

much to anyone who has found that the years suggest no better philosophic guide to mountaineering than the saying of one born in a country that is unrelieved by any hill worthy of the name—

‘Un procédé est stérile, une vision est féconde.’

Fruitful indeed the vision is in spirit and in action, but elusive as a sunbeam when we try to catch it in our little net of words. We set ourselves to tell our experiences, trying to say something of what matters most, and when we read what we have written we can only murmur a last regretful phrase from our philosopher of the plains—

‘Le journal s’interpose sans cesse entre nous et la réalité.’

Even that quotation the Editor will consider might have been more happily chosen, though he knows it means newspaper to everyone but me!

MOUNT ROBSON AND OTHER CLIMBS IN THE CANADIAN ROCKIES.

By C. G. CRAWFORD.

(Read before the Alpine Club, March 3, 1931.)

IT was my fortune in the summer of 1930 to spend some weeks in the mountains of Canada, commencing with a stay at the camp of the Alpine Club of Canada.

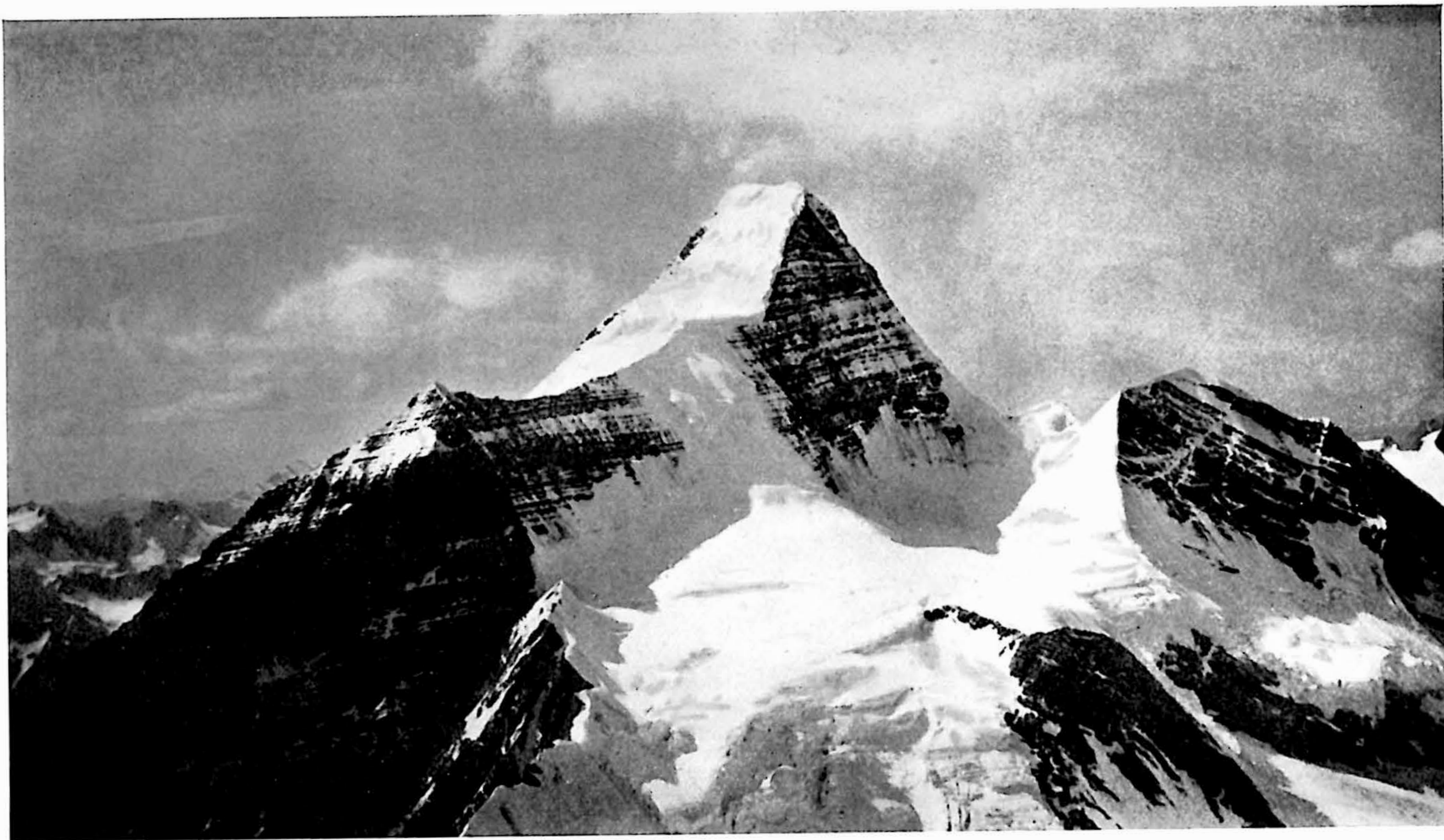
The main disadvantage entailed in a visit to the Rockies is the great distance—more especially the tedious transcontinental train journey. There is a fascination about the lake and forest scenery of Ontario; but once the train enters the prairies one mile is exactly like another until the slopes of the Rockies are reached. The Rockies themselves rise steeply from the western prairies, and the foothills are not extensive.

The transcontinental train reached Jasper about 8.30 A.M. There the Canadian Alpine Club had provided efficient transport; a car takes the traveller 20 miles over a very sketchy road, which must be almost impassable after heavy rain, to the edge of Medicine Lake, where there is a change into motor boats. This lake is about 8 miles long; it is narrow, with a peculiar comb-like range sweeping down to its northern flank. From the end of Medicine Lake a walk of 10 miles along a



Photo, L. S. Amery.]

MT. JULIAN ACROSS THE LAKE.



Photo, C. H. Mitchell.]

MT. ROBSON FROM THE E.

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forest path brings you to Maligne Lake—a magnificent stretch of water 18 miles long, at the head of which the camp was situated. A large motor boat took a varied collection of travellers from here to the camp.

The height of the camp was about 5000 ft. ; it was close to the point where Coronet Creek runs into the lake, and surrounded by peaks from 10,000 to 11,000 ft. high, the most prominent of the lower peaks being the Thumb, encircled by an almost unbroken rampart of cliffs.

The first few days were spent on practice climbs. Llysyfran, a snow summit buttressed by rock ridges, provided an amusing first ascent for a large party, while the view from the summit gave one an insight into the geography of the district. There is no map yet published of any value to the climber.

A second day found a party of seven bound for the N. side of the Thumb, which had not been climbed from this direction. At the foot of the Thumb, we split into two parties, Sibbald, the Club Treasurer, taking one party up the snow slopes of the Thumb, while Lady Rosemary Baring and a young Canadian named Alexander accompanied me to an unclimbed rock peak in the centre of the cirque. We made for a gap in the E. ridge, and experienced little difficulty until within 50 ft. of the arête, where the couloir we had been following came to an end in smooth and friable slabs. From the ridge to the summit there was an exhilarating scramble along a knife-edge. Returning to the gap, I had to redescend the couloir for 600 ft. to retrieve my rucksack which had fallen on the way up ; we then made our way down the further side on to the glacier and into the pine forests growing along the ramparts of the Thumb. In the Rockies, frequently, the most difficult part of a climb is the finding of a way off the lower limestone cliffs ; on this occasion we were lucky enough to hit off the only practicable descent, and so reached camp before nightfall.

The next climb in which I took part was to the N.E. face of Mt. Julian ; Messrs. Moffat, President of the A.C.C., Sharpe and Thompson forming the party. There was some confusion as to whether this peak was Mr. Amery's A1 or A2¹ ; the unclimbed peak being our objective. The route led over a tumbled glacier to the foot of a most unattractive-looking couloir. We hoped that by keeping close under the right wall we should avoid falling stones and ice ; actually during our ascent nothing whatever fell, though the guides who went out to look for us

¹ *A.J.* 42, 46.

on our non-return found the couloir had subsequently been swept by an avalanche.

An hour on steep snow brought the party to a fork in the couloir ; but the rock on this buttress, if it could be called rock, was so inconceivably rotten that we were forced to cut across the face of the couloir on to the N.E. face. Surprisingly easy scrambling brought us up this face and on to the long summit ridge, and we were soon able to see a cairn, proving conclusively that it was Mt. Julian we were on.

The summit was reached at 3.0 p.m. and our intention was to descend the N.W. ridge to a gap which would lead us easily back to camp ; this gap had been reached previously by Hans Führer from below on a reconnaissance. We were, however, soon stopped by a series of overhangs, and turned back to the snow slopes of the S. face.

From the foot we made a way up to the pass between A (since named Mt. Moffat) and Mt. Julian by a series of chimneys, and anticipated an easy walk down the snow to ' Ultramaligne ' Lake, but to our consternation were stopped by a cirque of nearly vertical cliffs 150 ft. high at the lowest point. We were only a stone's throw from the gap to the N.W. ridge which we knew would give us an easy way back to camp, and it was 7.30 p.m. There was nothing for it but to retrace our steps to the pass, and go down the farther side to Maligne Creek Valley, where, at any rate, we should find wood for a fire. We reached the trail at 11.0 p.m., and making a large fire, passed a hungry but not uncomfortable night.

The next morning we started early and by noon had covered the 16 miles to the foot of Maligne Lake, where we were able to get the motor boat back to camp. Unfortunately, a search party had already left before we arrived.

About a week after the main camp was started, flying camps were pitched, one up Coronet Creek and another up Sandpiper Creek. From Coronet camp the unclimbed Coronet Peak was ascended and a new route made up Mt. Mary Vaux. The continuous spell of fine weather had melted the snow on the upper slopes of Mary Vaux, until in places the ice showed through, making a good deal of care necessary in dealing with these slopes ; the rocks were as treacherous as they are throughout the Rockies, and one member of the party received a nasty cut from a falling stone. It is indeed a matter of astonishment to me that no serious accident has, so far as I am aware, occurred in the Rockies owing to falling stones.

From Sandpiper Creek the three Maligne peaks were

traversed, and the first ascent of a formidable looking peak named the Wedge was made. This peak was, however, disappointing, as the southern slopes provided an easy way up to the summit ridge. From the N. this peak looks almost impregnable.

About a week before the camp came to an end Odell arrived, and we arranged to attempt Mt. Robson with a young American friend of his named Moore, so we three left camp together. The camp had been an extremely enjoyable one and was splendidly organized. The main disability, I understand, from which all Canadian Alpine Club camps suffer is a lack of experienced climbers to lead the many enthusiastic novices with which the camps are crowded. The result is that parties tend to be too large, a serious danger when one considers the rottenness of the Canadian rocks.

After a night at Jasper, Odell, Moore and I left for Mt. Robson station. Our intention was to try the unclimbed N.W. ridge of Robson, and also to see if we could find any traces of an American named Waffl, who had disappeared eight days before on Mt. Robson.²

The nomenclature of Robson has often been debated ; but I cannot resist referring once more here to the Indian name Yuh Hai Haskun—'the mountain of the spiral curves'—a splendidly descriptive name, as one realizes as soon as one sees the horizontal shelves running across the limestone cliffs, not unlike a pair of puttees.

We left Mt. Robson station in the morning, travelling for the first few miles by car, and then on horseback to Berg Lake camp, some 16 miles away. On our journey up, we met the two guides Führer who had been sent by the Canadian Alpine Club to search for Waffl. With them were Miss Busk and Dr. Gilmour, members of the American Alpine Club.

Various of Waffl's belongings had been found in a small glacier formed by continuous avalanche falls from above, and the guides seemed to be quite certain that the body was somewhere on the glacier.

It rained all next day—the first rain I had had since reaching Canada—so it was not till August 18 that we left Berg Lake Chalet. We had heavy sacks weighing about 40 lbs. or more apiece, as we could get no packers to carry for us. Rowing across Berg Lake, we started up the N.W. flanks of Robson and by evening reached the camping place 'Moore's Pile,'

² *A.J.* 42, 367.

where Moore had camped on his previous reconnaissance of this side of Robson. We just had time to make a hasty reconnaissance before dark ; this showed us that a large couloir split the W. face in our vicinity, and this we hoped would enable us to reach the upper part of the N.W. ridge.

There has been considerable confusion in the nomenclature of this side of Robson. Attempts have been made on what is known as the 'Wishbone.' Unfortunately there are *two* 'wishbones,' two ridges running to a point high up on the mountain in each case ; these two 'wishbones' are divided by the small avalanche-fed glacier referred to above.

At 5.30 A.M. we attacked the face of the most northerly 'wishbone,' ascending by the left wall of the central couloir. It was very cold and there was much ice and snow on the rocks. Although there was no place which could be called very difficult, the climbing throughout needed the greatest care. Some 500 ft. up the couloir we were forced out on to the face, which appeared better ; but looks were deceptive and we soon found ourselves engaged on a long exposed traverse with very few ledges. Odell worked his way out on to the S.W. ridge of the 'little' wishbone at 12.30, and for the first time we were able to halt for food. The height was about 10,800 ft. ; after the first thirty minutes, we had not been able to do more than 150 or 200 ft. per hour.

We reluctantly agreed that there was no chance of reaching the summit and getting back to our bivouac that day ; so we turned back down the S. ridge of the wishbone and examined the face with glasses for traces of the missing Waffl. We could see nothing. Lower down the ridge steepened and eventually we had to rope down the last 40 ft.

We reached our bivouac, speeded on our way by a thunderstorm, at 5.45 P.M. and hurried down with our sleeping-bags towards Berg Lake camp. We were overtaken by darkness before we could get down the lowest cliff, and spent a damp night under the shelter of an overhanging rock.

The next morning we got back to Berg Lake camp, and arranged to make another attempt up the S. face. This face had been climbed in 1924 by parties from the A.C.C. camp at Berg Lake and again by an 'Appalachian' club party in 1928, on each occasion with guides. Starting early, carrying packs of some 40 or 50 lbs., we took our previous route to 'Moore's Pile' and from there went down to the glacier where some of Waffl's effects had been found. We searched for five hours without effect, though we found a dog that had been left by



Photo, N. E. Odell.]

LOOKING TOWARDS BERG LAKE FROM THE W. SLOPES OF MT. ROBSON.



Photo, C. G. Crawford.]

THE SOUTHERLY RIDGE OF ROBSON.

[To face p. 262.]



Photo, N. E. Odell.]

ON N.W. RIDGE OF ROBSON AT TRAVERSING POINT.



Photo, N. E. Odell.]

WESTERN FACE OF ROBSON FROM BIVOUAC PLACE ON S. ROUTE, SHOWING SHELVES ALONG WHICH TRAVERSE FROM BERG LAKE IS MADE.

one of the previous search parties. This dog was taken back to Berg Lake camp by Miss Busk and Dr. Gilmour who had accompanied us on this occasion. Just before leaving the spot we found, low down, a wooden piton, one of two of which the missing man was in the habit of carrying.

From here we contoured round the W. face of Robson on shelves covered with detritus. The cliffs of this portion of the mountain have a peculiar wild grandeur of their own, the horizontal shelves sloping down into vertical cut-offs, frequently 500 ft. or more in height.

By 7.30 we had worked round below 'Little' Robson, and found ourselves on a wide mossy plateau which offered a good bivouac place for the night. Before getting into our sleeping-bags, Odell reconnoitred a downward route to Kinney Lake for our next day's descent (the way through the cliffs is anything but easy to find), while I investigated the lowest part of the climb upward. Moore, in accordance with his usual unselfish habit, monopolised the duties of cook.

We left at 5.15 on the morning of August 22, and found the way easy up to the lower icefall, where we had to pass below a row of bulging séracs. Above them the glacier is uncrevassed; it drains the whole of the S. face of Robson, but is, as far as I know, unnamed. The route lies rather on the W. bank of the glacier, and there is always a chance of an exceptionally big fall from the hanging glacier on the S. face of the mountain sweeping down the whole length of the ice. Indeed, on our return we found our tracks of the morning had been covered for a considerable distance with avalanche débris, though this portion of the ascent is not usually considered to present any particular danger.

Our route from near the head of this glacier lay up snow slopes to the neck between 'Little' Robson and the upper fall. The couloir below the fall was soon crossed, and by 10.0 A.M. we found ourselves well above the upper fall and about to traverse across the S. face.

We put on crampons here and, working across the face, Odell led over the bergschrund and up a steep little ice-slope to the summit ridge. Here we hoped to find good snow lying at a comparatively easy angle, but we soon found that the Führers were right as to the best season for Robson. This is said to be the latter half of July, when good snow may be expected. Our chief difficulty was the enormous amount of step-cutting we had to do owing to the fact that just enough rotten snow lay on the ice to make our crampons of little value,

and it was not till nearly 1.30 p.m. that we reached the rocks some 250 ft. below the summit. After a hurried meal we went on over steep ice pinnacles and slopes to the double cornice which Kain says³ forms the summit. The last 250 ft. had taken us over an hour, and the work resembled that in a difficult icefall rather than that on an ordinary summit ice ridge.

At 3.0 p.m. we turned down, only to find to our disgust that nearly all the steps had to be recut. It was not until 8.0 that we stopped for a few minutes below the upper fall; but we were already beaten in the race against the gathering darkness. We got down the lower glacier, but could not for a long time find the way off on to the rocks. After an interminable attempt to descend these rocks, sometimes carrying the lantern in our teeth, sometimes in pitch darkness, we gave up the attempt when level with the lower fall and resigned ourselves to a ledge for a few hours. It was then midnight, and at first we tried to sleep in a shivering chorus. We found singing the best way to keep warm, and I listened in admiration to Odell's and Moore's repertoire of hymns.

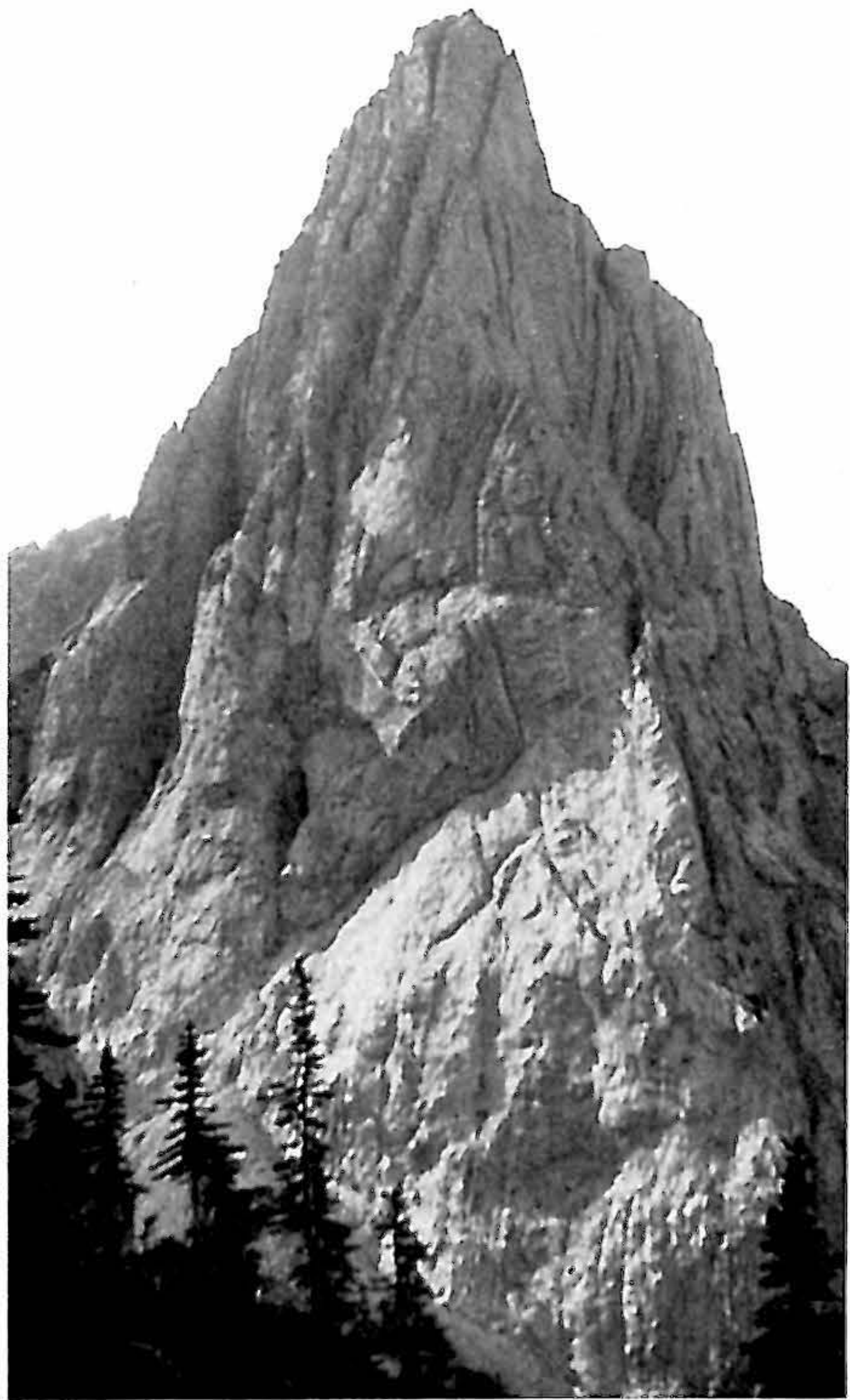
During the night there were several tremendous falls of ice from the lower séracs, shaking the rock on which we sat, so it is clear that even in the small hours this portion of the climb is not safe. As soon as it grew light enough we started down and got back to our bivouac; after some food and a short sleep, we made our way down to Kinney Lake, where we were met by Miss Busk and Dr. Gilmour with ponies.

After parting from Moore at Mt. Robson station, Odell and I made our way round to Glacier on the C.P.R., where we joined the Harvard Mountaineering Club camp. After a pleasant walk across the Illecillewaet névé, the hut at Glacier Circle was reached. It is most charmingly situated among firs which, however, make it very difficult to find.

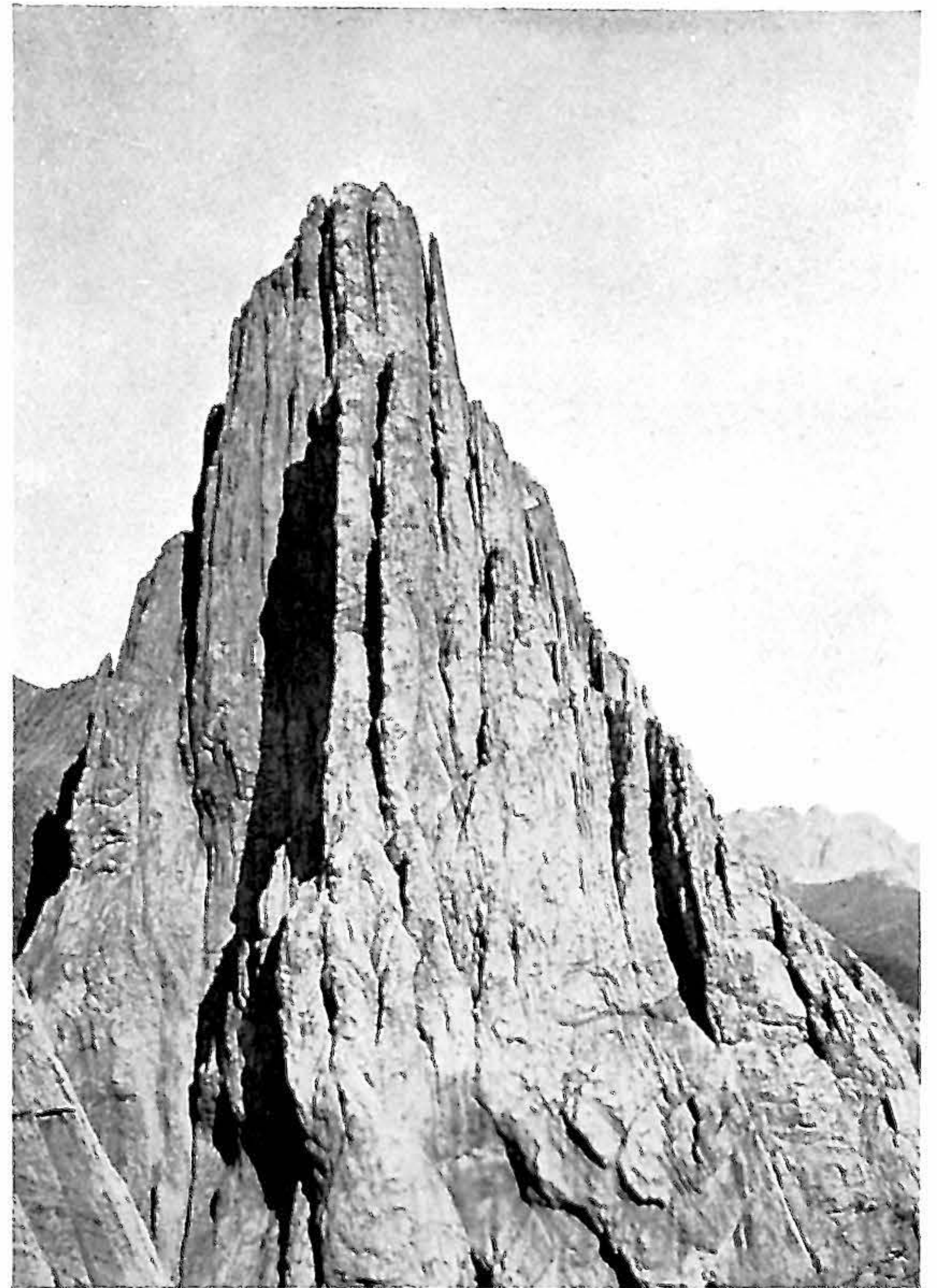
From here we climbed the E. ridge of Mt. Fox—the first ascent of this ridge had been made a few days previously by other members of the Harvard Mountaineering Club—and then returned to the main camp at Glacier with the intention of climbing the N.W. ridge of Sir Donald. This we did on a very cold day. It is a pleasant rock climb on good firm rock. The descent by the S.W. face is easy, but the route a little complicated.

After the break up of the Harvard Mountaineering camp, Odell and I were joined by Lady Rosemary Baring and we set

³ *A.J.* 28, 36.



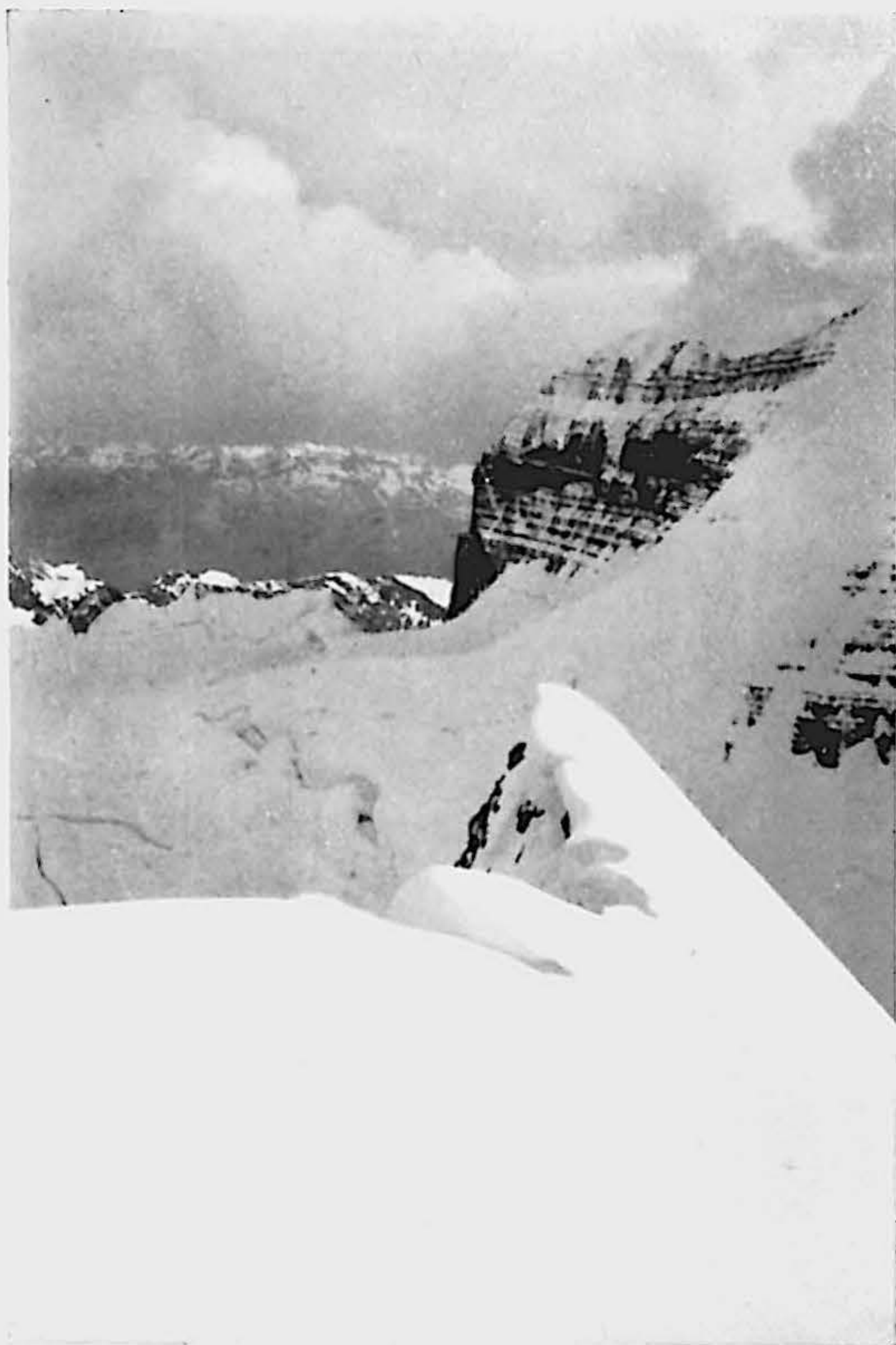
MT. LOUIS FROM THE TRAIL BELOW EDITH.



Photo, C. G. Crawford.]

MT. LOUIS—SIDE OF ASCENT.

[To face p. 264.]



Photo, C. G. Crawford.]

ON THE SUMMIT RIDGE OF ROBSON.



Photo, N. E. Odell.]

MT. TUPPER AND CAMEL GAP.

out, well-loaded, for Rogers Pass and the Hermit Hut. We wished to find a new route up Tupper, another of the Selkirks composed of comparatively solid rock. We started up the usual W. ridge, traversed by ledges across the S. face to the gap between Tupper and the Camels, and climbed the E. ridge, a pleasant climb somewhat similar to Sir Donald by the N.W., but shorter. The traverse was completed by descending the W. ridge.

On September 5 we left soon after 2.0 A.M. for the Donald-Uto Pass, hoping to explore the untouched E. face of Sir Donald.

After descending the Uto Glacier to a point about 7000 ft. in altitude, the retaining rock wall was climbed with some difficulty owing to the rottenness of the rock, and a way was then made for some hours up the E. face. This part of the climb was very uninteresting; the face is set back at an easy angle, and it is possible to vary the route almost indefinitely. It took, however, some considerable time, and the E.S.E. ridge leading to the summit was not reached till 2.0 P.M. This ridge gave us some entertaining gendarmes (which, however, could probably be circumvented) and so we did not reach the top till 5.0 P.M. It was then too late to descend the N.W. ridge, so we made our way quickly down the ordinary route, but were surprised to find that the glacier at the foot of the rocks had altered considerably within a week. The bridge over the bergschrund had collapsed, and we had to rope down from a snow pinnacle. The snow had also melted off the lower part of the glacier, and quite a considerable amount of step-cutting in the dark was necessary before we got on to the moraine. Glacier was reached at 11.30 P.M.

After a day's rest, we left for Banff, with the intention of climbing Louis,⁴ by repute one of the most difficult rock peaks in Canada. We were hospitably entertained by Mrs. Lyell and Messrs. Wheeler and Mitchell at the Club House, and left the next morning early by car for Edith Pass. For the last two hours a good footpath is followed, but nearing the top of the pass we found ourselves in dense cloud. It seemed to me likely that the clouds would lift as soon as the sun got strong, and I wished to sit down and wait. Odell however pressed on, and though we were apparently walking in a circle (our map was primitive, so we scarcely used a compass), when the clouds finally did lift we found ourselves almost at the foot of Louis.

⁴ *A.J.* 32, 68-73.

I have not the faintest notion how Odell arrived at this result ; I could only admire respectfully.

The foot of the rocks of the S.E. face were not reached till 10 A.M., and we began the climb too far round to the S. The result was that we got involved with difficult rocks low down, where the ascent should have been easy. We struck the usual route at the point on the shoulder where there is a descent and a traverse on to the E. face, but soon left it for a fine buttress which is the lower prolongation of the wall of the final chimney. The climbing here on firm exposed rock was very pleasant and brought us on to the platform below the final chimney, 250 to 300 ft. high, which has been somewhat grandiloquently named the 'Crack of Doom.' Here we were once more on the usual route. This chimney really offers little difficulty, the main trouble being that it is almost impossible for the leading climbers to avoid stoning the last man, since the chimney is full of loose rock. It was 5 P.M. before we reached the summit ; we did not stay long, but lost time again in a futile endeavour to hit off the usual line of descent from the foot of the final chimney. Consequently by 9.0 P.M. we had only just reached the E. face, and found ourselves obliged to face another night out. This time our choral efforts were still more prolonged than on Robson. To while away the time we had in addition the spectacle of a magnificent display of Northern Lights. At 6.0 A.M. we moved stiffly off, reached our sacks at the foot of the cliff at 8.30, and walked quickly down the path from Edith Pass. On our way we met a gentleman on horseback with a lasso. It appeared that he was the advance guard of a rescue party, but we were able to allay anxiety by our arrival in Banff soon after noon.

We decided to make a last climb from Lake Louise, and left Banff the next day by train, reaching the chalet at the plain of the Six Glaciers by the evening. The weather was very threatening, and it was becoming late for tourists ; consequently we were regarded with suspicion by the young daughters of Edouard Feuz the guide, who were alone in the chalet. However we succeeded in getting accommodation, and left the next morning in dense cloud for Abbots Pass.

The 'Death Trap,' where the valley narrows between Mts. Victoria and Lefroy and avalanches are liable to come down on either side from these mountains, proved to be quite innocuous that day, and we reached the hut on Abbots Pass at 9.0 in the teeth of a biting wind. After a halt for breakfast we made our way up easy rocks on to the summit ridge of

Victoria, which was swathed in cloud. This ridge offers no difficulties and we were on the summit by 12.30, having met Edouard Feuz and Miss Bausch on the way.

Before we left the weather had begun to clear, giving magnificent views of Hungabee and Lefroy and of the ridge across to the W. Peak of Victoria. On the way down we had a good view of the very unprepossessing W. face of Lefroy, which however appeared to offer attractions to some members of the party. Lefroy from here is, I think, the nearest approach to a positively ugly mountain I have seen, though from Lake Louise it is most impressive.

We turned down to the chain of tarns and streams leading to Lake O'Hara, one of the most beautiful lakes it is possible to imagine, its colour being the most intense of blues.

The C.P.R. has a most attractive log hotel here—'camp' it is termed. After a comfortable night we were up at 5.0 A.M., cooking our own breakfast in the kitchen, as is the custom in those parts with early risers.

To the great fury of my companions I accidentally knocked the coffee-pot into the fire, the resulting brawl waking the hotel manageress who slept above the kitchen. We were soon silenced by thumps on the ceiling, and hastened out over the Opabin Passes to Moraine Lake and the Valley of the Ten Peaks. A car drive took us back to Lake Louise, where my climbing in Canada came to an end.

List of new ascents made by Messrs. N. E. Odell and C. G. Crawford in Canada, 1930.

Maligne Lake Group.

LLYSYFRAN.—First ascent and traverse. July 31, Miss Rita Rushworth, Messrs. C. G. Crawford, I. Vanderburg, E. M. Gillespie, J. Macauley and Dr. Percy.

MT. JULIAN. First ascent by N.E. face. August 4. Messrs. Moffat, Thomson, Sharpe and Crawford.

UNNAMED PEAK (rock) on ridge between Mt. Florence and The Thumb, *ca.* 9000 ft. August 1, Lady Rosemary Baring, Messrs. Alexander and Crawford.

MT. MARY VAUX. First ascent from the S. August 7, Lady Rosemary Baring, the Misses Prescott, Messrs. Hendriks, Gardiner, Maclaren and Crawford.

WEDGE PEAK.—First ascent. August 12, Miss Maclaren, Messrs. Hendriks and Crawford.

UNNAMED PEAK N.E. of Mt. Julian. August 14, Miss Gardiner, Messrs. Odell and Crawford.

Selkirks.

MT. TUPPER.—First traverse by S.S.E. ridge and down by the W. ridge. September 3, Lady Rosemary Baring, Messrs. Odell and Crawford.

MT. SIR DONALD.—First ascent from the E. September 5, same party.

THE LOFOTEN ISLANDS, 1930.

BY G. F. ABERCROMBIE.

(Read before the Alpine Club, March 31, 1931.)

IT is on record that just a hundred years ago an enterprising German naturalist climbed one of the mountains in Lofoten. He is pictured as having 'bravely ascended, in spite of pouring rain and the derisive remarks of the natives.' The late Professor J. D. Forbes seems to have been the next to look upon the Lofoten Islands with the eye of a mountaineer, and he thus describes the impression made upon him in 1851, as he approached them across the Vestfjord.

'In but a few instances have I been so struck with any prospect. From the place I describe, more than one-third of the entire horizon was occupied by the sharply defined jagged summits of this wonderful range of island mountains. The actual extent on the map, from Rost, the outmost of them, to the Sound or channel which separates Hindö from the mainland, is no less than 130 English miles; and the whole of this extent is one mass of peaks, which at a distance appear inaccessible.'

The next visitor who concerns us is the late Sir Edmund Gosse, and he concerns us very closely, for he tells us that 'it was an object with me to fix on the true appellations of these magnificent mountains; and I was in many cases enabled, through the courtesy of the people and through patient collation of reports, to increase the amount of information in this respect.' The whole of his essay is of great interest, and his vigorous description of Norse cod-fishers makes good reading. 'Men, women, and children cluster on the shore, busily engaged in their filthy work, and steeped to the eyes in blood and scales