

THE ASCENT OF MT. RAINIER

E. M. HACK, D. D. S.

Oh fateful, oh unhappy, tearful Friday!

From Glacier Basin, Rainier National Park, on August second, nineteen hundred twelve, at three o'clock in the afternoon of that most direful of all days in the week, was begun the climb of Mt. Rainier.

Glacier Basin has an elevation of approximately six thousand feet and the climb of thirty-seven hundred to Camp Curtis was made by six o'clock. The wood brigade, preparatory to the big climb we all expected to make, had ascended two days before, consequently a goodly supply of fuel awaited our band of nine and right welcome it proved, for a biting wind swept the camp. As protection in such emergencies small stone pens have been erected. The one which comes distinctly to the writer's memory was intended for two persons. Four slept therein, with the agreement that the first position would likewise be the last, and there was forced home to him who rests upon his back the conviction that a brilliant moon very effectually dispels the sleepy phalanx of darkness.

We arose next morning at half after three, in season to behold a most wonderful sunrise. Far below a thick canopy of clouds shut out the nether world, and in the dim and mystic light of early morning, vast mountain ranges were seen suddenly transformed into wondrous cataracts, whose phantom waters rushed downward to break on airy rocks and be transmuted to lovely fairy forms clothed in the rose and gold of the rising sun.

From Curtis the route lay entirely over snow and ice, somewhat softened by the sun at lower elevations, affording an easy footing, but hard and treacherous on the steep slopes at higher altitudes. Considerable dust was noticed on its surface until a point fifteen hundred feet below the summit was reached, when the snow gradually assumed a dazzling whiteness varying in deep crevasses through shades of green to a deep emerald, according to light absorption. Some very good pictures were

Plate IX.



THE ROUTE TO THE SUMMIT P. M. McGregor
View from Camp Curtis, elevation 9500 feet, showing the route up the White glacier to the saddle between Crater peak and Russell peak, 500 feet below the summit, taken by the Mountaineers, August 3, 1912.

Plate X.



A CREVASSE ON THE WINTHROP GLACIER H. V. Abel
View taken Aug. 1, 1912, on a try-out trip of the Mountaineers through St. Elmo pass and across the Winthrop glacier.

taken during the ascent, but they do scant justice to the wonderful snow and ice formations, dreadful in their fantastic beauty.

The members of our party agreed that each man should in turn break or chop steps as necessary, which plan was adhered to throughout the climb, the present worker falling in at the rear when his "trick" was ended, the second in line succeeding him. No special precautions were taken, each person seeming capable of caring for himself. The mascot of the journey was an emergency bandage, which was not used. One regulation army canteen of oatmeal water supplied two men. This mixture proved much superior to either tea or undiluted water.

Our route to a point within one thousand feet of the crater was identical with that of the scouts who had been sent from the main body two days previously, with the object of ascertaining the most feasible way to conduct a large number to the top. On these dangerous climbs nothing is left to chance. At an elevation of more than thirteen thousand feet they had encountered a seemingly impassable barrier, a deep crevasse. Professor Flett, whose wide experience on the mountain eminently fitted him to be our pilot, now took the lead and nonchalantly "hit" the ugliest looking trail the writer has ever gazed upon.

The little band scattering out at intervals in uncertain and wobbly effort to follow leader, the writer was left alone for a few minutes beneath a peculiarly formed impending mass of snow and ice, which imagination easily likened to the jaws of some vast pre-historic monster suddenly frozen by tremendous climatic changes, even in the act of devouring its prey. Standing there sheltered from the wind, no living being in view, the earth obscured by floating mists, there was gained for the first time an appreciation of that "eternal silence of the hills." In an effort to understand the ambition which drives us into the very jaws of death after such fruitless victories, thought turned upon the glory of man's achievement in the past, the majesty of his probable destiny. For out of that eternal silence has he come, climbing slowly, painfully, through the countless eons which have vanished in a trackless past. Experience born of the bitterness of misfortune and defeat, his only guide, has taught him how to conquer every obstacle which ignorance and superstition have thrown across his path, yes, even Death

itself. So the answer came from that restless spirit of conquest, which urges us ever onward to the accomplishment of our destiny, to the ever narrowing confines of the land of the unknown.

A shout of triumph echoes through the mountain fastness, a passage has been discovered. True the way is dangerous, but it leads to success and what else matters? One portion conformed much too closely in general contour to the inverted letter V and for a while we experienced a most unseemly envy of the fly and his various appliances designed for sticking fast. Moreover, to give additional comfort, nature had flanked us with two beautiful and very commodious crevasses, the whole furnishing a short and slippery path to that country of golden harps and milk and honey; the praises of which are so often sung by those who have never crossed its confines, and into the realms of which we are so eager that the other fellow should enter. A snow bridge crossed, we approached the upper levels of that graceful, dazzling sweep known as the saddle, guarded by Columbia Crest and Russell Peak. Here the slopes were less precipitous and the snow softer, due probably to recent falls. The hour hand (also the inner man) now indicated one o'clock and we began anxiously to peer about for the celebrated steam caves promised us by Professor Flett. I fail to recall the prevailing idea entertained of those apartments, but our doughty leader had hinted of hissing steam and sulphurous gases, so we expected a large and commanding archway bearing the celebrated legend; mayhap a little devil to receive wraps and a hot lunch seasoned à la Mexicano.

Sad disillusionment! We scrambled, or fell, through a jagged opening in the ice crust into a spooky cavern most comfortably warm and so moist with the condensing steam that our clothes were soon bedewed with glistening drops. Sure enough the steam was escaping in jets through various openings among the rocks and we had the unique and most enjoyable experience of scraping the snow with tin cups from the roof of our house, placing in the icy mixture a cube of condensed bouillon, putting the utensil on the floor over a jet of escaping steam, and in five minutes detecting with eager nostril the delicious aroma of boiling beef tea. And this at an elevation of fourteen thousand feet, under the eternal snows of Mt. Rainier. While perched upon a warm rock munching a most



**CROSSING
INTERGLACIER**
E. V. Abel

Showing the Mountaineers returning from Camp Curtis, elevation 10,000 feet, to camp in Glacier basin, July 31, 1912. Inter-glacier is a banging glacier between the Winthrop and the White, but not connected with either, nor with the great ice cap on the summit.

delicious lunch, we idly wondered how long it would take to complete the process of parboiling, should a miniature avalanche suddenly deposit us in some remote corner of the cavern.

The presence of steam caves is easily explained. The snow falling on warm surfaces at higher altitudes is reduced to water, runs through the still hot rocks of the extinct volcano, and escapes as steam at various points below the snow crust, which is melted in the immediate vicinity of the jets, forming a cave.

Luncheon over, we scrambled again to the upper world and continued our arduous journey, soon encountering a wide margin of small loose rocks extending downward from the rim of the crater, possibly two hundred feet, and swept entirely clear of snow. This, as viewed from Camp Curtis, appears a faint, dark band around the summit. The party reached the crater at three-fifteen o'clock and there across the comparatively level area of the smaller crater was our goal, the semi-spherical, snow-clad Columbia Crest. A few minutes and we stood upon the pinnacle of Rainier's icy mantle. A thick haze obscured the horizon. The utmost heights of Hood, St. Helens, and Adams pierced the cloud canopy and appeared as floating islands in a sea mist.

Two important ceremonies were now observed. The leaders were corralled and a wobbly war dance done around them, then we stood, a row of icicles, while the camera fiends accomplished their fell purpose.

It is interesting to note that several had a heart-beat of approximately one hundred per minute, though he who claimed to be the oldest in the party reported one hundred and thirty. He had been quite sick as we approached twelve thousand feet but recovered after the summit was reached. Respiration with most was somewhat labored while exercising.

The descent was commenced at three-fifty o'clock. The rim of the crater again reached, we cached a paper bearing our signatures and sang a song to the good old tune of "Never again." The ground just here was too warm in places to afford a comfortable seat. Possibly old Rainier may some day pay us its respects in the form of a lava flow and evil smelling gases, who knows?

The higher altitudes above us, the descent became quite rapid, Curtis being reached shortly after six. A half-hour rest encouraged three of the party to continue the descent to Glacier

Basin which was entered at eight, and there we found ample toothsome evidence that Carr had been snoopin' 'round. Next morning the complete party joined the main body in their camp at Grand Park.

The writer is not justified in advancing an opinion concerning the relative merits, hardships, or dangers of this climb. However, Professor Flett remarked in his hearing that a party of twenty men would have found it necessary to spend the night in the crater, and when Camp Curtis was reached on the return journey most of the party were exhausted. The trip proved a pleasure none of us would forego, possibly few repeat.

"Among those present" were Messrs. J. B. Flett, J. H. Weir, and Duncan Pearce of Tacoma; F. Q. Gorton, P. M. McGregor, S. V. Bryant, H. V. Abel, C. A. Hultin, and E. M. Hack of Seattle.