on our coach trip to Moraine Lake and the Valley-of-the-ten-peaks. She said she liked that drive particularly because it helped to restore her confidence in herself as a member of the human race. Men, she reminded us, who had planned and built the marvellous road could hardly be pygmies after all. Una, sitting beside an English Honourable, hastily agreed, while the two British officers between whom Ma Smith herself was placed looked slightly surprised. The pygmy idea was evidently new to them. My own coach neighbour, a smart looking American widow, gave it as her opinion that the engineers must have been "pretty bright".

The beautiful Bow Valley lay beneath and beyond us, gorgeous under its wealth of colour—colour for which our green-sated eyes were hungry. Every hollow in the circling hills sent to the sun its curling plume of incense. Bowls of blue mist stirred and eddied, spilling their blueness along the mountain side. The river sparkled or gloomed as the sun touched it. The Tower of Babel, strange, fantastic shape, provoked Ma Smith to Biblical references which appeared to greatly interest her military audience. Occasionally we paused, and everyone who had a kodak snapped, and those who

hadn't one thanked God that they were not as other men.

Una mislaid her camera and politely asked the Honourable if she were sitting on it. It was a tactless thing to do. Uno might have remembered the story of the Princess and the Pea. But she didn't.

"Terribly stiff, aren't they?" confided the smart widow.

"Kodaks?" I ventured.

"No—Honourables. One would think they were afraid it would rub off."

"Perhaps it would in time."

"No chance! Say, I like your friend. She's right smart. Too bad she's so hefty. Did she ever try—"

"S-Ssh!" I ventured, and the widow obligingly changed the subject.

"This is a right pretty place, don't you think?" she resumed. "I've been through the mountains on our side, but I like these better. They're more laid out. I've been in Switzerland, too, and, of course, I was crazy about that. But that was different. It's neater over there—sort of trimmed around the edges. But for enjoying scenery I never knew the equal of Mr. Boggs, my late husband. He'd have been tickled to death with this. We always intended taking this trip together. But he could never get away. He couldn't get a man to replace him. In his profession personality counts for so much."

"He was a clergyman?" I suggested sympathetically.

"No, not exactly. Mr. Boggs was a mortician."

"A—?"

"Mortician. You usually say undertaker over here. But mortician is smarter. Mr. Boggs was very progressive. He was one of the brightest men I ever knew."

Such genuine regret gilded the memory of Mr. Boggs that one forbore to smile; and before further confidences were possible our coach drew up with a cheerful rattle of harness on the shore of our valley lake. Una's camera was discovered fitted into the small of the back of the stiffest of the



"With dinner in the middle distance"

British officers, and her stumbling apologies were made more painful by the awful courtesy with which they were received—a courtesy which Una assures me is utterly paralyzing to the repentant mind. "I lived in England for a year and a half," she murmured, "and I never got used to it, never!"

Moraine Lake lies in a valley so high that even now, in September, snow lay almost at the base of its further slope. The shadows of the great peaks keep it there, and its cool breath meets you in the breeze. The rock slips steeply into the water on one side, but along the nearer edge a path runs below a gentler slope. Along this path our party scattered and the horn had been blown many times and the Honourable was looking very bored before it gathered again for the home-ward trip.

"It was a beautiful day," sighed Ma Smith when we met by the fire that night. "I do enjoy talking to foreigners, not that British officers are exactly foreigners. But they're different. You feel that—don't you?"

Una said she did.

"Now, the one on my right, the red-faced one, was Scotch, but land! you'd never dream it. I asked him had he been brought up at home and he said he had. I asked him why he didn't talk Scotch like Harry Lauder, and he said he was afraid Harry might not like it. 'But,' he said, 'though I may talk like the hated Sassenach. I'm awfu', terrible, heilin' Scotch forby.' The other officer was English on both sides. (He was the one who was so

nice about sitting on your camera, my dear.) He didn't talk much. No doubt he has the war very much on his mind. But they were both nice people, very nice. It's too bad you ladies are leaving in the morning. They would be such nice acquaintances for you!"

The day of our departure dawned earlier than other days. Days of departure always do. We were soon astir, eager to see our last sunrise steal upon the glacier, to watch once more the sacrificial incense of the hills "in airy spiral seek the face of God", and to see the morning bring back the blue to the depths of the night-filled lake.

"If it should be cloudy—" fretted Una. But the sun did not disappoint us. He came gloriously.

"As if some giant of the air amid the vapours drew
A sudden elemental sword."

Now here, now there it flashed—lighting up the peaks—lighting up the valleys—lighting up the world!

We thought of all the mornings when this miracle would happen and we not there to see. Delightful melancholy enveloped us, a melancholy in which we seemed remote, strangers to each other and to our kind, tiny, tragic figures in face of a beautiful and un-caring world.

"But we will come again," said Una. "When you have written a best seller and I have inherited a fortune from my lost uncle we will come again—"

And so to breakfast, and the ten-fifteen express!

