

THE CONQUEST OF MOUNT COOK



The Long White Cloud

Ao-Tea-Roa

By THE HON. WILLIAM PEMBER REEVES

Director of the London School of Economics

Revised Edition. Demy 8vo.

7s. 6d. net.

Whirlpool Heights

The Dream-House on the Niagara River

By JULIA CRUIKSHANK

4s. 6d. net.

Not a book with a purpose, not a book with a moral, and not even a story, but a record, kept in journal fashion, of summer days spent in the open air, always with books and sometimes with friends, at the top of the beautiful wooded cliff from which one looks down upon the seething whirlpool, far below, of the Niagara River.

Winter Sports in Switzerland

By E. F. BENSON

With 12 Colour Plates by C. FLEMING WILLIAMS, and 47

Illustrations in half-tone from photographs by

Mrs. AUBREY LE BLOND

Crown 4to. Cloth.

15s. net.

"Mr. Benson's name, coupled with that of Mrs. Le Blond, upon the title-page is sufficient to recommend the volume to all who are familiar with the Alps. Indeed, the book—a large and handsome volume—is admirable."—*Times*.

LONDON: GEORGE ALLEN & UNWIN LTD.

THE CONQUEST OF
MOUNT COOK
AND OTHER CLIMBS

An Account of Four Seasons' Mountaineering
on the Southern Alps of New Zealand

BY FREDA DU FAUR

LONDON: GEORGE ALLEN & UNWIN LTD.
RUSKIN HOUSE, 40 MUSEUM STREET, W.C.

First Published in 1915

Alpenvereinsbücherei	
D.A.V.,	München

56 401

43 108

[All rights reserved]

TO
MY FRIEND
MURIEL CADOGAN
WHOSE LOVE AND SYMPATHY HAVE NEVER FAILED ME
I DEDICATE
THIS BOOK

PREFACE

SOME of the material contained in this volume has appeared in *The Otago Witness*, *The Christchurch Press*, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, *The Dupain Quarterly*, and *The Lone Hand Magazine*. My thanks are due to the editors of these periodicals for their permission to reprint my articles in their present form.

I am also greatly indebted to Dr. Teichelmann of Hokitika for the generous manner in which he has allowed me to reproduce specimens of West Coast scenery from his fine collection of photographs, and to Mr. Severn Storr for a picture of the Hermitage after the flood.

I have attempted in my first chapter to give a slight summary of the climbing accomplished between 1862 and 1909. This record is necessarily incomplete, dealing as it does with only the main district surrounding Mount Cook. If by any chance I have overlooked any important incidents of the period I have chosen, I can only crave indulgence for my unintentional omissions on the ground of want of data. The history of New Zealand mountaineering is at present so slight and scattered that it is difficult to obtain reliable details.

In compiling my résumé I have made use of the following authorities : (1) "High Alps of New Zealand," by W. S. Green ; (2) "With Ice-Axe and Rope in the New Zealand

Alps," by G. Mannering; (3) "Climbs in the New Zealand Alps," by Edward A. Fitzgerald; (4) "Pioneer Work on the Alps of New Zealand," by Arthur P. Harper; (5) *The New Zealand Alpine Journal*, and (6) "The New Zealand Government Reports." The record kept in the last-mentioned volume is very slight, and when driven to use it I have frequently only been able to discover the names of the mountains ascended, and by whom they were climbed, with no details as to dates, routes, etc.

Slight as is my summary, I hope that it may be of some use as a record of New Zealand mountaineering. Perhaps it may induce some New Zealander with more material at his command than I have been able to obtain to go into the matter thoroughly, and to write a complete and comprehensive summary of New Zealand mountaineering before all the present records are obliterated and forgotten.

FREDA DU FAUR.

LONDON, *December*, 1914.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
CHAPTER I	
A RÉSUMÉ OF MOUNTAINEERING IN THE MOUNT COOK DISTRICT BETWEEN 1862 AND 1909	17
CHAPTER II	
REASONS FOR TAKING UP MOUNTAINEERING	25
CHAPTER III	
THE HERMITAGE AGAIN	31
The journey to the Hermitage—Inconvenience of being a woman pioneer	
CHAPTER IV	
MOUNT SEALY AND THE NUN'S VEIL	38
CHAPTER V	
MOUNT MALTE BRUN AND THE MINARETS	47
CHAPTER VI	
MOUNT COOK	63
Plans for the Ascent of Mount Cook—The Attempt and Failure	
CHAPTER VII	
WESTLAND	73
The Copland Pass—Waiho Gorge, and the Franz Josef Glacier	

CONTENTS

	PAGE
CHAPTER VIII	
GETTING INTO TRAINING	87
Mount Annette—The Ball Pass—A Virgin Peak—Harpies' Saddle —Mount Wakefield	
CHAPTER IX	
THE ASCENT OF MOUNT COOK	99
CHAPTER X	
THE ASCENT OF MOUNT DE LA BÉCHE	112
CHAPTER XI	
A GREAT ICE PEAK	121
The Ascent of the Silberhorn, and Defeat on Mount Tasman	
CHAPTER XII	
THREE ASCENTS	133
An Attempt to cross Graham's Saddle—The Ascents of Mount Green, Mount Walter, and Mount Chudleigh	
CHAPTER XIII	
TWO VIRGIN PEAKS	148
Return to the Hermitage, 1912—Ascent of a Virgin Peak north of the Footstool—Defeat on a Virgin Peak immediately south of Mount Cook	
CHAPTER XIV	
A DIFFICULT CLIMB	158
A Virgin Peak north of the Copland Pass—The First Ascent of Sebastopol by the Eastern face	
CHAPTER XV	
THE ASCENT OF MOUNT TASMAN	168
CHAPTER XVI	
MOUNT DAMPIER AND MOUNT LENDENFELD	176

CONTENTS xi

CHAPTER XVII		PAGE
ON THE MOUNT COOK RANGE		191
The Ascent of the Virgin Peak south of Nazomi		
CHAPTER XVIII		
THE FIRST COMPLETE TRAVERSE OF MOUNT COOK		196
CHAPTER XIX		
THE HERMITAGE FLOOD		209
CHAPTER XX		
A TRIAL CLIMB		216
Mount Sefton from Tuckett's Col—Over the Copland Pass to Welcome Flats		
CHAPTER XXI		
THE FIRST TRAVERSE OF MOUNT SEFTON		224
CHAPTER XXII		
GOOD-BYE TO NEW ZEALAND		238
The Ascents of Mount Cadogan and Aiguille Rouge—Defeat on Mount Elie de Beaumont—A Second Flood		
INDEX		247

ILLUSTRATIONS

MOUNT COOK FROM THE SILBERHORN	<i>Frontispiece</i>
	FACING PAGE
PANORAMA OF THE HERMITAGE VALLEY	34
THE RED LAKE, MOUNT SEBASTOPOL	34
THE HOOKER VALLEY AND MOUNT COOK	42
MOUNT MALTE BRUN AND AIGUILLE ROUGE	50
THE TASMAN GLACIER AND MOUNT DE LA BÉCHE	56
MOUNT COOK FROM THE RED LAKE ON MOUNT SEBASTOPOL	60
THE HOOKER RIVER AND MOUNT COOK	64
THE MOUNT COOK BIVOUAC ON THE HOOKER SIDE	68
MOUNT COPLAND	74
MAHINAPUA CREEK, WESTLAND	78
Photograph by Dr. Teichelmann	
MOUNT HERCULES ROAD, SOUTH WESTLAND	82
Photograph by Dr. Teichelmann	
THE MULLER GLACIER AND MOUNT SEALY	90
MOUNT TASMAN FROM THE SUMMIT OF MOUNT COOK. WESTLAND IN THE CLOUDS	104
THE TASMAN GLACIER AND THE MALTE BRUN RANGE FROM THE SUMMIT OF MOUNT COOK	110
MOUNT COOK FROM THE TASMAN RIVER	110
THE HEAD OF THE TASMAN GLACIER	114

	FACING PAGE
MOUNT DE LA BÊCHE AND THE TASMAN GLACIER	114
THE HAAST BIVOUCAC, MOUNT DE LA BÊCHE, THE TASMAN GLACIER	122
MOUNT TASMAN ARÊTE	128
PANORAMA FROM THE SUMMIT OF MOUNT GREEN	138
THE TASMAN GLACIER FROM THE MALTE BRUN HUT	148
THE BLUE LAKE STREAM	148
THE ROCKS OF MOUNT NAZOMI	156
MOUNT COOK AND MOUNT NAZOMI	164
THE SOUTH-WEST FACE OF MOUNT RUAREKA	166
THE NORTH-EAST FACE OF MOUNT TASMAN, SHOWING LAST PART OF THE ASCENT	172
LOOKING DOWN LA PEROUSE GLACIER <i>Photograph by Dr. Tschelmann</i>	180
NORTH-WEST ROCKS OF MOUNT COOK FROM MOUNT DAMPIER	182
MOUNT SEFTON	192
THE WESTERN FACE OF MOUNT COOK	198
THE HIGHEST PEAK OF MOUNT COOK FROM THE MIDDLE PEAK	202
THE MIDDLE AND THIRD PEAKS OF MOUNT COOK FROM THE HIGHEST SUMMIT	202
THE NORTH-EAST FACE OF MOUNT COOK	204
MOUNT COOK AND THE HOCHSTETTER ICEFALL	206
MOUNT CADOGAN AND MOUNT DU FAUR FROM THE HOOKER RIVER	212
THE FOOTSTOOL AND THE COPLAND VALLEY	220
A BUSH ROAD IN SOUTH WESTLAND <i>Photograph by Dr. Tschelmann</i>	222
THE EAST FACE OF MOUNT SEFTON, SHOWING LINE OF ASCENT ON THE FIRST TRAVERSE	224
PANORAMA OF THE SOUTHERN ALPS FROM MOUNT KINSEY	228

ILLUSTRATIONS

XV

	FACING PAGE
MOUNT COOK FROM MOUNT SEPTON	228
THE HOOKER RIVER AND MOUNT SEPTON	230
THE SECOND SUMMIT OF MOUNT SEPTON	230
NORTH-WEST RIDGE OF MOUNT SEPTON	236
THE FOOTSTOOL FROM THE HOOKER RIVER	240
MOUNT DU FAUR AND MOUNT CADOGAN	240
AIGUILLE ROUGE	242
ICE CLIFFS AND THE HOOKER RIVER	244
THE HERMITAGE AFTER THE FLOOD	244

CHAPTER I

A RÉSUMÉ OF MOUNTAINEERING IN THE MOUNT COOK DISTRICT, BETWEEN 1862 AND 1909

A handful of workers seeking the star of a strong intent,
A handful of heroes scattered to conquer a continent.

On! tho' we grope and blunder, the trend of our aim is true!
On! there is death in dalliance whilst yet there is work to do,
Till the land that lies like a giant asleep may wake to the victory won,
And the eyes of the Master Worker may see that the work is done.

ESSEX EVANS.

I CAN find no record of interest being taken in the Southern Alps of New Zealand before 1862. In that year Dr. Julius von Haast, an enthusiastic scientist and botanist, first penetrated to the Tasman Glacier, which he ascended to the Hochstetter Icefall at the eastern base of Mount Cook. After spending a few days there, he transferred his camp to the Hooker Valley, on the western side of Mount Cook, and devoted some time to exploring the Hooker and Muller Glaciers, and in investigating the geology and botany of the locality. His companion, Mr. Dobson, succeeded meanwhile in making a sketch and topographical survey of the district. The published results of Dr. von Haast's expedition created considerable interest both in New Zealand and abroad. So much so that in 1873 the Governor of New Zealand, Sir G. F. Bowen, offered official aid to any member of the English Alpine Club who would undertake the ascent of Mount Cook.

18 THE CONQUEST OF MOUNT COOK

For some years the offer was not accepted, but in 1882 the Rev. Spotswood Green, of Dublin, an English A.C., had his attention drawn to the Southern Alps, and came out to New Zealand accompanied by two Swiss guides, to lay siege to Mount Cook. As the pioneer of mountaineering in the Southern Alps he faced many dangers and difficulties. An interesting record of these may be found in his book, "The High Alps of New Zealand." After two unsuccessful attempts he succeeded on the third in reaching a point he considered within 50 feet of the summit. Here the party were overtaken by bad weather; they had only an hour before the fall of darkness, so considered it would be foolhardy to attempt to finish the ascent. They beat a hasty retreat and reached the last rocks just as darkness closed down upon them. Here they were forced to spend the night balanced upon a three-foot ledge, shivering, wet, and foodless. They survived the night and succeeded next morning in safely descending to their bivouac. The expedition occupied sixty-two hours and was a fine piece of work. Readers of Mr. Green's book will always regret that so fine a performance was not crowned with the complete success it deserved. He was under the impression when he retreated that he was within a few feet of the summit. Careful consideration of his records and the knowledge of Mount Cook gained in later years have led authorities on the subject to believe he was only within about 200 feet of the summit.

In 1883 Dr. von Lindenberg surveyed the Tasman Glacier and made the first ascent of the Hochstetter Dome, a fine snow mountain of 9,258 feet at its head.

During the years 1886 to 1890 Messrs. G. E. Mannerling and M. Dixon made four attempts to climb Mount Cook by the Rev. Green's route, and on the fourth attempt succeeded in reaching a point within 140 feet of the summit. Want of time and bad weather forced them,

A RÉSUMÉ OF MOUNTAINEERING 19

as it had forced their predecessors, to descend without ever standing upon the highest point. During these four expeditions they also made an attempt on Mount De la Beche, and a successful ascent of the Hochstetter Dome. When leaving the Tasman Glacier they crossed over the Mount Cook range by a saddle at an altitude of 7,426 feet on the main south arête leading to Mount Cook. This saddle they named the Ball Pass, and from it descended into the Hooker Valley; from whence a seven-mile tramp landed them at the Hermitage, a hotel in the Hooker Valley which had been opened since Mr. Green's time. Great credit is due to Mr. Mannering for his enthusiastic work in the Mount Cook district. He and his friend laboured under the disadvantage of not being trained mountaineers. For two novices to attempt to climb Mount Cook, and gain their mountaineering knowledge in the painful school of experience without the assistance of trained guides, argues a very real love of the mountains, and the possession of a fine courage and self-reliance.

In 1891 a few enthusiasts formed the Alpine Club of New Zealand, with a view to preserving the records of the pioneers, to encourage New Zealand men to take an interest in mountaineering, and to assist in opening up the mountains to the general public.

During the five years of its existence the club did good work, but in 1896 it lapsed from various reasons. Though there is still cash in hand, and the beginnings of a fine library, no one of the younger generation of mountaineers seems to have sufficient enterprise and energy to set the club on its feet again. Considering the ever-growing interest in the New Zealand mountains, and the rapidly increasing number of English and other climbers, it seems a thousand pities that no one can be found to set the club in working order.

In 1893 T. C. Fyfe and Malcolm Ross made the first ascent of the Minarets.

20 THE CONQUEST OF MOUNT COOK

In 1894 several important ascents were made from the Tasman Glacier, the chief of these being Mr. T. C. Fyfe's ascent of Mount Malte Brun (10,421 feet). Mr. Green had remarked on this fine rock peak, comparing it to the "Matterhorn minus its highest tower." It is undoubtedly the finest rock climb in the Mount Cook district.

In the same year Dr. Franz Kronecker, with T. C. Fyfe and Jack Clark, made the first ascent of Mount Darwin (9,715 feet), and later T. C. Fyfe and G. Graham climbed the Footstool, a fine peak next to Mount Sefton and within easy access of the Hermitage.

The years 1894 and 1895 proved record ones in the Mount Cook district. In December of the former, T. C. Fyfe, George Graham, and Jack Clark, fired by the news that Mr. Edward Fitzgerald and his Swiss guide, M. Zurbriggen, were on their way out to climb Mount Cook, decided if possible to forestall them. After attacking the mountain on its east or Tasman side, as all their predecessors had done, they made the final attempt from the west or Hooker side. Fyfe and Graham first tried climbing to the saddle between the lowest and middle peak, and from there reached the summit of the latter. Finding the distance between it and the highest peak much greater than they had expected, and the ridge between the peaks badly corniced, they decided to descend and make a direct attack on the highest peak, from a bivouac near the head of the Hooker Glacier. In this expedition they were joined by Jack Clark, and on Christmas Day, 1894, they succeeded in making the first complete ascent of the highest peak. The performance was a fine one, and great was the joy of the New Zealanders at their success; for they had no desire to surrender the first ascent of their highest mountain to an Englishman, even though he was better equipped and trained than the colonials had a chance of being.

Disappointed in being second in the field, Mr. Fitzgerald made no attempt to climb Mount Cook. Zurbriggen,

A RÉSUMÉ OF MOUNTAINEERING 21

however, made the second ascent of the highest peak by a new route from the Tasman Glacier.

Mr. Fitzgerald and Zurbriggen devoted most of their time to conquering Mount Sefton. After several attempts they succeeded in making the ascent by the eastern face. Mr. Fitzgerald had a narrow escape of losing his life during the climb, and left Mount Sefton with the reputation of being the most difficult and dangerous mountain in the Southern Alps.

They also made the first ascents of the Silberhorn and Mount Tasman. The latter is the greatest snow climb in the Southern Alps, as well as being the second highest peak (11,475 feet). They made first ascents of Mount Hardinger (10,107 feet), a fine square-topped peak to the north of Mount Tasman, and of Mount Sealy (8,631 feet). They also discovered an easy pass to the west coast.

Between 1895 and 1903 little or no climbing seems to have been accomplished; by the latter year the Government had taken over the Hermitage and installed a competent manager. Tracks were made and two huts erected—the Ball hut on the scene of Mr. Green's fourth camp, and the Malte Brun hut twelve miles farther up the Tasman Glacier. They also secured Jack Clark, one of the three New Zealanders who first climbed Mount Cook, as guide, with one or two porters to assist him. A coach service ran from Fairlie to the Hermitage, a distance of 96 miles, three times a week. With these improvements to encourage them, tourists and climbers from all over the world began to discover the charm of the Mount Cook district.

During 1903 and 1904 the only climbs recorded in the Government reports were two unsuccessful attempts to climb Mount Cook by Mr. Claud McDonald of New South Wales, and the ascents of Mount Darwin, Mount Sealy, and Rotten Tommy by Messrs. Tennant and Bambridge.

In 1905 Dr. Teichelmann, the Rev. Newton, both of the West Coast, and Mr. Lowe of Scotland, with guides

22 THE CONQUEST OF MOUNT COOK

Jack Clark and Peter Graham, made the ascent of Mount Cook, by Zurbriggen's route.

In 1906 Mr. Sillem, an Alpinist of European note, made the first ascent of the third or lowest peak of Mount Cook, accompanied by Clark and Graham. A few days later they ascended the highest peak. Mr. Sillem also conquered Mount Elie de Beaumont (10,200 feet), a fine snow peak at the head of the Tasman Glacier, Mount Malte Brun, and Mount Sealy.

In the same year Messrs. Turner and Ross, with Peter Graham and Fyfe, made the first traverse of the highest peak of Mount Cook from east to west.

A West Coast party consisting of Dr. Teichelmann, the Rev. Newton, and Mr. Lowe, of Scotland, with guide Alex Graham, made the first ascent of La Perouse (10,101 feet) from the West Coast. The same party, minus Dr. Teichelmann, who had hurt his foot, made the first ascent of St. David's Dome (10,410 feet).

In 1907 the same party from a high bivouac on the West Coast made first ascents of Mount Douglas (10,107 feet), Torres Peak (10,576 feet), Mount Haast (9,835 feet), Mount Lendenfeld (10,551 feet), Mount Conway (9,511 feet), and Actone and Glacier Peaks (10,017 feet).

In 1908 Dr. MacKay of the *Nimrod* ascended the Nun's Veil.

In 1909 Mr. Claud McDonald was again twice turned back from Mount Cook by bad weather, once when within 200 feet of the summit. He was, however, successful in making the first traverse of Mount Malte Brun and Mount Sealy with P. Graham and J. Murphy as guides, and the first ascent of Coronet Peak (9,263 feet).

Dr. Voltmann, of Peru, a member of the German and Swiss Alpine Clubs, made the ascent of the Nun's Veil; and with Dr. Teichelmann and guides Peter and Alex

A RÉSUMÉ OF MOUNTAINEERING 23

Graham made the first ascents of Mount Green (9,305 feet) and Mount Walter (9,507 feet).

Mr. L. M. Earle, A.C., made the ascent of Mount Cook with A. and P. Graham and Jack Clark, the first ascent of Aiguille Rouge (9,731 feet) with guide Peter Graham, and the first ascent of Mount Sefton from the West Coast. He was accompanied in the last expedition by Captain B. Head.

Mrs. Lindon, of Geelong, Victoria, was the first woman to do any climbing in the Mount Cook district. With her husband she made the ascent of the Nun's Veil. They also crossed over Graham's Saddle to the west coast and returned via the Copland Pass.

At the end of the same year 1909 I also ascended the Nun's Veil and traversed Mount Sealy.

When you come to study this list of climbs, it is curious to note how few of them have been accomplished by New Zealanders. If you except the New Zealand professional guides, who up to date (1913) number five, and turn to the amateur high climbers you will find at the present moment they can be counted on the fingers of one hand; and that as compared to English and foreign climbers, and English and foreigners resident for the time being in New Zealand, their climbs both in number and difficulty rank lower. When one considers how great were (and are) proportionately their chances, and how the way has been opened up for them by the New Zealand pioneers, and later by the assistance of professional guides, their want of enthusiasm and enterprise seems rather extraordinary. The want of money is often brought forward as the reason, but I am sure that this alone would never account for the little interest displayed. If we take it for granted that there are many men debarred by want of money and physical fitness who would climb if they could, what about the men who have these requisites, the men who play polo and go deer-stalking,

24 THE CONQUEST OF MOUNT COOK

and vary the monotony with trips abroad? As a matter of fact, the men in New Zealand who do climb, with few exceptions, are poor men—men who have but one short holiday a year and save so that they may spend it mountaineering. When I think of the men who live in the South Island, and read in their newspapers the accounts of climbs as they are accomplished, and more particularly the men whose homes are within sight of the mountains, on the great sheep stations that extend to the very base of the Mount Cook range, their want of energy and interest does seem rather appalling. It argues for one thing such a lamentable lack of imagination.

This subject came up for discussion one night, and some one suggested that the young colonial is not intellectual enough to appreciate mountaineering, that he has not sufficient resources within himself to be happy away from his kind. He loves physical exercise, but he likes it in company and before an admiring audience, as on the football field and tennis ground. When, following out this argument, one pauses to consider who were the men who first took up climbing in the Swiss Alps, and who continue to do so to this day, it is at once evident that they are mainly members of the scholastic professions. Nor can one deny that as well as splendid physical exercise they do find intellectual enjoyment; in fact, it is this very combining of the physical and intellectual that makes mountaineering the finest sport in the world. Being a colonial myself, I do not like to hear my countrymen and women considered unintellectual and unimaginative, but if it is the case by all means let us know it and so be able to take some steps towards a remedy.

CHAPTER II

REASONS FOR TAKING UP MOUNTAINEERING

Only a hill : earth set a little higher
Above the face of Earth : a larger view
Of little fields and roads : a little nigher
To clouds and silence : what is that to you?
Only a hill ; but all of life to me,
Up there between the sunset and the sea.

G. WINTHROP YOUNG.

I HAVE been asked so often "What made you take up mountaineering?" that perhaps it will be wise to devote the first few pages of this book to answering the oft-repeated question, and endeavouring to explain the fascination the mountains exercise over me.

To begin with, I sincerely believe that the true mountaineer, like the poet, is born, not made. The details of their craft both of course must learn, but the over-mastering love of the mountains is something which wells up from within and will not be denied. An unsympathetic environment and want of opportunity may keep this love hidden even from its possessor ; but alter the environment and give the opportunity and the climber will climb as naturally as the sparks fly upward.

The majority of my readers will know that Australia possesses no permanently snow-clad mountains ; so the average Australian may perhaps never see snow and ice, and has nothing in his environment to encourage a love of mountaineering. My own life was no exception

26 THE CONQUEST OF MOUNT COOK

to this rule. I lived in the bush happily ignorant of both mountains and mountaineering. My home from the age of seventeen was situated four miles from anywhere, on the edge of a twenty-five miles Government reserve. This reserve, left absolutely in a state of nature, is a series of ridges with valleys of from 300 to 400 feet in depth on either side. These ridges and valleys are for the most part unexplored. They are of sandstone formation, and are a regular paradise for wild flowers. Lured by the flowers, I explored ridge and valley for miles, usually with no other companion than a hound, who deserted me whenever so inclined, to chase iguanas, 'possums, and native bears. During five years of scrambling I gained a very considerable knowledge of rock-climbing.

Indeed, I faced some very pretty problems without either the moral or material support of a rope or a companion. The support was all given to my dog, who would frequently sit and howl dismally on the top of a cliff that I had just succeeded in scrambling down, until I returned and found an easier road for him or deserted him until he found a way for himself. Besides rock-craft I developed a love of exploring and adventure, and a self-reliance which caused my parents some alarm. However, the expected never happened: I neither broke my neck, sprained my ankle, nor was bitten by a snake, but always returned home intact; so they ceased to worry, and left me to my own devices, which all unconsciously laid the foundation of my mountaineering career.

For some years I spent my summers in the North Island of New Zealand, but I don't remember ever hearing of the Southern Alps. I used to strain my eyes to see Mount Egmont, and on a clear morning was sometimes rewarded by the glimpse of a white pyramid across the sea: but it was too ethereal and far away to wake any mountaineering ambitions.

In 1906 I went south for the first time, to see the

REASONS FOR MOUNTAINEERING 27

Christchurch Exhibition. There I saw my first picture of Mount Cook, and met people who had visited the Southern Alps. As my interest in the mountains increased, the charms of the exhibition waned, and I decided to go to the mountains. I had no thought of climbing, I was merely filled with curiosity to see something that was quite outside my experience, so at the end of December I set out.

People who live amongst the mountains all their lives, who have watched them at sunrise and sunset, in midday heat or moonlight glow, love them, I believe, as they love the sun and flowers, and take them as much for granted. They have no conception how the first sight of them strikes to the very heart-strings of that less fortunate individual, the hill-lover who lives in a mountainless country. From the moment my eyes rested on the snow-clad alps I worshipped their beauty and was filled with a passionate longing to touch those shining snows, to climb to their heights of silence and solitude, and feel myself one with the mighty forces around me. The great peaks towering into the sky before me touched a chord that all the wonders of my own land had never set vibrating, and filled a blank of whose very existence I had been unconscious. Many people realize the grandeur and beauty of the mountains, who are quite content to admire them from a distance, if strenuous physical exertion is the price they must pay for a nearer acquaintance. My chief desire as I gazed at them was to reach the snow and bury my hands in its wonderful whiteness, and dig and dig till my snow-starved Australian soul was satisfied that all this wonder of white was real and would not vanish at the touch.

To a restless, imaginative nature the fascination of the unknown is very great; from my childhood I never saw a distant range without longing to know what lay on the other side. So in the mountains the mere fact

28 THE CONQUEST OF MOUNT COOK

of a few thousand feet of rock and snow impeding my view was a direct challenge to climb and see what lay behind it. It is as natural to me to wish to climb as it is for the average New Zealander to be satisfied with peaceful contemplation from a distance.

The night of my arrival at the Hermitage the chief guide, Peter Graham, was introduced to me. Knowing his reputation as a fine and enthusiastic mountaineer, I felt sure that he, at least, would understand my craving for a nearer acquaintance with the mountains. I asked him what it was possible for a novice to attempt. After a few questions as to my walking capabilities, he suggested that I should accompany a party he was taking up the Sealy Range. Only an incident here and there remains of that climb. Firstly, I remember fulfilling my desire to dig in the snow (at the expense of a pair of very sunburnt hands) and joyously playing with it while the wiser members of the party looked on. Likewise I remember a long, long snow slope, up which we toiled in a burning sun, never seeming to get any nearer to the top. At length, when the summit came in sight, the others were so slow I could not contain my curiosity ; so I struck out for myself instead of following in Graham's footsteps. Soon I stood alone on the crest of the range, and felt for the first time that wonderful thrill of happiness and triumph which repays the mountaineer in one moment for hours of toil and hardship. On the descent I experienced my first glissade ; it was rather a steep slope, and I arrived at the bottom wrong side up, and inconveniently filled with snow. These facts, however, did not deter me from tramping back to the top just for the pleasure of doing the same thing all over again. At the end of the day I returned to the hotel fully convinced that earth held no greater joy than to be a mountaineer.

My day in the snows had taught me several things, but chief of them was the knowledge that I could never

REASONS FOR MOUNTAINEERING 29

be content to worship the mountains from a distance. This raised the question: Had I, besides the inborn love of climbing, the other requirements of a mountaineer? Had I the physical strength, courage, endurance, and perseverance without which nothing worth doing could be accomplished? My time was so limited that it was useless to expect to find the answers to these questions. So I decided to return and test my capabilities at a later date.

Fate, in the shape of an urgent cablegram, made it necessary for me to leave even sooner than I had expected, and I returned home almost at once.

It was two years before I was able to take a holiday again. When the chance came I set out for the Southern Alps with my enthusiasm by no means impaired. From various causes my holiday was limited to a fortnight, but short though it was it was long enough to settle the question of my capabilities. I was fortunate in always going out with parties that were under the charge of the chief guide, and which usually included no other woman. Very soon Graham realized that I was always the most enthusiastic, and often the fittest of the party at the end of the day, so he began to watch me carefully. One day three of us climbed with him to a pass immediately beneath the third summit of Mount Cook; it was the highest point to which I had ascended. As I stood on the summit I felt that my question was answered. I could do what I would. Silently I gazed at the thin, jagged ridge in front of me leading up to Mount Cook. Then and there I decided I would be a real mountaineer, and some day be the first woman to climb Mount Cook. When I had made this decision I was half afraid of it. I knew the history of every expedition hitherto undertaken; knew how trained men and guides had been beaten back time and again, and how fierce was the struggle of those few who had succeeded. Thinking of these things I wondered at my own presumption, and wisely decided to say nothing of my ambitions.

30 THE CONQUEST OF MOUNT COOK

On our return I interviewed Graham, and said I would like to come back the following year and do some high climbing if he considered I was fit for it, and would undertake to train me in snow and ice work, of which I knew nothing. He willingly agreed to do so, saying he saw no reason why I should not make a mountaineer. Mount Cook was never mentioned by either of us, and the next day I left for Sydney.

CHAPTER III

THE HERMITAGE AGAIN

Mountain gorses, ever golden,
Cankered not the whole year long,
Do ye teach us to be strong,
Howsoever pricked and holden,
Like your thorny blooms, and so
Trodden on by rain and snow,
Up the hillside of this life, as bleak as where ye grow?
ELIZABETH B. BROWNING.

IN the spring of 1909 I had word from Graham that if I still wished to keep to our arrangement of the previous year I could not do better than come over early in the season before the Christmas rush of tourists made serious demands upon his time.

Nothing loath, I made my arrangements, and on December 6th left for Lyttelton by the s.s. *Marama*. I am ever unhappy at sea, so the less said of the five days' voyage the better. The fact that I willingly undergo such days of misery every year may give some idea of how deep is my devotion to New Zealand.

Once on land again I ceased to feel so wilted, and by the time the south-bound train moved slowly out of Christchurch life was worth living once more, and the rattle of the wheels resolved itself into a joyous refrain, "Mountain bound, mountain bound!" The houses were soon left behind, and the wide, barless windows framed picture after picture. First, a field of growing grain, swaying before the soft spring breeze; bounded by hedges

32 THE CONQUEST OF MOUNT COOK

of golden gorse and protected by breakwinds of slender poplars standing like sentinels against the sky-line. Then a wide, grey river-bed, with silvery streams, curling and twisting through its great expanse; here and there shone patches of vivid gold, where broom and gorse turned the grey wilderness to a patch of burning colour. The miles flew past, and through the window was wafted the unmistakable salt savour of the sea; marshes stretched on either hand leading to the curved grey beach and vivid emerald waters of the little seaport of Timaru, where a long, straight breakwater stretches out into the ocean, affording sole protection to all the vessels rocking so peacefully at the wharves. After half an hour's wait at Timaru we were transferred into the little train that conveyed us to the end of the railway at Fairlie. A peaceful, placid little train this, which pursued its way with many pauses through fertile hills and valleys—hills so steep that one wondered how the ploughman guided his team and prepared the land for the wheat, oats, and clover that waved on either hand.

Fairlie was reached in the gathering darkness, and as I stepped on to the platform I was greeted with the first keen breath of mountain air.

Eight o'clock next morning saw the start for the final stage of the journey, a motor drive of 90 miles. Perched on the box-seat and tingling with joyous excitement, I left behind me all the worries of everyday life and felt free and irresponsible as the wind that stung my cheek. A sudden turn in the road, an elbow cut out of the hill, with a stream winding below, disclosed a beauty that made me catch my breath. A wall of broom, pure gleaming, glistening gold, towered above me till it met the blue sky. Those "streets of pure gold," the wonders of the New Jerusalem, that used to capture my childish imagination, faded suddenly to something dead and sordid before this wonder of living bloom. It scintillated and burned against its blue back-



MOUNT COOK FROM THE SILBERHORN.

Frontispiece.

ground, looking more like flame than blossom. The air was filled with perfume and the eye with colour till sight and senses swam, and I turned almost with relief to the cooling crystal stream flowing over grey waterworn pebbles, its banks fringed with the tender green of osier willows. On we dashed over the narrow bridge and up the winding road to the little hamlet of Burk's Pass, where we paused to deliver the daily mail. Then away down the other side and across the long stretches of brown tussock grass, which undulate for mile after mile. Slowly we crept up the shifting sand-hills, and at last gained the crest of the ridge. Eagerly I strained my eyes for the first glimpse of the mountains. Clearly they rose up before me, a long silvery line of snow-clad peaks, breaking the blue of the distant horizon. Rapidly we descended again, and presently Lake Tekapo lay before us, a turquoise in its setting of brown plains, and rivalling in colour the blue sky overhead.

Morning tea was served at the little hotel on the borders of the lake. Through the open window, looking on to a garden gay with poppies and cornflowers, the beds edged with a brilliant border of tulips, and sweet with the scent of two great bushes of lilac, drifted the peaceful lap, lap of the lake, and the swish of swaying pine-boughs that fringed its margin.

On leaving Lake Tekapo the road makes a detour of 30 miles to avoid the Tasman River, whose great expanse is too costly to bridge. It runs through mile after mile of sun-scorched tussock grass, the brown expanse of which is broken here and there by plantations of willows and poplars which shelter some lonely homestead. Sheep browsed beside the road, and scattered with wild leaps and bounds at the sound of the approaching motor, which stopped at the paddock gate to deliver the daily mail—often to some shy country girl sitting gracefully astride her horse waiting for the five minutes' chat which links up the lonely station with the world beyond. About lunch-time we

34 THE CONQUEST OF MOUNT COOK

arrived at Lake Pukaki. The wonderful chalky blue of this great lake comes as a revelation in colour to those who are unaccustomed to snow-fed waters. Peak after peak rises into the sky at its head, and miles of brilliant blue water merges in places to sheets of rippled silver under the sun's rays. Just above our stopping-place the water swirled under a bridge, foaming in fierce rapids over the boulders that broke its course; farther down it formed into a basin, on one side of which is a steep clay wall past which the stream rushes in a series of rapids. Away to the left it widens to a shallow, where wavelets ripple on the grey beach of a little wooded isle. After leaving Pukaki the road followed along the shores of the lake for some miles; parts of it were very rough, with now and then a sharp corner that required the skill of an expert driver. On reaching the head of the lake the road wound through low foothills, which shut out the view of the ever-nearing mountains. At last at about 4.30 p.m. we came out into the plain at the foot of the Mount Cook Range. This plain is surrounded on three sides by snow-clad mountains, the Mount Cook Range dividing it in the centre into two narrow valleys; on the right hand glisten the white peaks at the head of the Tasman Glacier, which flows down for eighteen miles in waves of white ice. This is one of the largest glaciers in the world outside the Himalayas or the Arctic regions; it is longer than the largest glaciers in Switzerland. At the left hand is the valley of the Hooker, in which the Hermitage is situated. The left side of the Hooker Valley is shut in by the great white wall of Mount Sefton, the highest peak of the dividing range, which separates the east and west coasts. In the middle of the valley Mount Cook towers high above all else, and the minor peaks of the Mount Cook Range shut in the valley on its eastern side. At the base of Mount Cook flows the Hooker Glacier, and from its terminal moraine the Hooker River gushes out, and after flowing about 10 miles

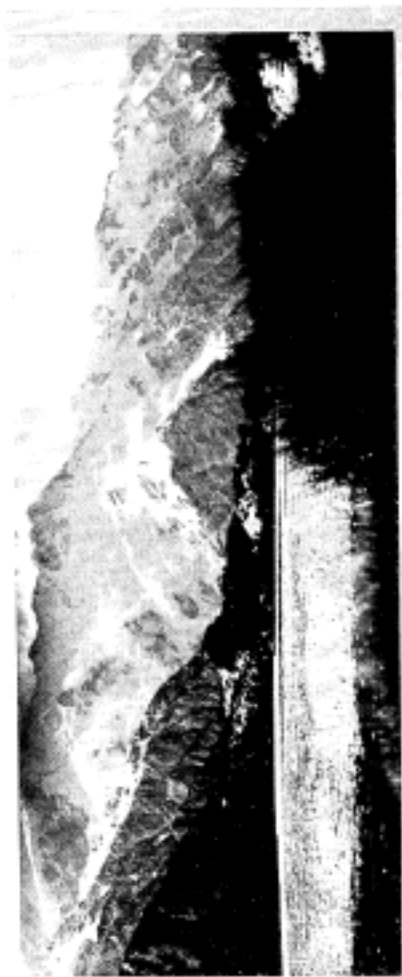
Mount Walsfield

Mount Cook

Mount Sefton



PANORAMA OF THE HERMITAGE VALLEY



merges into the Tasman River, which lower down absorbs the Murcheson River and then empties into Lake Pukaki.

The Hermitage is beautifully situated at an altitude of 2,510 feet near the terminal face of the Muller Glacier, which winds in a northerly direction under Mount Sefton and the other peaks of the dividing range. The front of the hotel affords a beautiful view of Mount Sefton, and a few minutes' walk from the back brings one to a fine view-point for Mount Cook. We arrived about 5.30 p.m., and I spent the hours till dinner-time in wandering about renewing my acquaintance with the mountains.

I found that Graham was away in charge of a party up the Tasman Glacier and would not be back until the following evening, and until his return I could make no plans as to the course of my future training. The following day was wet, so I had an enforced rest, which no doubt did me good after my week's travelling. Graham came back in the evening and suggested a couple of minor excursions to put me in touch with the mountains again. The first of these took the form of traverse of Mount Kinsey and Mount Wakefield. We had a glorious day, and returned home after ten hours' scramble sunburned, hungry, and happy. This climb had the effect of convincing Graham that I was in excellent condition and fit to tackle bigger things without more preliminaries.

We decided therefore to climb Mount Sealy on the first fine day, the weather having turned bad after our day on Mount Kinsey. Mount Sealy requires a bivouac, as it is some distance from the Hermitage, and there are no huts in that direction. This fact did not trouble me, but I soon learnt to my sorrow that I had to reckon with the other people in the house. As I was a girl, travelling alone, the women in the house apparently considered themselves more or less responsible for my actions. On Mount Kinsey I had been accompanied by a tourist who wished to join our party. As soon as I cheerfully announced, when asked,

36 THE CONQUEST OF MOUNT COOK

that I was going to climb Mount Sealy alone with a guide, I found myself up against all the cherished conventions of the middle-aged. In vain I argued and pointed out that I had come to the mountains to climb, not to sit on the veranda and admire the view. If I were to limit my climbs to occasions on which I could induce another woman or man to accompany me, I might as well take the next boat home. At the moment there was no one in the hotel who could or would climb Mount Sealy; there was not the ghost of a climber on the premises, only women who found a two-mile walk quite sufficient for their powers. This they could not deny, but they assured me in all seriousness that if I went out alone with a guide I would lose my reputation.

The fact that the guide in question was Peter Graham, whose reputation as a man was one at which the most rigid moralist could not cavil, made no difference. They acknowledged it was true, but seemed absolutely incapable of applying it to the facts of the case. One old lady implored me with tears in her eyes not to "spoil my life for so small a thing as climbing a mountain." I declined gently but firmly to believe that it would be spoiled, and added, with some heat I am afraid, that if my reputation was so fragile a thing that it would not bear such a test, then I would be very well rid of a useless article. Though not convincing me that I was doing anything wrong, they had succeeded in worrying me considerably. I turned over plans in my mind, seeking a way out of the difficulty; for about ten minutes I almost succeeded in wishing that I possessed that useful appendage to a woman climber, a husband. However, I concluded sadly that even if I possessed him he would probably consider climbing unfeminine, and so my last state might be worse than my first, and the "possible he" was dismissed as unhelpful at this crisis of my affairs. Instead I sought out Graham and told him that the female population was

holding up hands of horror, and asked what we were going to do about it. He suggested a compromise in the shape of taking a porter with us. I agreed to this, but felt vindictive when I thought of the extra expense entailed, and threatened to send the bill into my tormentors. Graham agreed that advice was cheap and that they might feel rather different if they were asked £1 a day for it. However, it seemed like the thin edge of the wedge, and later I would probably be beyond their advice. I sighed, not for the first time in my existence, over the limits imposed upon me by the mere fact that I was unfortunate enough to be born a woman. I would like to see a man asked to pay for something he neither needed nor wanted, when he had been hoarding up every penny so that he need not be cramped for want of funds. I don't wish to pose as a martyr, but merely to point out the disadvantages of being a woman pioneer even in the colonies, where we are supposed to be so much less conventional than elsewhere. I was the first unmarried woman who had wanted to climb in New Zealand, and in consequence I received all the hard knocks until one day when I awoke more or less famous in the mountaineering world, after which I could and did do exactly as seemed to me best.

Fortunately in this world, the wonder of one day is taken as a matter of course the next ; so now, five years after my first fight for individual freedom, the girl climber at the Hermitage need expect nothing worse than raised eyebrows when she starts out unchaperoned and clad in climbing costume. It is some consolation to have achieved as much as this, and to have blazed one more little path through ignorance and convention, and added one tiny spark to the ever-growing beacon lighted by the women of this generation to help their fellow-travellers climb out of the dark woods and valleys of conventional tradition and gain the fresh, invigorating air and wider view-point of the mountain-tops.

CHAPTER IV

MOUNT SEALY AND THE NUN'S VEIL

Eastward in the skies of morning
Rosy tinges streak the grey,
Bars of crimson change to golden—
Glittering heralds of the day ;
Like a blood-red shield uprising
Swims the sun in palest blue,
Crowns the hills with crests of splendour,
Flashes in the trembling dew ;
Far to eastward, far to northward,
Stretch the hills in purple chains ;
Far to southward, far to westward,
Waves the grass on yellow plains.

ESSEX EVANS.

SATURDAY, December 18th, proved fine, so I joyfully packed my rucksac and handed it over to the "chaperon" porter to swag up to the bivouac. He and Graham left at 4.30 p.m., while I remained behind to wait for the mail, as I expected my weekly Australian letters. I left about 5.30 and rapidly made my way up the steep track that leads to the mountain tarn on the Sealy Range. Just above the tarn where the track ceased I found the men waiting for me; it was a warm evening and they were weighted with heavy swags, so had been taking things easily. We set off again and climbed the steep grass slopes for another 500 feet or so, till we came to a fair-sized patch of level grass with big boulders strewn around it. Here the tents were pitched and a fire lighted, and in an hour's time we were enjoying our evening meal.

MOUNT SEALY AND THE NUN'S VEIL 39

This was finished about 8.30 p.m., and shortly afterwards I crawled into my sleeping-bag and tried to go to sleep. I was very comfortable, the grass being as good as a spring mattress, but I was much too excited at the prospect of my first real mountain to sleep. About midnight it began to drizzle with rain, and in the depths of despair I lost consciousness. About 2.30 a.m. I was awakened by the crackling of a fire, and put my head out to find Graham already busy with preparations for breakfast. Dressing hastily, or rather undressing, as in a bivouac one puts on all spare clothes to keep out the cold, I came out to view the morning. To my relief it was quite fine, so I scrambled on to a convenient boulder to await the dawn. It proved a beautiful one. Immediately beneath us lay the Hooker Valley, all filled with soft white morning mist, which hid the base of the mountains while their summits stood out clear against the deep blue sky, in which innumerable bright stars twinkled and flashed. As I watched, the stars faded one by one and the first streaks of dawn lighted the eastern skies. Brighter and brighter grew the colours, and soon a patch of rose lit up the dead-white snows of Mount Sefton; onward and upward it crept until the whole summit flushed to glowing crimson. One after another the light caught the surrounding peaks, edging their cold snows with glittering gold. Up came the sun from his hiding-place behind Mount Cook, scattering the mists before him, till the perfect colours of dawn faded before his triumphant majesty as he heralded in a glorious summer day.

Breakfast disposed of, we struck camp and climbed rapidly to the top of the range. We descended a little and traversed along its Muller side until we came to a huge snowfield. It being still early, the surface was quite hard. The crunch, crunch of the frozen snow and the tingling morning air set my blood racing, till I wanted to run and frisk like a sporting lamb from pure joy of life

40 THE CONQUEST OF MOUNT COOK

and exercise. The chaperon, weighted with a rucksac, was depressingly slow and stolid, and eventually got left far behind. We waited for him later on where a few crevasses were beginning to open out. We reached the base of our climb at 6.30 a.m., and rested there for a quarter of an hour, refreshing ourselves with tea from a Thermos flask, figs, and chocolate. Then we put on the rope and started up a steep snow-face. It was still frozen, so Graham had to chip up. Standing in my steps waiting for him to cut more, I looked straight down over pure snow to the Muller Glacier, 6,000 feet beneath. It was my first experience of step-cutting on a steep slope with a long drop beneath. Graham turned now and again to ask if I felt "all right," and seemed amply satisfied with my cheerful grin of response. At the end of the snow slope we gained some rocks, which led direct to the summit. These rocks were steep and in places by no means overburdened with hand and foot holds. The want of these did not worry me half as much as the rope, to which I was quite unused, so naturally found it considerably in the way. At first Graham, who led, turned round every minute or so to show me a hand or foot hold, or to give me a pull with the rope on what he considered a difficult bit. He evinced considerable surprise when he usually discovered me already at his heels without the proffered assistance. Once I caught a gentle murmur that sounded like "Did not know I was taking out a blessed cat"; and I enjoyed a quiet laugh to myself all unheard. By the time we neared the summit I was left severely alone to do as I pleased, and all the attention was directed to the porter, who was a novice on rock, and consequently rather unhappy. He was short in the limbs (and breath), and had visibly not been intended by nature for a mountaineer. As I watched his struggles it was borne upon me that I was not the only victim being offered up on the sacred altar of the conventions. We safely reached the summit

MOUNT SEALY AND THE NUN'S VEIL 41

at 8.15 a.m., and threw ourselves down on the sun-warmed rocks for a well-earned rest. While Graham investigated the contents of the rucksac preparatory to our second breakfast, I basked in the sun and examined my surroundings. The day was perfect, and a wonderful panorama unrolled itself to my delighted eyes. Mount Sefton's great white wall and the whole length of the Morehouse Range stretched away to our left; over a low saddle we could see a thick bank of clouds in Westland, which shut out our hoped-for view of the ocean. Everywhere else was clear—Mount Cook's three white peaks towered up across the valley in serene aloofness, in spite of the conquering foot of man on their pure snows. Through the Ball Pass loomed a sea of mountains at the head of the Tasman Glacier, while at our feet the Hooker River wound its way to join the Tasman, and both merged into a streak of silver, which flowed through yellow plains and was lost in the blue of Lake Pukaki.

After we had breakfasted, there being no hurry, we settled down on the rocks again. Soon a gentle snore announced that the chaperon was sleeping off his morning exertions. I lay with my hat tilted over my eyes, studying Mount Cook and weaving a fabric of dream and desire about the silvery summits. Presently I mildly suggested that Sealy had been a most enjoyable climb, but not as difficult as I had expected. Graham rose to the bait promptly and said it was considered difficult by most people, and added that I had done very well. By way of answer I pointed across the valley at Mount Cook, "Well enough to attempt that some day?" Breathlessly I awaited the answer. I thought I detected a smile in the voice that came from beneath the sheltering hat. "So that is the plan you have been hatching while I thought you asleep." "Oh, the plan was hatched long ago; it was merely the right moment for mentioning it I was looking for," I confessed. Quietly and earnestly we talked

42 THE CONQUEST OF MOUNT COOK

the possibility over from all points of view. The final result was a promise that if I went on as well as I had begun, and would patiently train and not want to rush things, I should have my chance on the first suitable opportunity. Graham has a theory on the best way to train a novice into full-fledged mountaineer; I may as well give it here, as it was tested for the first time on me, with results of which both pupil and teacher are proud. Briefly stated, it amounts to this: he considers that it gives the minimum of risk and the maximum of pleasure to be led from climb to climb, each of increasing difficulty, until one is fit physically and mentally for the most difficult and dangerous work. He did not deny, for instance, that he might be able to take me up Mount Cook at once, but he did deny that I would get the highest benefit and pleasure out of the experience. "Climb Mount Cook at once," he argued, "and you will have done what is considered the biggest climb in New Zealand, therefore you will have nothing left to look forward to here. You probably won't enjoy the doing of it, or be fit to appreciate your success when you have gained it. Except the mere notoriety of being the first woman on the summit, you will gain nothing, and stand to lose the best of a wonderful experience, because you have tried to grasp it before you are ready to appreciate it in all its fullness. Furthermore, you will lose all the pleasure of looking forward to it and thoroughly enjoying the climbs that bring you each week a step nearer your ideal." Looking back on the many things for which I have to thank Peter Graham, I feel there are none for which I owe him more heartfelt thanks than his wise training at the beginning of my mountaineering career. I think any mountaineer who reads this book and knows anything of climbing in New Zealand will agree with me.

To return to Mount Sealy, after our discussion was over we woke up the porter and began the descent. I



THE HOOKER VALLEY AND MOUNT COOK.

MOUNT SEALY AND THE NUN'S VEIL 43

found the rocks considerably more difficult to go down than to ascend, and began to appreciate the moral and material support of the rope. Just as we arrived at the last rocks joining a snow slope, the porter, who was nervous, slipped, lost his footing, and slid away down the slope. In less time than it takes to tell my axe was jambed in a crack with the rope round it, and the porter brought to a standstill before Graham had time to reach me. He exclaimed, "Where did you learn that?" "I didn't learn it; I knew it—by instinct, I suppose," I answered, quite as surprised as he was; I had not had time to think, I had simply done it unconsciously. Meanwhile the porter, dangling on the rope, looked reproachful that we should discuss such a detail while he was so uncomfortable. Apologetically we pulled him up, and I was put in the lead. We descended without further incident and began our long tramp back to the bivouac. The snowfield we had skimmed over so gaily in the morning let us through up to our knees at every step; we were very glad to see the last of it, and follow along the top of the range till it was time to descend the other side. We shot down in a series of glissades and reached the bivouac at 1.45 p.m. After a leisurely lunch we lay on the grass in the shade for an hour and then descended to the Hermitage in time for dinner.

Next day, December 20th, it was still fine, so Graham said the chance was too good to lose, and suggested a start for the Nun's Veil bivouac. I was still sleepy, in spite of twelve hours' rest, but not at all stiff from my Sealy climb, so announced myself willing to try anything. At 3 p.m. Graham, Murphy, and I rode off for Griller Creek. It was intensely hot in the sun, and we could not go very fast as our way lay mostly over rough river-beds. We forded the Hooker River just below the cage. The river was swollen with melting snow, and we had some difficulty in riding through. Once across, we struck over

44 THE CONQUEST OF MOUNT COOK

to the Tasman, fording it and the Murchison in several places; fortunately none of these rivers were as high as the Hooker, so we had not much trouble in getting through them. The horses were left in the yard of the Shepherd's hut, beneath Rotten Tommy, and we started up the steep and slippery grass slopes of Griller Creek. I was stiff from riding, so found it hot and tiring work. After about a mile and a half we struck down to the creek bed and followed it as far as the last grass slope. Here the tents were pitched. It was a most picturesque bivouac. The mountain creek rushed along at our feet, and at its head the Nun's Veil stood out in the moonlight, pure snow from base to summit. Looking down stream, Rotten Tommy rose brown and rugged at our left, while beyond it we caught a glimpse of Mount Sealy.

Supper was a meal to remember; seated on a rucksack, with my back to a rock, I enjoyed every moment of it. The red flames lit up the brown faces and gleaming eyes and teeth of the guides as they plied me with one good thing after another, and the whole made a picture worthy of Rembrandt.

After supper we gathered round the fire, and the guides told me stories of the mountains until it was time to turn in. After several fruitless attempts at slumber I crept out of my tent and down to the creek for a drink. Everything was so lovely, bathed in the moonlight, that I stayed there for quite a long while; at last, infinitely refreshed, I crept back to my tent and fell asleep. Waking at 2 a.m. and being unable to sleep again, I roused the guides at 2.30 a.m., and by 4 a.m. we had breakfasted and were toiling up the last mile of creek bed. Once we reached the snow it was all straight-ahead work. We climbed steadily up slope after slope, only to find still another above us, till it became rather monotonous, and I longed for some rock-climbing by way of diversion. At last we came to a schrund, the top lip of which was all

MOUNT SEALY AND THE NUN'S VEIL 45

hung with icicles. We paused a moment, and each broke off a long crystal. The cool, smooth feeling was lovely and quenched my thirst for the time being. Our only excitement during the ascent was negotiating the schrund just near the summit ridge; it was rather wide, and we had some difficulty in hauling ourselves to the upper lip. This accomplished, we followed a narrow ridge for a few yards, and at 8 a.m. stood upon the summit. Unfortunately, the day had turned cloudy and cold, making the surrounding mountains look barren and colourless. Murphy had swagged up a heavy camera, wishing to take a panorama, so after breakfast he and Graham looked about for a good view-point, and I curled myself up on the rocks and went to sleep. After about an hour on the summit we began the descent. We indulged in the series of glissades, which were great fun but rather wetting. The time was well spent in my case in learning to keep right side up. We reached our camp at 1.30, and after our meal started on the long tramp down Griller Creek to the horses. The creek justified its name, and seemed endless as well as hot. Graham stalked ahead at four miles an hour, and I followed in the rear with protests in my heart that I never got near enough, or breath enough, to utter. At last we reached the horses and rode home as fast as we could. I was half asleep by the time we reached the Hermitage, and Graham lifted me from my horse with a commiserating smile at 4.30 p.m. That night I asked the maid not to wake me if I did not come to breakfast next morning, and I slept the clock round till noon. When I appeared at lunch the women looked me over and demanded, "Is it worth it?" I was sunburned from brow to chin, and was already beginning to peel. I admitted that it was a pity that mountaineering had such a devastating influence on the complexion, but pointed out it was only a temporary evil and as nothing to the joys I had acquired at the same time. Naturally they

46 THE CONQUEST OF MOUNT COOK

remained unconvinced, as these joys were a closed book to them.

A large party arrived by the motor in the morning, and all the guides' services were required in taking out various parties for glacier and other expeditions. I joined a party going up to the Malte Brun hut, as it was impossible to get any guides for high climbing. We spent four very pleasant days there, and returned to the Hermitage just as the spell of fine weather broke.

CHAPTER V

THE MOUNT MALTE BRUN AND THE MINARETS

And God's own profound
Was above me, and round me the mountains,
And under, the sea,
And within me my heart to bear witness
What was and shall be.
Oh, heaven and the terrible crystal!
No rampard excludes
Your eye from the life to be lived
In the blue solitudes.
Oh, those mountains, their infinite movement!
Still moving with you;
For, ever some new head and breast of them
Thrusts into view.

ROBERT BROWNING.

FOR a week after our return from the Tasman Glacier the weather was so changeable that it was impossible to attempt any climbing, so I settled down at the Hermitage, now filled to overflowing, and passed the time very pleasantly, when it was fine enough to go out, in picnics and afternoon excursions to the many charming spots that abound near the Hermitage. Several old acquaintances of mine had now arrived, including Professor Baldwin Spencer, with whose daughter I had had several pleasant excursions the previous year. The professor wished to go up the Tasman to take some photographs, and I easily persuaded him to try a little climbing as well; so we decided to join forces and go up to the Malte Brun hut, and from there climb anything that

48 THE CONQUEST OF MOUNT COOK

most attracted us. No sooner was this plan settled than Mr. Earle, A.C., expressed a wish to join us. He had been in the mountains since October, and had done some high climbing with Jack Clark, who was acting as his private guide. Clark was for the time being laid up with a strained foot, and would probably be unfit for work for some weeks, so Mr. Earle was rather at a loose end, being unable to procure another guide, and was glad to join a party that offered some chance of mountaineering. We on our side were very glad to add an experienced climber to our party, as we were unable to secure two guides, owing to the crowded state of the Hermitage.

On January 6th the weather seemed to have definitely cleared, so we set out for the Ball hut, accompanied by Peter Graham. We reached the hut the same evening, just in time to climb up the wall of Moraine that shuts out the view, and see the last glories of the sunset. In the quivering air of the midsummer evening the strange black waves of moraine, tipped here and there with crests of white ice, seemed really to undulate like some uncanny sea. Beyond their black depths shimmered mile after mile of pure white ice, which rose in a grand curve at the ice-fall and swept round the base of Mount de la Beche and the Minarets and on to the head of the glacier; here they lost themselves in the rounded softness of the Hochstetter Dome. In contrast with the white of snow-clad peaks and curving glaciers, Mount Malte Brun reared its great rock ridge from the crevassed ice at its base, and towered up with crag after jagged crag outlined sharp against the ever-changing evening sky. As the sun disappeared into Westland its last rays dyed the black pyramid to a glowing mass of molten copper, till one could but believe that some volcanic fire was welling up from the unseen heart beneath. We watched till the last vestige of colour faded and the surrounding mountains turned grey and cold, and then scrambled down to the hut, and thoroughly enjoyed

the evening meal which Graham had been preparing while we absorbed the beauties of nature.

Next morning we were awakened before daylight by the screaming and chattering of many keas (mountain parrots), varied by the rattle of their claws as they gaily glissaded from the ridge-pole to the gutter of our tin-roofed hut. Sleep in such a din was impossible, so we turned out with the usual reluctance to exchange a warm bunk for a cold world. As soon as breakfast was over we set out for a twelve-mile tramp over the moraine and glacier to the Malte Brun hut, which we reached without incident at noon.

On the way up we came to a decision as to our first climb. Mr. Earle and I were both very anxious to ascend Mount Malte Brun, which is reckoned the finest rock climb in the Mount Cook district. On consulting the professor we discovered that he had no inclination towards difficult rock-climbing. He declared it held too many thrills to the square inch for his constitution. He was, however, quite willing to have a day's spell round about the hut taking photographs. He also nobly offered to keep house for us and have dinner ready on our return; this offer we gratefully accepted, and promised to climb a snow peak of his choice the following or first suitable day. I was much too excited to sleep the night before our climb, and just before retiring I had a small passage of arms with Mr. Earle on the subject of costume. He declared he would not climb with me if I wore a skirt. I replied with more vigour than politeness that in that case he would have to stay behind. The skirt in question was so brief, that on my showing it to Graham, and asking him if it were all right to climb in, he had grinned cheerfully and exclaimed, "Skirt! I should call it a frill," and at once passed it as harmless. I now appealed to him to support my costume, but with a wariness born of a long experience of tourists, he declined to side with either

50 THE CONQUEST OF MOUNT COOK

of us, and I retired to the ladies' compartment with dignity and a determination that was worthy of a militant suffragette to stick to my rights.

The next morning, the 8th of January, was beautifully fine, so we set off in the best of spirits at 5.30 a.m. I wore the despised skirt, and Mr. Earle wisely refrained from objection. While we were coming up the glacier the day before, Graham had taken the opportunity afforded by the splendid view of Mount Malte Brun, to pick out a new route; we had therefore all the excitement of the unknown ahead of us. We skirted to the left of the rocks that rise just behind the hut, and climbed up the tussock grass and scree slopes until we came to the snow slopes leading to the west arête. We did not immediately gain the arête, but kept somewhat to the left. The rocks were good and we climbed at a fair pace. On reaching the top of a buttress which we thought connected with the main arête, we found we were cut off by an aiguille. We wasted about half an hour before we found a serviceable way over this obstacle, but at last successfully gained the west arête. We now paused for a second breakfast. From where we sat we could follow the windings of the Tasman Glacier far below us, till the white ice vanished into the terminal moraine; out of this crept the silver thread of the Tasman River, shining through shingle beds and yellow plains, until it emptied itself into the blue of Lake Pukaki 50 miles away. A south fog was drifting softly up the valley, and the bases of the surrounding mountains were soon enveloped in it, while their summits rose above, clear against the intense blue of the Alpine sky.

We followed the arête for about half an hour without any particular difficulty, the rocks being firm and good; but suddenly on turning a corner we found ourselves confronted by quite a fine bit of rock-work. The ridge dipped suddenly, a fall of about 10 feet, and then stretched out



MOUNT MALTE BRUN.

AIGUILLE ROUGE.

To face page 98.

in a narrow straight line for about 70 feet. It was very sharp and narrow, and on either side the steep, smooth faces dropped sheer for hundreds of feet, a true specimen of the knife-edge variety often talked about and seldom found. We all stood and looked at it for a few moments. Then Graham lowered himself down to it, and putting a leg on either side, worked along till he came to the end of his rope. I surveyed this procedure with somewhat mixed feelings—certainly not all pleasurable; while I was considering it and wondering how it felt and if I could do it, Graham's quiet voice broke in upon my meditations: "I think you had better come now, Miss Du Faur." He was sitting apparently quite happy astride the ridge, holding the connecting rope between us and waiting for me to come on, seemingly not at all concerned lest I should object. Probably if he had asked me if I could do it I should have refused. His taking my courage for granted, and not giving me time for too much consideration, saved the situation. Too proud to say I did not much like the look of it, I gingerly let myself down, and proceeded as he had done. I soon worked myself along to Graham. He then set off again and reached the other side, leaving me perched in the middle, a prey to conflicting emotions. One of them very shortly took the form of wishing I possessed a cushion. I thought by the time that Mr. Earle reached me and so gave me length enough of rope to go on, that I was in some slight danger of being halved. When we all arrived safely at the other side we turned and looked at the place, and I for one was filled with pride and vainglory; also a deep regret that I did not have a camera, in order to possess a photograph of one of us astride so sensational a ridge.

From this cheval ridge on, the only difficulties we encountered were loose rocks; the final ridge that leads to the summit was certainly not in good repair. The rocks were loose and crumbly, a slate-like formation quite

52 THE CONQUEST OF MOUNT COOK

different from the solid red rock of the lower slopes. We climbed them with the utmost care, only one of us moving at a time, and keeping a sharp look-out for falling stones. Though some whizzed past us uncomfortably near, no one was hit, and at twelve o'clock we arrived quite safely on the summit. Thereupon followed no little jubilation and excitement. We shook hands all round, and Mr. Earle's hearty "Well done, young one" wiped out all old scores, and left me with the feeling that at last I might count myself amongst the elect. It was intensely hot, the sun beating down on us from a cloudless sky, with not a breath of wind to stir the air. We settled down in what patches of shade the boulders afforded, and while Graham prepared the lunch we had time to take in our surroundings. To the east we had a splendid view of the Murchison Glacier; behind it away to the north and east stretched range after range of snow-capped peaks, all practically unknown, a wide field for some future explorer. To the north-west across the shoulder of the Hochstetter Dome we could see the silvery line of breakers on the West Coast. The whole length of the Tasman Glacier lay spread at our feet, culminating in Mount Cook, whose three white summits reared themselves high above the surrounding mountains. Naturally we began to talk of the different ascents, and I asked Mr. Earle to give me some idea of his new route up the western face, as Graham had promised that if I made good on Mount Malte Brun he would take me up Mount Cook by this route. Mr. Earle assured me that there was nothing to worry about. He said his ascent contained nothing so bad as the knife-edge ridge we had just conquered. It was only a question of climbing 2,000 feet more, and that, given such a day as we were now enjoying, I would "go up like a bird." It was comforting to find some one besides Graham with faith in my mountaineering powers, especially a man of wide experience. All the same I tried not to build too

much upon my chances; I had read too frequently the struggles of the pioneers, calling often for great courage and endurance, to think lightly of any ascent of Mount Cook.

We now turned our attention to lunch, and that finished, duly built a cairn and placed in it our whitebait tin, on which we had previously inscribed our names and the date with the point of my hatpin. This little ceremony seemed to bring home to me the fact that I had really accomplished a first-class climb, and I felt inclined to whoop for joy at the thought that I was the first woman to stand on the summit of Mount Malte Brun; especially as it had only been thrice climbed before, each time by experienced men, and Graham declared ours was the most difficult route of all. We made the first traverse going from south to north, and began the descent, following Mr. Sillem's route down the northern arête. Mr. Earle took the lead, I was in the middle, and Graham safe-guarded the rear. The descent proved considerably more nerve-racking than the ascent, although the rocks were not really so difficult. Descents are, I think, to most climbers harder than ascents; so many elements combine to rob one of that first joyous freshness which makes the surmounting of difficulties a matter of pleasure and encouragement when the summit is still to be attained. On the descent your triumphs are all behind you, and the major part of your forces are the worse for wear. You begin to descend, and the strain of past difficulties begins to tell in aching muscles and over-active nerves. You have a choice of two methods, either of which are harder than ascending the same rocks would be. You may climb downwards with your back to the rocks and consequently facing the abyss beneath you, and getting a tolerable view of the difficulties ahead of you, and a notion where to place your hands and feet; or you may turn your face to the rocks and your back to the abyss, and let yourself down gingerly with your foot-holds out of sight. An exploring glance, or the man

54 THE CONQUEST OF MOUNT COOK

below you has assured you that footholds exist and these the feet have to seek, feel for, and find before the strain on upward-reaching arms can be lessened. You have also to keep your feet clear of the rope below you and retain some slack of the rope above you in one hand; and last, but not least, you must avoid catching the ice-axe that is thrust through the rope at your waist, to give freedom to your hands, and trails out at awkward angles in the most inconvenient places. To be truthful, I know no greater annoyance on difficult rocks than an ice-axe; the point is always catching on something below you and jabbing the blade into your back, or if pushed out sideways it catches on the rocks and threatens to upset your equilibrium, and undoubtedly upsets your temper.

On the descent of Malte Brun we experienced all these things. Hour after hour we crept down precipitous cliffs, clambered along sharp arêtes, or traversed across repel- lently smooth faces. Down the worst places we had to move only one at a time. On one of these I dislodged a tiny pebble which, as ill-luck would have it, shattered one glass of Mr. Earle's pince-nez; fortunately his eye was untouched by the broken glass. To his credit I must record that I heard no winged words, his justly tried feelings never reached the surface. The accident was singularly unfortunate, as without his glasses Mr. Earle could see but little, so our progress was slower and more careful than ever. Just as I was beginning to wonder if we were ever going to reach the bottom, we manipulated a particularly nasty overhanging corner and crossed into a snow couloir, which led down to a basin at the foot of the rocks. Mr. Earle in the lead warned me of a patch of glazed ice, which he had managed to cross safely; but on touching it my feet shot from under me, and on being pulled up by the rope held by Graham who was still above me, I swung inward and cut my hands against the rocks. The damage done was fortunately slight. When

we reached the bottom of the couloir we threw ourselves down to rest in the snow-field beneath, keeping well out of reach of the falling stones with which the basin was strewn. Turning our attention to the rucksac, we emptied it and consumed all the food we could find. After twelve hours on the rope, most of the time at a considerable strain, it was refreshing to be at ease on the snow, and contemplate the line of our descent with now and then a comment on its dangers and difficulties. As it was already six o'clock we had to cut short our self-congratulation and make tracks for home and the professor's promised dinner, which latter began to loom largely on our imagination. Unfortunately a snow slope down which we had hoped to glissade had frozen hard, and so involved half an hour's step cutting; this accomplished, we found some of the lower slopes in excellent condition and managed a few short glissades. Considerably revived by our whizz through the keen air, we tramped our last mile over scree and snow grass and arrived at the hut at seven o'clock. The excellence of the professor's cooking and of our appetites was testified by the fact that "when we had finished the platter was bare." Then came that luxurious after-dinner hour when the men smoked in beatific contentment, and I curled up on the locker and slowly reviewed the joys and trials of an eventful day. Contentment reigned supreme; with weary muscles relaxed, and tired nerves soothed, my mind wandered undisturbed, touching lovingly on beauties but half perceived at the moment, but now photographed safely in my memory. Dreamily I wove together the hopes, fears, doubts, despairs, and joys that make up the rainbow tale of a day in the mountains. Waking up from my dreams as the men finished their pipes, I asked what were our plans for the next day. The professor's choice had fallen upon the Minarets, two beautiful snow-clad peaks immediately opposite to the hut. After some discussion it was

56 THE CONQUEST OF MOUNT COOK

decided to rest to-morrow and climb the following day. Well pleased at the prospect of unlimited sleep I retired to my bunk, where I slept dreamlessly till eleven next morning. Finding it was a beautiful day I proceeded to get up, and on appearing was pleased to be able to answer the volley of questions as to how I felt by "Fine, and not at all stiff, thank you." Considering the contortions that rock-climbing demands of the human form divine, the fact that I really was not stiff pleased me mightily and surprised me considerably. Though I was none the worse for wear the same could not be said of my costume, so I sat down on a stone and proceeded to repair damages. The professor, seeing me so usefully employed, presently appeared dangling a pair of knickerbockers, which he surveyed ruefully, and then observed with obvious truth that he was afraid they were hardly fitted to stand the strain of glissading down the Minarets. Considering his noble efforts in feeding the hungry the night before, and in wasting this lovely day that we might all have a day's rest, I concluded it was up to me to patch the breeches; but with what was a question that puzzled me considerably. Knowing from past experience that the New Zealand guide is usually to be depended upon to produce anything from hairpins to a change of costume, I asked Graham to solve my difficulty. After much rooting round he appeared with some ancient tweed which, of course, could not compare in dignity to the professorial garment. The resulting patch was the cause of combined regret and mirth to me. Merely to contemplate it from behind, even in the most serious climbing crises, put new heart into me. About three o'clock Graham set off to reconnoitre, as the Minarets were unknown to him, only having been climbed once before somewhere in the dim, distant past by T. C. Fyfe and Malcolm Ross. Mr. Earle and I undertook to cook the dinner in his absence. The process was conducive to much laughter; with the excep-



THE TASMAN GLACIER AND MOUNT DE LA BÈCHE.

tion of a blancmange of tempting appearance but unfortunate solidity, the result was thoroughly up to the somewhat ambitious standard set by the previous chef. On his return Graham reported all well, so very shortly after dinner we turned in, intent on a good sleep before the alarm should arouse us at the shivery hour before dawn.

I was awakened while it was still dark by the wind howling round the hut; it quivered and shook beneath the fierce blasts, and was only saved from being carried away by the wire cable which bound it securely to a great rock on the south side. There was no question of starting in such a gale, so I cuddled down into the blankets with a guilty joy at postponing those hateful moments of chilling misery to which even the most enthusiastic mountaineer is liable on being aroused at 2 a.m.

About five o'clock the wind moderated considerably, so getting up in all haste we dispatched breakfast, and left the hut at 6.30 a.m. By the time we reached the glacier the wind had dropped altogether. We crossed it rapidly, and started up a snow slope, keeping to the left of the two rock-faces that stand out a few hundred feet from the base of the mountain. Soon we came upon Graham's footsteps of the day before, and followed them to a maze of crevasses. This was my first experience of real ice work, and I am bound to admit that for a few hours I was distinctly unhappy. Once in among the broken ice we wound in and out, sometimes walking along the narrow space between two yawning crevasses, until we could find some frail snow bridge thrown across the gaping chasm, over which we must step, with fleeting, fascinated glances into the cold, blue depths beneath. Backwards and forwards we dodged amongst great blocks and pinnacles of ice which sagged and leaned at drunken angles as if they meant to fall and bury us for evermore. To me the whole place was an icy nightmare, recalling to memory

58 THE CONQUEST OF MOUNT COOK

horrid pictures by Doré in Dante's "Inferno," where poor tormented souls shivered in awful depths of eternal ice. They always fascinated me; now they had my heartfelt sympathy. Nothing was what it seemed to my untrained eye in this strange frozen world. Just when I was congratulating myself that we were really in for some safe, smooth going, Graham must needs go poking about with his ice-axe, and disclose a treacherous snow-hidden crevasse, and helplessly I began to wonder if there was a solid yard on this horrible mountain strong enough to bear my modest weight. My mind was chaos, my nerves on edge, but fortunately neither of these are exposed to an unsympathetic world; and my face, thanks to the long training of two brothers who jeered at me for a girl baby if I dared funk anything, was no doubt smiling and bland as that of the "heathen Chinee." Anyway no one seemed to observe anything wrong with it. Possibly the professor, who was also somewhat of an ice novice, was too concerned with the feelings in his own solar plexus to worry about me; if so, he is also able to bluff some.

Before we saw the last of the broken ice and began climbing the final snow slopes there was a steep ice wall to negotiate. This wall dropped away into the icy depths of a schrund. It was an evil-looking place, and I watched Graham cut his way up it with some anxiety. When my turn came to follow in his steps I thought of the oft-read description as applied to climbers in a like situation, "a fly on the wall." The description struck me as inadequate, the advantage being undoubtedly all with the fly; four legs in such a crisis and a horizontal position seem so much more supporting than two and an ice-axe. Then when you consider the fly can wing his way heavenwards, if he is stupid enough to fall off, while the wretched climber can only dangle in space and claw the air, or equally unsympathetic, but harder, ice, the comparison breaks down altogether. Not being of the winged tribe I was

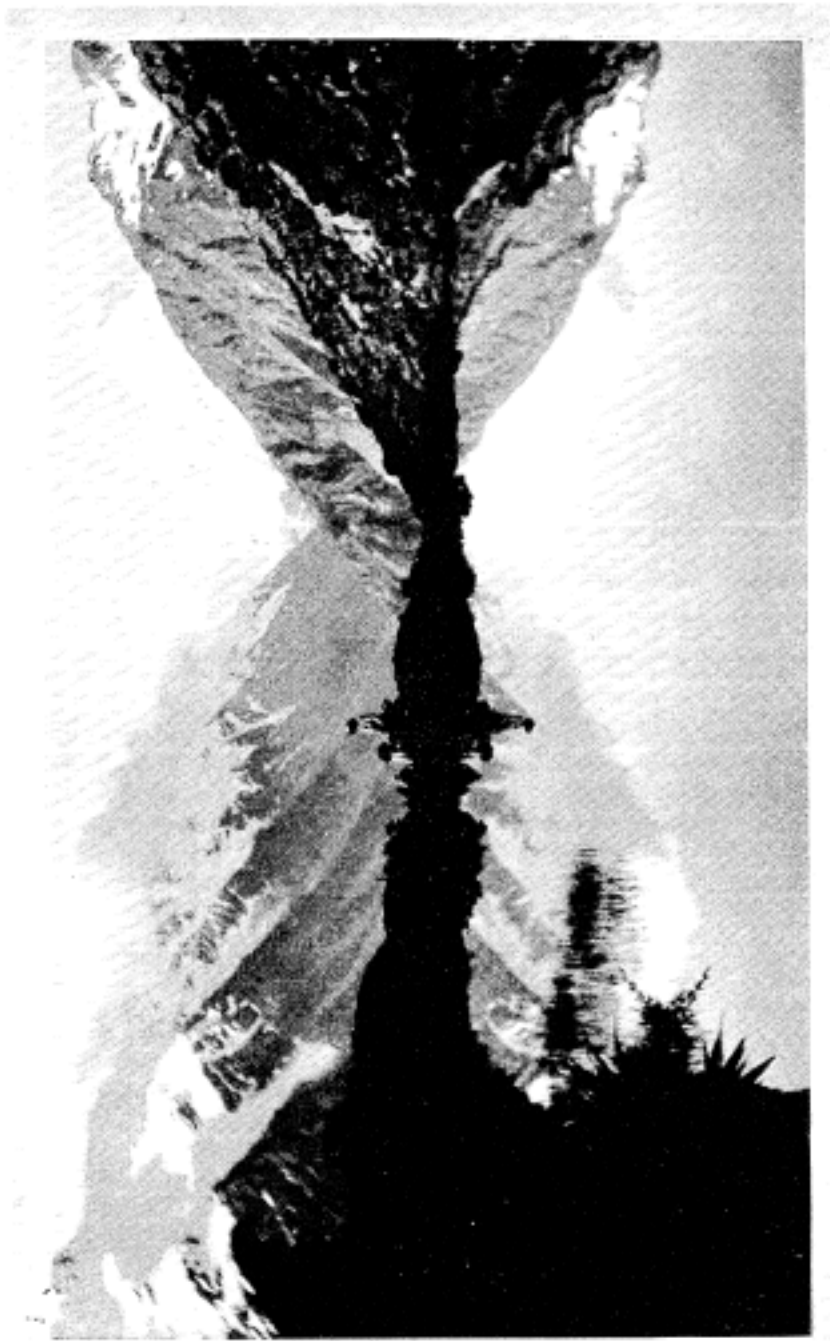
exceedingly pleased to stand safely on the slope above without testing the efficiency of the rope. By this time the day was very hot, and the ensuing toil up the steep snow slopes, minus the enlivening element of broken ice, though certainly peaceful, tended towards monotony. Within about an hour's distance of the summit mists began to gather about us, and shortly everything but a few yards ahead of us was blotted out by the fog. Still we toiled on, and eventually reached the summit at twelve o'clock. At least Graham said it was the summit, and I presume he knew; it might have been anywhere. We were surrounded in swirling mists which obscured everything. Once for a second they blew apart, and disclosed a dark chasm on the West Coast side, and far away below we could hear the sound of rushing water. I believe some climbers consider the view from the summit but a small element when counting up the joys and rewards of a climb, consequently its absence owing to bad weather does not affect them. Personally, whenever I have conquered a mountain and seen nothing from its summit, I have experienced only a bitter sense of failure and disappointment. I don't consciously start out to climb for the view, and I do consciously enjoy overcoming difficulties, and have often mountaineered on a wet day for the joy of climbing and nothing else. Nevertheless, in an ordinary way the culminating moments of a climb are the last few, when you are nearing the summit and eagerly strain forward for the first glimpse of what lies beyond. It is then you know the thrill of victory and achievement in its fullness, a feeling so subtle and soul-satisfying as to defy analysis, and which is absent, no matter how great is your achievement, when you conquer and see nothing.

This is the reason, I suppose, that the Minarets have always been counted in amongst my failures; the only sensation I experienced on their summit was one of overwhelming disappointment. We did not stay very long,

60 THE CONQUEST OF MOUNT COOK

but turned homeward, and lower down took advantage of a sheltered spot to cheer our drooping spirits with a meal. In spite of the fog it was very hot, and every now and then the boom of an avalanche resounded eerily from the misty abyss below us. It was quite evident that a heavy thaw was in progress, so we raced down at top speed, intent on reaching some crevasses that had been but frailly bridged in the early morning, and now might easily collapse before we could reach them. We managed to cross all but the last one safely; this one we paused to consider for a moment, and Graham went up to Mr. Earle, who was leading, for a nearer view of it. Stretching out his ice-axe he felt it cautiously; as he withdrew the axe the bridge split in the middle and fell with a resounding crash into the depths beneath. The crevasse was both wide and deep, with smooth icy walls, and the fate of any one who had set foot upon the bridge would have been exceedingly unpleasant. We followed up and down the crevasse for a considerable distance, but not a vestige of a bridge could we find. As to cross it was impossible, we retraced our steps for a long way and then turned to the right and made for the two rock-faces we had kept to the left of in the morning. Graham had been over these the day before, and decided to avoid them if possible. Now they were our only way of descent, so we had to make the best of them. I was so pleased to be on rock again; I did not care how bad they were, but felt sorry for the professor, who had declined Malte Brun to be landed on something just as bad.

A steep, overhanging corner was the main difficulty. The only way to manipulate this was for each of us to be lowered over separately the full length of the rope. Mr. Earle went first, and I heard "curses not loud but deep" as he descended, so presumed it was pretty bad. However, he arrived safely, and the rope was pulled up, and the professor tied on and sent on his



MOUNT COOK FROM THE RED LAKE ON MOUNT SEBASTOPOOL.

To face page 60.

adventurous career. Mr. Earle shouted directions as to hand- and foot-holds from below, and at last the professor also arrived safely. I went next—dangling on a rope looking for hand- and foot-holds is not exactly pleasant, but as long as you keep your head and have a good man at the end of the rope, neither is it dangerous—and in due time I arrived at the bottom. Graham's progress down, unassisted, left me with my heart in my mouth for ten minutes. I think I must have been as pleased to see him land on a safe spot as he was to get there. Once off the rocks, we shot down the remaining snow slope in a standing glissade, and very soon stood upon the Tasman Glacier. Crossing this, we reached the hut at 6.30 p.m., our climb having occupied just twelve hours. We found that in our absence Guide Thomson had arrived with a large party from the Ball hut, so the Malte Brun was full to overflowing. Under these conditions we decided to leave the following morning for the Hermitage. We left next morning in pouring rain and a head-wind that made our three and a half hours' tramp to the Ball hut anything but a pleasing expedition. We arrived there drenched to the skin, to find it also in the possession of a large party. Merely pausing for something to eat we pushed on to the Hermitage. It gradually cleared up as we neared the Hooker River, and the hot sun had nearly dried us by the time we reached the Hermitage at 5.30 p.m.

We spent the next four days, which were beautifully fine, in picnics and scrambles near the Hermitage. Our favourite spot was a small tarn half-way up the Sebastopol, known as the Red Lake. Here we returned time and again, never tiring of the glorious view of Sefton and Mount Cook which it affords. The lake is almost covered with a coppery red water weed. I never saw such lovely lights—golden, purple, and bronze—as play upon this tarn, while on a still evening the reflections of the

62 THE CONQUEST OF MOUNT COOK

mountains add the finishing touch to its beauty. Sometimes we would laze here the whole afternoon watching the clouds chase one another over the Copland Pass, telling stories, or dreaming in perfect contentment. Any one disposed to be energetic would climb to the top of Sebastopol (4,819 feet) and indulge in the never-failing joy of rolling down huge boulders, watching them bound from rock to rock, hurling themselves over a precipice, and shatter into a hundred pieces below.

CHAPTER VI

MOUNT COOK

It seems too much like a fate indeed!
Though I do my best I shall scarce succeed.
But what if I fail in my purpose here?
It is but to keep the nerves at a strain,
To dry one's eyes and laugh at a fall,
And baffled get up and begin again.
So the chase takes up one's life, that's all.

ROBERT BROWNING.

GRAHAM had left for the West Coast, taking two ladies across the Copland Pass, and I was waiting his return to make my attempt on Mount Cook, bitterly grudging the loss of these four perfect days, which would have meant every chance of success. Graham came back on the evening of the 10th, but now, in addition to a falling glass and cloudy weather, it was found that Murphy, my second guide, had poisoned his arm. A doctor staying at the Hermitage declared it impossible for him to think of climbing for a fortnight. Only one trained guide remained, and him we could not take, leaving a houseful of people stranded with no one to guide them anywhere. The only alternative to giving up the expedition was to take a porter, leave him at the last bivouac, and try what Graham and I could do alone. We discussed this plan from all points. I was willing to take the extra risk, and the chance of failure it involved, rather than not make an attempt at all, having perfect confidence in Graham's

64 THE CONQUEST OF MOUNT COOK

ability to get me safely to the summit, if it were humanly possible. Graham on his side was equally confident of my ability to climb rocks, as compared to any man he had mountaineered with, and was willing to climb two, under the circumstances. So we made our plans accordingly.

The fact that I was going to attempt Mount Cook leaked out, and in consequence I had to face a storm of disapproval and criticism. Every one was against us: they came at us separately and together to say it was "madness" or "an unjustifiable risk."

Mr. Earle's guide, Jack Clark, who was a member of the first party to ascend Mount Cook, did his best to persuade me from attempting the climb with only Graham. He urged that climbing two was against all mountaineering rules. I pointed out this rule was mainly intended for snow and ice work, and that we were taking the Hooker route, specially because it was a rock climb, which made all the difference in any case, but especially in mine. I admitted it was no doubt hard for him to believe in my rock-climbing capacity as he had never been out with me, but he must acknowledge that a traverse of Mount Malte Brun such as we had made, not only by a new and difficult route, but in the fastest time on record, was a reliable test as to my powers of rock-climbing and endurance. It was even a test that none of the men who had already climbed Mount Cook had been put to. I concluded if he would simply ignore the fact that I was a woman, and judge me as an individual on my climbing merits, the case might appear to him in a less alarming light. The only person who knew anything about my climbing from experience was Mr. Earle, and he stood by me absolutely and encouraged the expedition. The opposition party, finding they were wasting their efforts upon me, turned their attention to Graham, only to be met with imperturbable unconcern, mixed with a



THE HOOKER RIVER AND MOUNT COOK.

To face page 64.

polite surprise that any one should try to interfere with what were so obviously my private affairs. With hopes dashed at all points the attacking party desisted, contenting themselves with Cassandra-like prophecies as to our probable end.

On Friday, January 21st, the sun came out once more after four days of pouring rain; at 4.30 p.m. Tom, the porter, Graham, and I left the Hermitage. The men were both heavily laden, as we had to take an equipment sufficient for four days. This included two tents, sleeping-bags, extra clothes, and provisions. In spite of swags that must have weighed 50 lb. each, the men's spirits were in nowise damped, and mine were at bubbling-point, since we were really off at last, in spite of all obstacles. After leaving the Hermitage we crossed the Hooker River, and followed along its right-hand bank on a track cut in the cliff. Fifty feet below us the torrent roared along in its narrow bed, flashing foam-white over the boulders that impede its course. The evening was perfect, and leaving the river we sauntered the seven miles to our first bivouac. The track winds through a grassy meadow, studded here and there with great patches of white mountain lilies and bushes of veronica. To the left Mount Sefton's white wall towered above us, and straight ahead, blocking the whole valley and looking as if you had but to put out a hand and touch it, stood the centre of all our hopes, Mount Cook. We bivouacked under its shadow in a grassy valley. The tents were soon pitched, and our meal prepared over a cheery fire by which we sat and talked till 11 p.m. It was a perfect moonlight night, its stillness only disturbed now and then by the boom of an avalanche off Mount Sefton and the splash of a distant waterfall; it seemed wasteful to bury one's self in a tent on such a night, but at last I crept into mine, and putting my boots under my rucksack for a pillow, wriggled into my sleeping-bag and endeavoured quite fruitlessly to go to sleep. About 2 a.m. I dozed

66 THE CONQUEST OF MOUNT COOK

off. At 4 a.m. sounds of the fire being lighted drifted in, and shortly after I was provided with the luxury of a cup of morning tea. It was a beautiful morning, and at five o'clock we set out with light hearts for our long tramp to the head of the Hooker Glacier. We had to climb down a great wall of moraine to reach the glacier, up which we travelled without difficulty until we arrived at the icefall. Here the crevasses were so bad that it was impossible to force a route through them, so putting on the rope we decided to leave the glacier and climb the rocks on the right. These presented no difficulties to me with only an ice-axe to look after, but to the men, weighted with heavy and ungainly swags, they meant hard work. After about an hour we reached Captain Head's old bivouac, and found some stores he had left behind. As it was half-past nine we had some breakfast, and rested for a while before descending to the glacier again. Once on the glacier our troubles began. Usually above the icefall one may be sure of comparatively smooth going till about the end of March, when the crevasses open out. Unfortunately for us, we found the ice already badly broken up, and it gave us endless trouble looking for bridges over the crevasses. Graham said the glacier was in infinitely worse condition than when he travelled up it with Mr. Earle in March 1909. Once we thought we were cut off altogether and would have to give up the attempt to reach Mount Cook. A great crevasse yawned at our feet, crossing the glacier from side to side; it was too wide to jump, and a bridge was nowhere to be seen. Freeing himself from the rope, Graham followed it along in both directions, while Tom and I waited to hear our fate. In about twenty minutes Graham returned saying there was only one crossing-place, and he would like me to come and look at it; after he had tied himself on the rope again we proceeded to the place. Here the crevasse was about 20 feet wide, with sheer sides of blue-green ice, and apparently bottomless; over this chasm was

flung a fragile snow bridge, so narrow it would be impossible to walk across it. My heart sank as I looked. "Is there really no way across but that?" I asked. "None; but I think we can straddle it, if you are not afraid. It is our only chance, and if we succeed I think we will be at the end of our troubles," Graham answered. When I agreed, he asked me to take off the rope, so as to give him more length. It was still tied round Tom's waist, and he was directed to play it round his ice-axe, which was firmly wedged in the snow. Getting on to the bridge at all was a ticklish performance. It was about 3 feet below the surface-level, and looked very fragile where it joined the crevasse wall. I watched with a sickening feeling, expecting every second to see the bridge give way as Graham's full weight was put upon it. He is a very big man and weighs something over twelve stone, and it did not seem possible that this fragile-looking snow bridge could stand the strain. With infinite care and lightly as a cat he lowered himself on to it, and cautiously putting a leg on either side of the narrow ridge worked himself along with the aid of his ice-axe. At last he reached the other side and crawled up on to the solid glacier. "Come on, it is quite safe," he called to me cheerfully; so tying myself on to the rope again, I obeyed. I don't know how I got on to the bridge, it seemed to take ages; I was so frightened of not distributing the weight properly and breaking through, and the black abyss below me was not an encouraging thing to fall into. Once safely settled I cautiously worked my way along as my leader had done; I was not consciously afraid and certainly had no desire to fall off, but when I crawled on to the glacier beside Graham my heart was beating so hard I only just nodded in answer to his question as to whether I felt all right. Next the swags were tied on to the rope and hauled over, and lastly Tom safely negotiated the bridge, and we all stood together once more and gazed triumphantly at the conquered foe. We experienced no

68 THE CONQUEST OF MOUNT COOK

further difficulty, but the sun was cruelly hot, and burnt down upon us from a cloudless sky, until the reflected glare from the ice was almost unbearable, in spite of dark glasses. We plodded steadily on up the steeply rising head of the glacier, and about 2 p.m. reached the bivouac, the situation of which is on a small patch of rocks at an altitude of 8,000 feet. The place was just large enough to pitch two tents; the last party had kindly removed the larger stones, and what was left was a nice assortment of small sharp stones like road metal. I suppose my expression betrayed me as I surveyed this, for Graham at once hastily assured me that it would be quite comfortable once he had picked it over a bit and made a few convenient holes. Meanwhile snow was melting off a sun-warmed rock, and running into all our available vessels. While we waited for the water the men pitched the tents, using our ice-axes for posts and the Alpine rope for a ridge pole. When pitched these tents are just about high enough to sit up straight in, and big enough to accommodate three persons comfortably. As soon as the water was ready it was put on to boil in a methylated spirit cooker, which boils two quarts in about ten minutes. After lunch we all crawled into our tents and tried to sleep. It was intensely hot; any one who had not experienced it would find it hard to believe that at an altitude of 8,000 feet, surrounded by snow and ice, one could be in a tent with the flaps open and swelter as in an oven. Sleep was impossible, so I lay with my head out of the door and looked at my surroundings. Straight in front of me was a gap like a half-circle in the Dividing Range, known as Baker's Saddle; through this I could see soft billowy clouds on the Westland side, and rising out of them the tops of the mountains. The most noticeable was Mount Sefton, a snow-crowned pyramid towering high above all else.

This new side of an old friend was disconcerting; from the Hermitage, Mount Sefton is a tremendous wall running north and south for about a quarter of a mile. From my

Mount Selton



THE MOUNT COOK BIVOUAC ON THE HOOKER SIDE.

To face page 08

new view-point a jagged rock ridge in the south-west led to a sharp peak which rose at one bound to a thousand feet above it—evidently two sides of a mountain may differ as much as the proverbial two sides of a question.

About 5 p.m. Graham turned out and announced he was going to reconnoitre our route for next day, and kick steps while the snow was yet soft. While he was gone Tom appeared with a troubled countenance, the source of which I soon discovered was the fact that he was to be left in the bivouac while we made the final attack. He begged me to put a word in with Graham to allow him to accompany us. I pointed out as considerately as possible that he knew nothing of climbing, and that our expedition was already considered a rash one, so to add an untried and untrained member to it would be the height of folly. I felt inclined to remind him of his feelings on Mount Sealy, but refrained. Graham came back in the middle of the discussion, and squashed poor Tom's hopes at once. He was looking weary and dispirited, and I soon learned from him that everything was as bad as it well could be, consequently he had not much hope of success for the morrow. By 9 p.m. we were all settled for the night. I expected to be bitterly cold, but fortunately it was very still, and after putting on all my spare clothes and crawling into my sleeping-bag, I managed to keep passably warm. Sleep I could not; between excitement at the thought of the coming climb, my rocky bed, and the continuous boom of avalanches that thundered from La Perouse opposite, rest was impossible. Before morning a wind arose and the sides of the tent began to flap angrily. At 2.30 a.m. I heard Graham inquiring if I were awake. On my answering he came to my tent with the news that the glass was going down and the wind rising; these facts did not add to our cheerfulness. Still we determined to start if possible, so packed our rucksac in readiness, and breakfasted with what cheerfulness we could muster while waiting for day-

70 THE CONQUEST OF MOUNT COOK

light. The wind seemed to be dying down, and at 4.45 a.m. we set out, leaving Tom still sound asleep. The snow was frozen hard, but we easily followed in Graham's footsteps of the previous night. We traversed along a steep snow slope until we reached the head of the basin formed by the west buttress of Mount Cook, Green's Saddle, and Mount Dampier. From side to side at the junction of rock and snow this basin is seamed with a huge burschund. Climbing to the lower lip of this we sought a possible crossing-place. Where Mr. Earle's party had crossed it the previous March was impossible. We kept away to the right as our only chance of finding a bridge. At least we found a place that looked possible, but dangerous, the rocks above it being heavily coated with snow and ice, and up these we must find our way. I anchored with the rope round my ice-axe, while Graham crossed the schrund and began attacking the icicles and loose snow on the rocks above him, to clear a few possible hand- and foot-holds. His position was most precarious, and the task looked hopeless. As I watched and waited every warning that I had received before starting on this expedition came back to me. For the first time I realized how helpless we would be if Graham came to grief and had no one but a girl to depend upon. After a while it was evident that there was only one possible point of attack, and this was out of reach unless he had some one's shoulders to stand upon. Bitterly we regretted the absence of Murphy at this moment. It was no use offering myself as a step ladder, as my modest eight stone would hardly bear the weight of a six-foot man; and my climbing on Graham's shoulders and trying my luck as leader he would not hear of, the foothold above being so slight that when I got there it was doubtful if I could keep my balance while giving him some assistance with the rope. If either of us lost our balance the inevitable consequence was a fall into the schrund. We were beaten, and I knew it; so quietly I suggested

that he should come down, and after one more hopeless look he complied, and was soon standing beside me on the brink of the schrund. Neither of us had much to say; it was one of the bitterest moments I ever experienced, and mere words were useless. We must have stood there half an hour, knowing it was hopeless, yet hating to leave, thinking of all the plans we had made and the obstacles we had overcome to be landed in such a cul-de-sac. One thing did console me a trifle, and that was the knowledge that no man or woman would climb Mount Cook by this route for another year; and by that time I would be in the field again. For the time being I was beaten, but only till it was possible to try again. At last with a sigh we agreed it was no use standing there and freezing any longer, so reluctantly I led down, following our footsteps back to the bivouac, at which we arrived at 8.30 a.m. to find Tom still peacefully sleeping. We indulged in a second breakfast, about the most cheerless meal I ever partook of, and packing up, started on our long homeward tramp. The day turned grey and cold, and another consolation was offered to us in the fact that even if we had succeeded, we would have been half frozen and had no view—that wonderful view which I had pictured in my imagination so often. Well, I could wait another year, and so I began building plans again as we toiled homeward.

We safely straddled over our crevasse, and by 3 p.m. we were back at our first bivouac. By this time the only thing I cared about was sleep, not having had any for two nights. Graham was not in much better case, so we threw ourselves down in the long grass, and left Tom, who had had his full share, to do all the work. I most deeply resented being awakened to eat, food being as nothing compared to sleep; at 4 p.m. it took some moral persuasion to rouse me for our seven-mile tramp to the Hermitage. Once started, the walking soon became merely mechanical, and we plodded steadily along and reached

72 THE CONQUEST OF MOUNT COOK

the Hooker Bridge in about an hour and a half. Here we paused for a few moments' rest. I was just trying to make myself look respectable, in case I was not able to sneak in the back way unobserved, when Professor Spencer and a party of friends hove in sight. I had to submit to introductions, questions, and sympathy, knowing the while that my appearance was hardly calculated to inspire any one with a sympathy for mountaineering. A badly sunburnt face, wind-whipped hair, and an exceedingly abbreviated climbing costume none the better for having been slept in for two nights, were a sum total no doubt appalling to the visitor fresh from civilization. I escaped as soon as possible, and reached the Hermitage with an hour to spare before dinner. At that meal I was able to present myself in a somewhat less appalling condition and take up the cudgels for mountaineering against the assaults of the uninitiated. Next day I took a well-earned rest and did not appear till lunch-time, and then spent a lazy afternoon writing and reading. The two following days were wet, but on the 27th it seemed inclined to clear. Seizing the opportunity, the professor and I, accompanied by Graham, set off for the Ball hut. We wished to make a trip across the Dividing Range to the West Coast via Graham's Saddle, and back by the Copland Pass to the Hermitage. Fate ruled otherwise, and we spent four days of pouring rain at the hut, and then, despairing of fine weather and distinctly tired of our cramped quarters, returned on the fifth wet day to the Hermitage. The professor's time was getting short, so he decided to give up the West Coast journey and spend a few days at his favourite Lake Wanaka instead.

Meanwhile a young Canadian had expressed a wish to go to Westland via the Copland Pass and back by Graham's Saddle; this fell in with my plans, so we joined forces and decided to start on the first opportunity.

CHAPTER VII

WESTLAND

Could tints be deeper, skies less dim,
More soft and fair,
Jewelled with milk-white clouds that swim
In fairest air?
The soft moss sleeps upon the stone,
Green tendrils of the scrub vine zone,
The dead grey trunks and boulders red.
Roofed by the pine and carpeted
With maidenhair.
But far and near, o'er each, o'er all,
Above, below,
Hangs the great silence like a pall
Softer than snow.

ESSEX EVANS.

AT 4 a.m. on February 2nd a shadowy party assembled for breakfast in the dim light of the Hermitage dining-room—Mr. Earle, his cousin, Jack Clark, Peter Graham, Mr. Frind, and myself. Mr. Earle's party were off up the Tasman Glacier and we for the Copland Pass. It was a merry breakfast in spite of the ungodly hour. Professor Spencer, in scanty attire, graced its end, and with much handshaking and wishes of good luck we took our separate routes at 4.30 a.m.

The morning was perfect, and the well-known way up the Hooker gained a new charm at that early hour. The rising sun flushed the cold mountains to life and outlined the far blue foothills against a sea of crimson and gold.

74 THE CONQUEST OF MOUNT COOK

We reached the foot of the pass about 7 a.m., and paused awhile for a second breakfast before beginning the climb. Our way lay up a long, steep rock ridge which presents no difficulties, only a steady grind for 3,000 feet. The hot summer sun blazed on our backs, and we paused frequently to mop our dripping faces and moisten our parched throats by eating the oranges with which a thoughtful member of the party had stuffed the rucksack pockets. All about us clumps of the New Zealand edelweiss clung bravely to the rocks; their fat little white flowers and silver-grey leaves peeped out of every nook and cranny with a cheerful optimism that was infectious. We gathered a handful and decorated our hat-bands, and then pursued our upward way. The rock ridge merges into a steep snow slope about 200 feet from the summit; as this was somewhat more crevassed than usual we put on the rope. We had, however, no difficulty in making our way, and safely reached the summit at twelve o'clock.

Eagerly I gazed over the rocky parapet which forms the narrow, jagged wall of the pass. The great dividing range was conquered at last, and Westland spread before me. Below lay a steep and narrow valley, through which the Copland River ran like a silver riband; dark green forests rose from its banks and led up to sombre rock ridges and snow-capped peaks. Far away at the river's mouth a white line marked the waves breaking on the beach, and beyond blue sea merged into blue sky. Behind me lay Mount Cook, glistening silver-white in the morning sunshine; cold, cruel, and careless the great peak pierced the sky. "It slayeth and it saveth, nowise moved, except unto the working out of doom." The half-forgotten lines rang in my mind as I turned away and looked sadly at the soft and lovely land of promise, which, for all its beauty, could never excite that passionate thrill of exultation and devotion which lured me to battle in the icy heights of the great mountains.



MOUNT COPLAND.

To face page 74.

We scrambled over the wall, and descending the rocks were soon enjoying a wild glissade down the steep snow slopes. Then came a scramble over some rocks which led to the grass slopes and to a great isolated boulder. Here we paused for a meal. While wandering round looking for firewood, I was attracted to the ravine at the back of our boulder by the roar of falling water. The snow slopes drained into this ravine and quickly formed a rushing mountain stream, which just below us leapt from off a shelf of rock and fell sheer to the valley below; it was a dark, sunless, eerie spot, into which these gay and restless waters tumbled. From where I stood it was impossible to see the bottom, and only in imagination could I follow the silver shower. Unfortunately our way lay in the opposite direction, and we had no time to spare, or I would have attempted to get a view from below of these precipitous cliffs and the wonderful fall.

After our meal we set off again over slippery snow grass slopes which at last brought us down to the head of the Copland River. We followed along the left bank as best we could, scrambling through the thick scrub and undergrowth, or walking over the top of the tough alpine vegetation. I was unhampered by a swag, so had a comparatively easy time of it. The men, laden with bulging rucksacs, were caught and pulled back at every yard. We had to cross two foaming mountain streams by jumping from boulder to boulder—this is a pastime I always enjoy, not yet having fallen in. At 5.30 our destination, Douglas Rock, was in sight; the approach to it is through thick tropical bush, where moss-covered tree-trunks and creeping ferns abound. The rock is a large overhanging shelf closed in on three sides, and the front opening on to dense bush. A fireplace occupies the middle of the open space, and serves to keep the inmates warm and drive away the sandflies and mosquitoes. The floor was thickly strewn with dried ferns, which were a great im-

76 THE CONQUEST OF MOUNT COOK

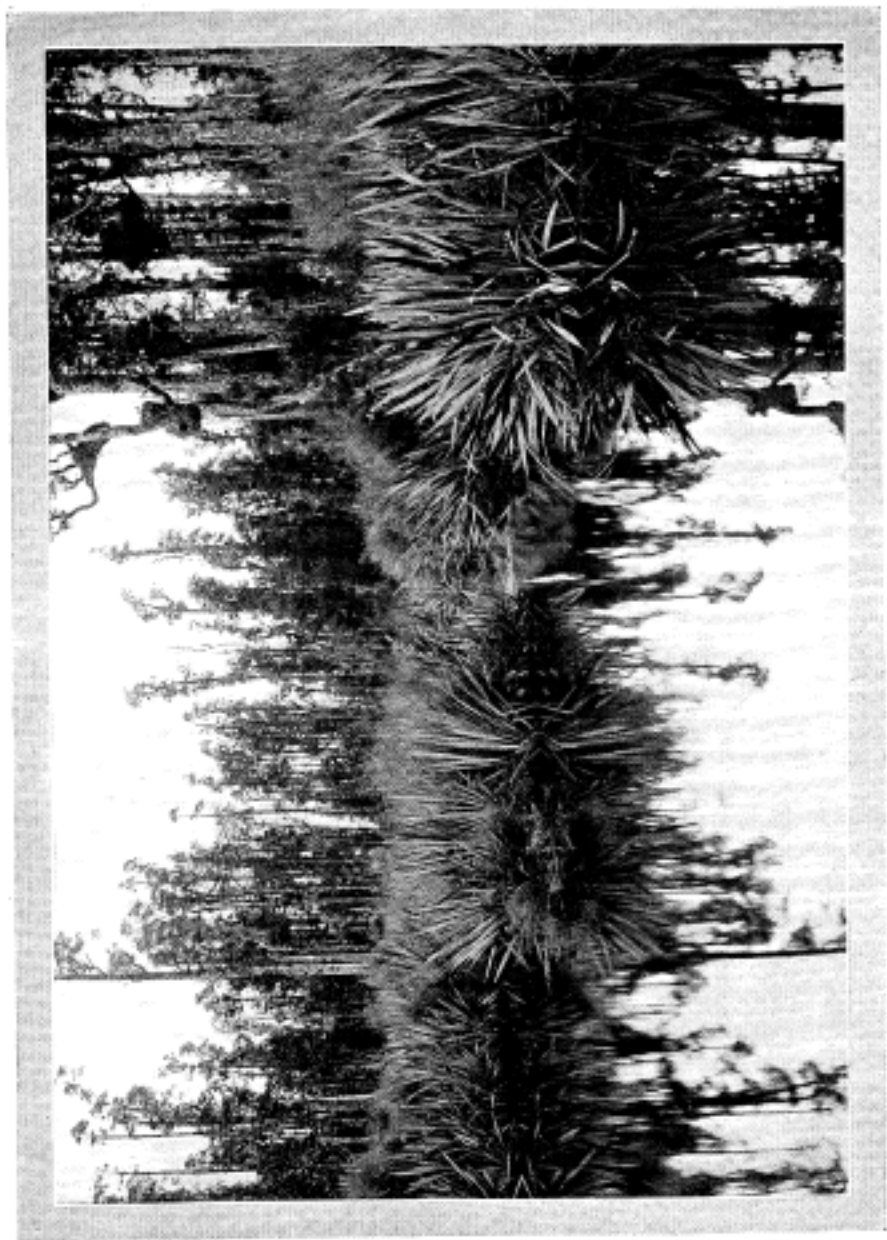
provement on the pointed stones of my last bivouac. A previous party had left two new sleeping-bags, which they had found too heavy to carry farther, so the bivouac was really quite luxurious, and we spent a most comfortable night. The fire went out towards morning, and this was the signal for a vigorous attack from sandflies, and no doubt made it easier for us to get up at 5 a.m. We started off at 6.30 a.m., travelling for miles on a narrow track cut through the dense bush. Beautiful ferns and moss clustered at the roots of the trees, and their gnarled trunks and overhanging branches were covered deep with moss, licapodium, and creeping ferns; here and there a ray of sunlight penetrated the dense growth, lighting it to exquisite tints of green, or a foaming mountain stream dashed in silver cascades over mossy boulders. Sometimes the path led us down to the Copland River, giving us beautiful peeps of snow-clad mountains with a foreground of forest and rushing stream. These excursions into the open were a great relief. The atmosphere in the bush is like that of a hot-house; the sun or wind rarely penetrates into it, and everything is dripping with moisture. One soon ceases to wonder at the tropical vegetation; it could hardly be otherwise in such an atmosphere. After about five miles we came out on an open grassy plain on the left side of the river, known as Welcome Flat. Dotted about it were great rata-trees, beautiful in their symmetry of glossy deep-green leaves and their wonderful crowns of crimson blossom. In striking contrast the opposite side of the river was fringed to the water's edge with the pale tender green of the ribbon woods, which hung their graceful boughs over the water and showered down myriads of silver-white blossoms, only comparable in beauty and purity to the shining snows of the distant mountains. We walked along the left-hand bank for about a mile, seeking a suitable ford where the water was not too deep and strong for safety. At last Graham picked

out a spot, and taking off putties, stockings, and boots, proceeded to roll up his knickerbockers as high as they would go; then he donned the boots again as a protection to his feet, and with the swag on his back waded into the river. In the deepest part it was nearly waist-high, and running strong, but he managed to cross safely, and leaving the swag on the farther shore, came back again and insisted on carrying me over. Mr. Frind had in the meantime waded to the opposite bank and seized the opportunity to take a photograph, the result of which was mainly wildly waving limbs and large nailed boots. I wisely confiscated this interesting negative, much to the artist's sorrow, but with great peace of mind on my own part. Once more we penetrated into the bush and toiled along in the moist, heated air, too enervated to properly appreciate all the wonderful beauty around us. At 11.30 a.m. we reached the Copland Hot Springs, which are hidden away in the bush, and only to be traced by the continuous cloud of steam that hovers round the tree-tops. To our disgust the water was too hot to bathe in, as we had been looking forward to doing the whole morning. This was my first experience of a hot spring, and I examined it with great interest. I suppose it occupied a space of about ten square yards, and was surrounded on every side by the forests. There were four pools of varying sizes and heat. The boiling one fiercely bubbled over and ran into the next, which was the usual bathing pool, but with the influx from the boiler was too hot for humans on this occasion; on the other side were two small lukewarm pools covered with scum and most uninviting to look upon. The ground between the pools was hot to the feet and crusty, forming into terraces which shaded from yellow to chocolate brown. The air was pervaded with a saline sulphury smell, that requires a week's residence before it can be assimilated with tolerance. Not being so inured, we shortly departed to a shady green

78 THE CONQUEST OF MOUNT COOK

glade, and propping ourselves against the moss-covered tree-trunks fortified the inner man with lunch. After our meal we set off again for the last few miles of our tramp, horses having been engaged to meet us at Architect Creek. About a mile above Architect we came on a camp and several men clearing a track through the forest, the Government having at last begun the long-talked-of path which is to connect the West and East Coasts via the Copland Saddle. Judging by the rate of progress, we observed it seemed likely that the happy day when the visitor from the Hermitage could ride from the foot of the Copland Pass to Scott's house was still many seasons off. At Architect Creek we were met by a boy with three horses. My pleasure at the thought of a ride was somewhat damped by discovering that they all had men's saddles on. However, the track was so rough and steep that it was rarely possible to ride at a faster pace than a walk, so I was not as unhappy as I might have been. The road follows along the river bank most of the way, giving lovely views here and there. The rata were particularly fine on the left bank, the blossom making great masses of glowing crimson amongst the deep-green forest foliage.

At last we left the river and reached a flat covered with tussock grass and flax-bushes: here we livened up our horses to a canter, which shortly developed into a race between Mr. Frind and myself. We galloped in and out of flax-bushes, the horses swerving and dodging all obstacles with the ease that becomes second nature after a few seasons of cattle mustering. A good stock horse is supposed to be able to turn on the space of a half crown, and becomes an exceedingly dangerous animal to any but an expert rider. Ours had not reached this pitch, or we probably would have been left sitting in a flax-bush; as it was, it was more good luck than good riding that saved us, I am afraid, but we gained so much enjoyment



MARINAPCA CREEK, WESTLAND.

out of our gallop that it was cheap at the risk of a tumble. We arrived at Scott's farm-house at 6 p.m., and welcomed civilization in the shape of a good dinner, a hot bath, and a real bed. Next day we had a thirty-mile ride ahead of us, so I set about procuring a side-saddle. Being unused to riding astride, it made me stiff in the knees, and was not half as pleasurable. There being no other, Miss Scott kindly lent me her own saddle and favourite horse, which kindness and consideration added considerably to my comfort and well-being for the rest of the journey.

Early next morning there was a thick fog and light rain, so we did not get away till about 9.30 a.m. We followed a good bush road, winding through typical West Coast forest until we came to the Cook River. This is the usual New Zealand river, a huge bed of grey stones with four or five streams meandering through it in all directions. Sometimes it is both difficult and dangerous to cross, but on this occasion we managed it with little trouble. About a mile farther on we came to Williams's farm, where we paused for lunch and an hour's rest. Here we had some disappointments in the matter of scenery, the mountains remaining obstinately concealed in the mist, and of the Fox Glacier we had but one little glimpse before the clouds closed down upon it again.

We left Williams's at 2.30 p.m. for our seventeen-mile ride over the range to Waiho Gorge and the far-famed Franz Josef Glacier. We followed a rough mountain track, the embankments of which were smothered in a profusion of beautiful ferns and mosses. It rained lightly all the way, just enough to obscure the distant view and keep us cool.

For Graham the ride was a triumphal progress, he having lived all his life, till he became a guide, in this part of the world. Every one we met knew him, and stopped to have a yarn; or he had friends on the farms who could not be passed by without a word of greeting.

80 THE CONQUEST OF MOUNT COOK

We mere tourists, being of no account, used to race off for a gallop where the road permitted. I am afraid we left a reputation for wild riding behind us, and Mr. Frind announced sadly that he would have to take his meals "off the mantelpiece" for the next few days. At 5.30 p.m. we reached the populous town of Waiho, which consists of Batson's hotel, Mrs. Graham's cottage, to which is attached the post-office and store, and three bark humpies, sole relic of the gold-fever days. I earned an undesired reputation for sarcasm by stopping at one of these huts and asking to be directed to Waiho; Graham was away behind somewhere, yarning as usual. We stopped at Mrs. Graham's cottage, which is situated with a beautiful view on to the Franz Josef Glacier. The garden was full of bright flowers, the first cultivated ones I had seen after leaving Fairlie, and the veranda was covered from end to end with many-hued geraniums, the whole making as picturesque a spot as could well be imagined. We were warmly welcomed by Mrs. Graham and her youngest son Alex, and fed with delicious tea and cakes. Mrs. Graham is a wee woman of only about five feet. She looks incredible as the mother of four strapping sons, all of whom are over six feet and broad in proportion. She is over eighty years of age, but still enjoys life, and dearly loves to meet people from the outside world from which she has so long been a stranger; she can tell many a tale of the old wild gold-digging days in Australia and New Zealand. Her two big sons look after her and adore her in a manner charming to see; but as they both have the call of the mountains in their blood, and have to be much away, the "little mother" spends many an anxious day and night when they are out on hazardous ascents and fail to get back to time.

We strolled over to Batson's about 6.30, and there found Dr. Teichelmann, a well-known West Coast climber, and Mr. Linden, of Geelong. They had both been waiting

some days for a chance of crossing over Graham's Saddle to the Hermitage. They were starting the following morning under the guidance of Alex Graham for a bivouac up the Franz Josef. We decided to spend at least two days at Waiho Gorge and explore the glacier, and then, weather permitting, follow the others across Graham's Saddle.

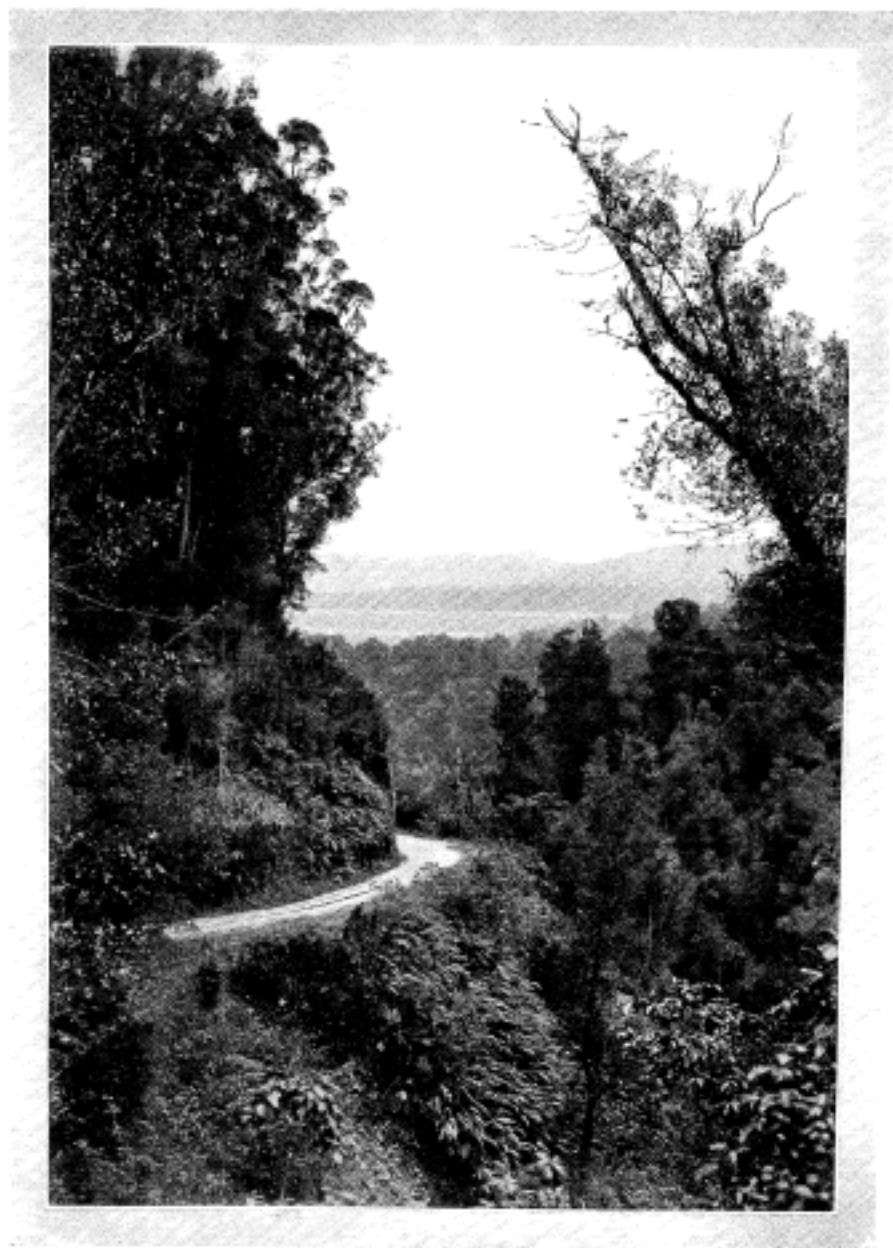
The next morning was gloriously fine, and the view from Batson's something to marvel at. We stood on a flat of tussock grass, strewn thickly with intense scarlet lichen-covered boulders; beyond, the Franz Josef Glacier rose abruptly from a tropical forest, the trees of which seemed to fringe its very banks. Giant tree-ferns and crimson rata hung over the white ice, which rose steeply to the lovely peaks at its head. These shimmered in the sun, standing out with dazzling purity from a background of cloudless sky. Never had I dreamed of anything more lovely, and I ceased from that moment to be a scoffer at the beauty of this wonderful Westland, except now and again to tease some proud West Coaster to defending it with all the ardour of a true son of the soil.

At the back of the hotel is a grand swimming pool of some mineral water; it is delightfully soft, almost oily. In it I disported myself most of the morning, and emerged feeling as if I had a skin made of velvet and much invigorated. In the afternoon we took a leisurely walk through the bush to the glacier; it was too late and we too lazy to go on to the ice. Mr. Frind, with the gallantry of the true Canadian, climbed a large rata-tree to get me some flowers; he was very stiff and sore from riding, and when he got up he could not get down. I sat on a boulder and endeavoured to look sympathetic and shouted directions. Fortunately, he also had a sense of humour, so when he ruefully reached the ground and presented me with the hard-won blossoms, we joined in a joyous peal of laughter over his unhappy plight. The next day, Sunday, was wet,

82 THE CONQUEST OF MOUNT COOK

and we amused ourselves as best we could ; I spent most of the morning in the swimming hole. Just as we were finishing dinner there came a sound of heavy boots and weary voices in the passage. It was Dr. Teichelmann and Mr. Linden, who had been driven back from their bivouac for the third time that week by bad weather. The doctor was unfortunate enough to have a toe slightly frostbitten, so retired to his room and was not visible that night. Their account of the days spent in the bivouac so diminished our desire to do the Graham's Saddle trip that we decided to return as we had come, endeavouring to piece in the missing bits of the view, and, weather permitting, spend a few hours on the Fox Glacier.

Monday, February 7th, saw us mounting on our horses once more for the return journey. It was hot but pleasant riding as we wound slowly up the seven miles of steep ascent to the top of the range, stopping now and then for Mr. Frind to photograph some particularly enticing peep of snow-clad mountains or virgin forest. The bridge over the Waikukupa had just received its finishing timbers, and we dashed across with a great clatter of hoofs instead of fording the river. We had been speculating as to how we would fare at this stream, as the two days' rain had been enough to swell it considerably. The rise and fall of New Zealand rivers is very rapid, and as their courses are continually changing it is difficult to know what to expect or to evade the dangers in fording them. By the time we reached Williams's farm ominous clouds had gathered over the mountains, and we decided to give up all thought of riding the extra six miles to the glacier (Fox), and push on to Scott's. We were a day late as it was, and if we were delayed another, as seemed likely in the uncertain state of the weather, it would leave me with only just time to catch my boat. It was evidently ordained that we should not see the famous view from the Cook River ; it had evaded us on the way over, and



MOUNT HERCULES ROAD, SOUTH WESTLAND.

To face page 82.

our fate was the same now. We waited an hour on the bank, encouraged by the gleams of sunlight that now and again appeared. Tantalizing glimpses of snowy peaks hovered before our eyes and in a second disappeared again. After several fruitless attempts at a photograph, we decided it was hopeless to expect the weather to clear, so we forded the river, which was no higher than on our forward journey, and made all haste for Scott's. Everything went well to within three miles of our destination; we were cantering along in single file, Mr. Frind some way ahead, then Graham, and lastly myself. Suddenly Graham's horse put his foot in a rabbit hole, lurched forward, and rolled over an embankment at the side of the road, and lay still among the ferns. Graham was pinioned beneath him by one leg. I was off as soon as the horse went down, but Mr. Frind, hearing nothing, went on unconcernedly. "Shall I sit on his head?" I asked, knowing this was the correct thing to do to prevent a horse from rising, but not particularly anxious to try the experiment in person. However, I was told to stand aside, and gingerly Graham managed to worm himself out of his uncomfortable position; the horse never made the slightest attempt to rise till we pulled him up by the bridle. That neither horse nor man was badly hurt was a marvel, as an ice-axe was dangling from each side of the swag, and either might have made a nasty wound. Graham's chief concern seemed to be that he was covered from head to heel with burrs, so Mr. Frind and I did our best to scrape him down with our pocket-knives; it took some time. Suddenly Graham looked at me and began to laugh, and on my inquiring why, he turned to Mr. Frind and said, "She was off her horse before you could say 'knife' and asking, 'Shall I sit on his head?'" and they both proceeded to laugh immoderately. Slightly mystified, I inquired what was wrong with my proceeding. Should I have wept or fainted? They

84 THE CONQUEST OF MOUNT COOK

hastily admitted my course was quite correct, but still seemed to find it a great joke, so I gave them up as hopeless, and we remounted and proceeded the rest of the way at a sober pace. Of course we jeered at our guide, who was the only skilled rider the party boasted, for coming to grief; but he took it with his usual philosophic calm and chuckled away to himself over "sitting on his head." We arrived at Scott's at 7 p.m. and were warmly welcomed.

Next day was too wet to start. We did make the attempt, but had to turn back, deciding it would be wiser to stay in our comfortable quarters than arrive at Douglas Rock wet through, with no chance of getting dry again. We engaged a Maori who was at Scott's to come over with us as porter. Mr. Frind had had enough of his swag on the forward journey.

Down in the stockyard in the afternoon we watched our new porter break in a buck-jumper. It was as fine an exhibition of horsemanship as I have ever seen, and put the professional buck-jumpers at the Christchurch Exhibition altogether in the shade. By the end of the performance the vicious, ugly brute, finding it impossible to dislodge his rider, was quite cowed. Next morning, when his master mounted him prepared for trouble, he was quite amenable to reason, enforced with a stockwhip.

We left Scott's at 8 a.m., the day being quite fine, and arrived at the Springs about 10.30 a.m. I had a hot bath, but did not enjoy it much; the mud was so slimy, it conjured up visions of all sorts of loathsome reptiles, and the sandflies made a good meal while I dressed. After lunch and an hour's rest we set off again, and reached Douglas Rock at 7 p.m. I had a glorious bath in a snow-fed stream; it was icy cold, but an immense improvement on the muddy old hot spring. We spent a peaceful night, as the fire did not go out this time and the sandflies were baffled. It began to rain at daylight,

and our prospects of crossing over the Copland Pass looked rather dim. Both Mr. Frind and I were booked to leave by the motor the following morning, and if we missed it could not get away for three days. Fortunately the weather showed some signs of clearing, so at 9 a.m. we made a start. In a few minutes we were drenched by the wet scrub and trees, but when the sun came out we dried again and were none the worse. We reached the summit of the pass at three o'clock. Clambering down, the long rock ridge seemed endless, but at last we reached the bottom. We wended our way along the right-hand side of the Hooker instead of the left, as we wanted to look at the site chosen for the new hut to be built for the convenience of parties crossing over the Copland Pass. I was specially interested, as I hoped this hut would save me one bivouac next year when I tried for Mount Cook again.

We arrived at the Hermitage at 6.30 p.m. After dinner I had to spend all my time packing, so had no chance of indulging in vain regrets over the end of my holiday. I found that the professor and Mr. Earle were also going down on the car, so we had quite a merry party. No sooner had I got to Sydney than word came through from Graham that the New Zealanders, fired by my attempt to climb Mount Cook, were putting up a woman candidate of their own to save New Zealand from the reproach that an Australian was the first woman to make the ascent. They did me the honour to imply that I would not fail on my next attempt, so were anxious to put their candidate in the field at once. A well-known guide declared he would "get the lady in question to the top if he had to carry her there." The Hooker route being closed for the season, they proposed to climb from the Tasman side and follow the Rev. Green's route.

The lady had no experience whatsoever in high climbing, and it struck me forcibly that she had no con-

86 THE CONQUEST OF MOUNT COOK

ception of the kind of expedition she was undertaking. The same cannot be said of the promoters of the scheme, who were mountaineers of sufficient standing to have had more sense than to take an untrained woman on such an expedition. Fortunately, I think, for all concerned they were overtaken with bad weather at the bivouac, and the expedition was given up. The enthusiasm seems to have been short-lived, as nothing was heard of it again.

At the risk of giving some offence I would like to point out that it is expeditions like the last-mentioned that will in the future spoil the splendid record the Southern Alps have so far maintained. In the twenty-eight years since the Hermitage has been opened to the public there has only been one bad climbing accident. This happened to an experienced mountaineer who was climbing alone, and fortunately was not fatal. The reason for this immunity is not far to seek. Climbers have been few, and they and the tourists who now come in hundreds every season have been supplied with competent guides. The tourists have been discouraged by every possible means from attempting even elementary mountaineering unless some competent persons were in charge of the party. A glance at the terrible death-roll of the European Alps is enough to convince any one of the folly of incompetent and reckless climbing. Any one who cares to look up the English *Alpine Journal* for May 1912 will find an illuminating list of the fatal alpine accidents in 1911, giving their number (114) and probable causes. The following remark is appended to this appalling list: "One thing is quite clear from all these records, and that is, that an accident of properly equipped and practical mountaineers is rare."

CHAPTER VIII

GETTING INTO TRAINING

Sing thou of Hope !
Of Hope that lights the world to strong endeavour !
Height beyond height but loftier summits show,
Depth beneath depth reveals a depth below.
Choose thou the best. There is no resting ever.
Sing thou of Hope !

ESSEX EVANS.

ON the principle that the early bird was likely to catch the mountaineering worm in the shape of Mount Cook, I left Sydney early in November 1910. For three months beforehand I had been training hard in the best physical culture school that Sydney possesses, "The Dupain Institute of Physical Education." I emerged from my quarter of strenuous work, under Miss Cadogan's capable hands, fit for anything, and with a reserve fund of endurance to draw upon which may mean all the difference between success and failure on a difficult and possibly dangerous climb. Graham looked me over with an approving eye when I arrived at the Hermitage, and admitted that I was trained to a hair and in better form than he had ever seen me. Nevertheless, he said it would be wise to spend a week or so in minor climbs, to put me thoroughly in touch with the mountains again, before we made our second attempt on Mount Cook. So Monday the 14th saw me setting forth for Mount Annette. The weather was astoundingly hot, worse than I had left behind me in Sydney, and as

88 THE CONQUEST OF MOUNT COOK

we did not get away from the Hermitage till 10.30 a.m. we had the full benefit of the worst of it.

We had only gone a short way when I observed something dripping from the rucksac. On examination we discovered the Thermos had sprung a leak, so while Graham went back for a refill I sauntered on to Black Birch Creek. I found on arriving there that a paternal Government had bridged it since my last visit; so gone were the exciting days when to cross it one must leap lightly from one slippery boulder to another, with the chance of an icy bath if the leap was unsuccessful. The bridge gave me a regretful feeling that the mountains were fast becoming civilized, and I felt a pang such as no doubt assails the mountaineer in Switzerland when he sees a railway crawling up a beloved peak. Fortunately it will take a generation or two for New Zealand to arrive at such a state of barbarism. For a long while yet, I hope, the happy climber may still have his mountain all to himself, undefiled by railways, tourists, and beer bottles. Graham joined me just beyond the bridge, and we sweltered up the steep and slippery grass slopes to the left of Sebastopol, which lead up to the Mount Annette Ridge. We lunched at an enchanting view-point and watched Mount Cook play hide-and-seek with impudent soft white clouds from Westland, but at last his dignity was overcome and he hid his sulky head for the time being. Lying on the cool grass was very pleasant after our hot scramble, and, loath to leave so charming a spot, I demanded all the Hermitage news, and we were soon deep in tales of the past and plans for the future. At last the mounting sun warned us that if we meant to accomplish anything it was time to be going; so we set off up the ridge leading to Mount Annette. It was uneventful climbing, and an icy wind greeted us on the summit, so we spent no time there, but descended via the Sealy Range, reaching the Hermitage at 6.30 p.m.

The next few days were wet, so we did nothing. Amongst the visitors at the Hermitage was a member of Scott's expedition, who had been sent up to gain some experience in glacier work and snow and ice conditions. Graham had instructions from the Government to put himself at the gentleman's disposal, so all hopes of climbing were off till this matter was disposed of. As anything was better than doing nothing, I joined in with the party, which consisted of Mr. T., his sister, and Mr. S., a Christchurch man. On Thursday, the 17th, we set out for the Ball hut. On the way Mr. T. decided he would like to explore the terminal face of the Tasman Glacier, so with his sister and Graham he set off for it. Mr. S. and I went on to the Ball hut and prepared dinner against their return.

Next morning was fine, so we started out to climb Mount Mabel and return to the Hermitage via the Ball Pass. The first hour is a wearisome business; we had to climb through scrub, waist and sometimes shoulders high. Even at that early hour of the morning the sun beat down upon us, and we sweltered and dripped with our exertions. Mr. T. and I defied all mountaineering rules and ate snow whenever we could get it; and I am bound to say suffered no ill-effects whatsoever. Eventually we reached the summit of Mount Mabel, 7,150 feet, and then descended to the Ball Pass. We had some glorious glissades, one 2,000 feet long, which swept in a gracious curve to avoid some rocks, and required no little skill to manipulate. We shot down to the Hooker Valley in twenty minutes, rather a contrast to the six hours it had taken us to toil up. It was terribly hot, so we rested by a stream at the foot of the snow slopes for an hour. Then we had a seven-mile tramp down the Hooker Valley to the Hermitage. Saturday's car brought up a load of tourists, so the guides were busy taking them minor excursions. The weather was so hot that I was not sorry to stay indoors and develop photographs.

90 THE CONQUEST OF MOUNT COOK

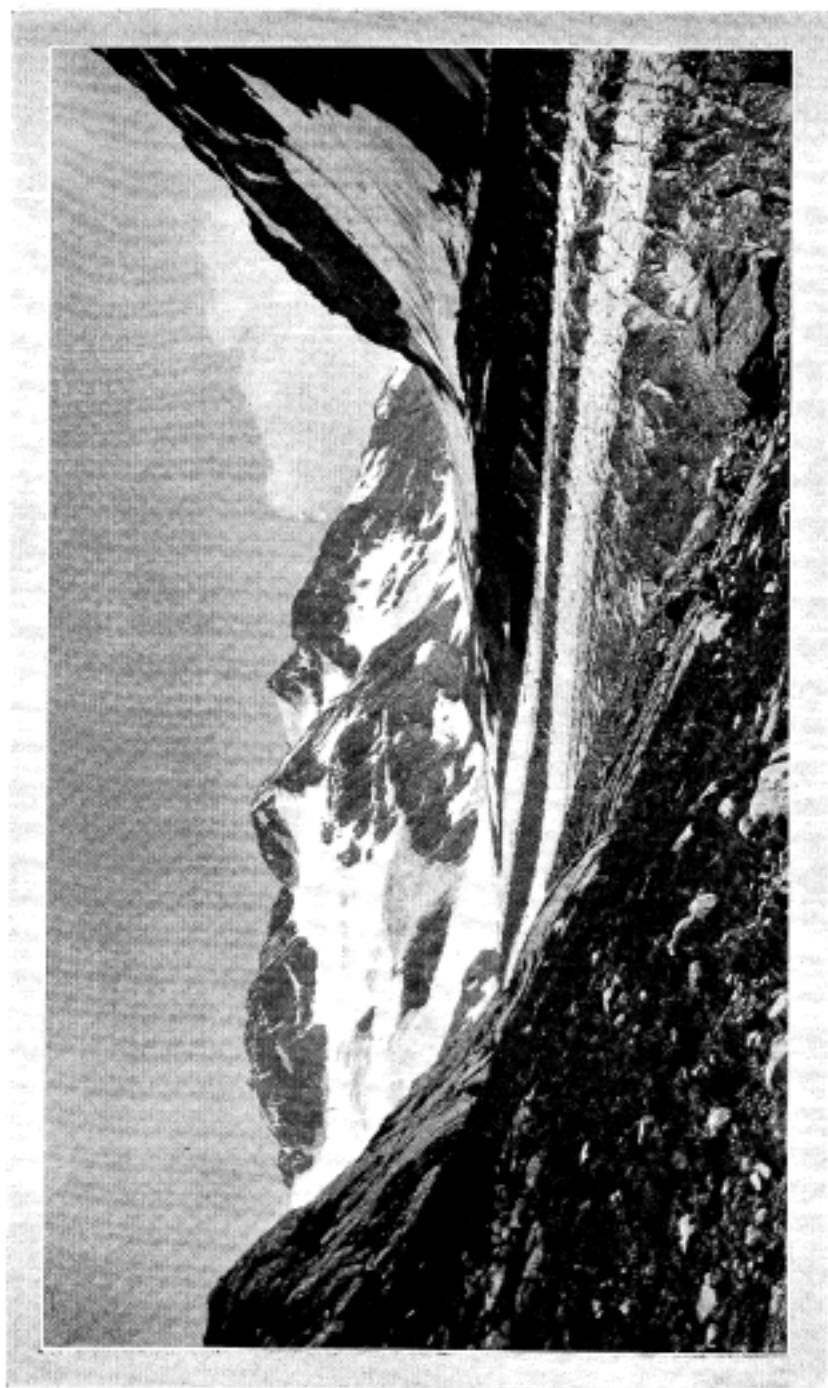
Mr. T. was leaving on Monday, after which Graham would be at my disposal and we might plan our attack on Mount Cook. The Hermitage was so full, and guides so few to cope with the demand made upon them, that I had decided not to chance being hung up again for want of a second guide; so I had written and engaged Alex Graham to be my private guide for a month. He was to come over from Westland as soon as we wired him that Mount Cook was in fit condition to climb. The top rocks were still icy, and we were waiting for them to clear before we made the attempt.

Mr. T. did not wish to climb on Sunday, so I promptly snared Graham, and we decided to make an expedition to the head of the Muller Glacier and climb Barron's Saddle. On Sunday we had an early breakfast in the kitchen, and were off before the Hermitage awoke.

I wanted to skip for joy, and felt like a truant evading school, bent on enjoying myself to the full. However, we soon settled down to an easy, steady pace.

Though it was only 6.30 a.m. the morning was intensely hot, and we knew it would take all our energy to tramp over the ten miles of moraine and glacier that lead to the saddle. I had not been up the Muller since the eventful day of my first climb. Looking back on it, it seemed a very long while ago, and when I thought of the scared little novice who hated stepping over a 2-foot crevasse I found I had unconsciously come to look at things from a very different angle since then.

We reached the clear ice at last, and plodded along silently in the heat. The sky was filled with soft white clouds, which made a splendid background for Mount Cook, so we called a halt, and I took some photographs, trying experiments with a yellow screen that had just been sent to me from Sydney. Then while we ate a second breakfast we took counsel together. The day was hot, the way to Barron's Saddle long and devoid of any hope of excitement;



THE MULLER GLACIER AND MOUNT BEALY.

To face page 90.

just a snow plug with an easy rise at the end. We both felt it was not good enough; we needed something requiring more effort and a spice of danger to make us forget the heat and thoroughly enjoy ourselves. Near the head of the Muller Glacier on the left-hand side stood two virgin peaks—one rose like a pyramid with a rock ridge leading to the summit, promising some good rock-work, which we both appreciate. Pointing to this peak, I suggested we should give up Barron's Saddle and make an attempt for the virgin peak. After a few moments' consideration Graham agreed, and off we went. We still had a mile or so of glacier to traverse, but it sped past in no time, to the tune of our joyous speculations as to what was in store for us and the hopes of conquering a virgin peak. We left the Muller Glacier at 11.15 a.m., keeping on the right-hand side of a small glacier—the Williams, I think. The snow was soft, but no sign of crevasses. However, Graham put his foot through one while he was intently gazing skyward, picking out a route, and went in up to his waist. In the middle of making a remark that he had better look where he was going, I fell into one myself, and found my toes dangling in space, and was only supported by clinging to my ice-axe, which was fortunately wedged firmly above me. Graham turned at my exclamation, to see only a head bobbing above the snow. I made several futile attempts to get out unaided, but the lip simply broke away with me, so at last Graham had to take me underneath the arms and ingloriously haul me to the surface. Too late we remembered what a thrilling photograph we could have taken. We took this episode as a warning to put on the rope, Graham remarking it would be "awkward for him if he lost me altogether." Shortly after this we gained the rocks, which were in splendid condition, not a loose stone anywhere. We spent a joyous ten minutes, but it was short-lived, for we soon came to an impossible bit, and had to give up the rocks in favour of a snow couloir. The slope we had to traverse

92 THE CONQUEST OF MOUNT COOK

was steep, and a week of burning sun had left it in a most treacherous condition; it was ready to avalanche at any moment. I rolled a stone on to it, and with a hiss a great piece of the slope slid away, gathering fresh snow every minute. We spent rather an uncomfortable time traversing this couloir, and would have gladly left it alone had any other way been practicable. Every time Graham took a step I waited with my heart in my mouth for the slope to slip away with us. Twice we heard the warning hiss, and small avalanches swept down on either side of us, leaving a deep groove in the snow from top to bottom, but fortunately nothing happened to us. I had no faintest desire to be rolled in a gigantic snowball for a thousand feet, and probably smothered in the process. We breathed a distinct sigh of relief when our feet touched solid rock on the other side. We pressed steadily up, and only encountered one more nasty place. This was a rounded projecting buttress of rock, very smooth and scant of hand- and foot-hold, and our rope was not long enough for Graham to reach a thoroughly safe position. I was none too secure myself, and quite helpless to stop him if he slipped. I clung with my face turned to the rock, my feet on a ledge, and my hands stuck in a crack above my head, for what seemed an eternity and was really about seven minutes, while he tried hold after hold, and at last let go with his feet and swung himself round, his whole weight resting on his arms, and worked himself along with his hands in a crack until he was round the obstacle and lost to view. In a moment he called to me to come on, and not put more trust in the rope than I could help, as he could not get into a good position until I moved and gave him a little more length. I made several attempts, but the thought of swinging in space over a snow slope that would avalanche if a pebble hit it was too much for me. I managed to give him the extra rope he needed, and then announced I was coming over the buttress instead

of round, if he could help me a bit with the rope. He agreed, and somehow I managed to haul myself up and arrived, breathless but safe, and we sat down in the first convenient spot, and concluded that we had had enough excitements for one day, and that this was the worst (or best, which ever way one looks at it) piece of rock-work I had done, and more difficult than anything we had met with on Mount Malte Brun last year. Another half-hour up an easy rock ridge and the summit was in sight. We reached it without difficulty at 2.15 p.m., and concluded we must have climbed 4,000 feet, having left the glacier three and a half hours before. We had no aneroid, so could not get the exact height of our peak, but it must be over 8,000 feet, as it was considerably above Barron's Saddle, and that is 7,654 feet. The day was perfect, with not a breath of wind. We stood and gazed around us trying to take in all the wondrous scene. Mount Sealy towered up quite close to us, looking strange and unexpectedly large from this side. The Dobson Valley stretched away beneath our feet; it is very narrow, with a silver thread of river winding through, and in the afternoon shadows looked like the hollow between two dark white-crested waves. I took a photograph of it, and it turned out for all the world like one of Doré's pictures in "Paradise Lost." The West Coast stretched away in front of us, ridge after ridge, peak after peak, to the horizon. The Muller Glacier wound like a white snake at our feet, Sefton's great white wall towering into the blue sky at its base. Farther north we could see La Perouse and St. David's Dome, and the whole length of the Hooker Glacier crowned by Mount Cook. Away eastward the Tasman and Murchison Glaciers and their respective peaks leading down to the Tasman River, whose course we could follow through yellow plains till it emptied itself into the blue of Lake Pukaki, fifty miles away.

I was indeed lucky in climbing my first virgin peak on such a day. Other peaks were ahead of me of greater

94 THE CONQUEST OF MOUNT COOK

name and fame, but I wondered if any of them would inspire me with the utter happiness, satisfaction, and peace of this little unknown peak, climbed on the spur of the moment and conquered only by strenuous effort. We lay in the sun on the summit for about an hour talking, taking photographs, and sometimes dozing. We decided to return via Mount Annette and Sebastopol. The snow was soft from the midday sun and we floundered knee-deep at every step. We crossed at the base of Mount Sealy rocks, a place of pleasant memories to me as the scene of my first good climb; from there through a pass that led to the slopes of Mount Annette. We traversed along towards Sebastopol, glissading whenever we could, and frequently bringing down small avalanches with us. Graham would not let me take off the rope, so I was nearly cut in two by it when brought up suddenly in mid-career. I thought I was tired of snow slopes and was thankful to see the last of them, but they were nothing to the never-ending grass slopes of Sebastopol: every step jarred me from head to foot and they were slippery as glass. Down one would go frequently into a Spaniard, which besides being picturesque are prickly. I should not have been surprised to have come to an inglorious end at any moment. At last we reached Black Birch Creek just as the setting sun dyed the surrounding mountains a fiery crimson. The time being half-past seven, it was no use hurrying, as we could not arrive in time for dinner, so we sauntered home in the most perfect hour of the day, the air still and warm, and the long tussock grass looking like a field of golden grain in the yellow evening light. Nature was in one of her softest and loveliest moods, and after our strenuous exercise we fully appreciated the parting beauties she so lavishly displayed, adding the final touch to a glorious day.

Since our climb I have some reason to believe that this was not a virgin peak, but was climbed by Mr. Malcolm Ross, of Wellington, in mistake for Mount Sealy. I have

not had the opportunity of clearing the matter up, but virgin or not the climb will always have a very pleasant place among my memories.

The next day we took a well-earned rest, but once restored to my usual vigour I began to feel impatient to be off and try Mount Cook. Graham acknowledged that our recent experiences had proved that no further training was necessary—the only doubt that remained was whether the top rocks were free enough of ice and snow for us to make the attempt. To decide this point we made up our minds to take a trip to the head of the Hooker Glacier and obtain a close view of them and also ascertain the state of the glacier.

I invited Mr. S. to join the expedition, as I knew he was anxious to see as much of the mountains as possible. Miss Murray Aynsley also decided to come with us as far as the new hut which was being built up the Hooker Valley, at the foot of the Copland Pass. We left the Hermitage for the hut on the afternoon of November 23. On arriving there we had somewhat of a picnic, it being even less finished than we had imagined. Murphy, who was doing the carpentry work, knocked up a couple of bunks for Miss Murray Aynsley and myself, and the men slept on the floor. There were no tables, chairs, etc., so we had our supper outside on the grass, and were all very merry and contented. It became bitterly cold after sundown, and we were glad to retire to our shelter and very shortly to bed.

We left the hut at 4.30 a.m. next day and proceeded without excitement to the head of the glacier. When we arrived there we decided to climb Harper's Saddle, as we had come so far and the view from there would be much more satisfactory. The slopes leading to the saddle are very steep, and about half-way up they were seamed with a large schrund from side to side. Mr. S. had no ice-axe, only a walking-stick, which put him at rather a disadvantage, the slope in some places being hard ice and lying at an angle

96 THE CONQUEST OF MOUNT COOK

of 60 degrees. However, we gained the summit, 8,580 feet, safely at 10 a.m. and sat down to study Mount Cook at our leisure. Shortly I was made joyful by Graham's verdict that another week of hot sun would free the top rocks of ice and leave everything in perfect condition for climbing.

An icy wind was blowing, which we tried in vain to dodge by descending a little on the western side and sheltering behind some rocks. We had something to eat there, and then climbed to the saddle again to take some photographs. This accomplished, we began the descent. I lent Mr. S. my ice-axe, as the steep icy steps were difficult to descend for a novice, especially when not properly equipped. I was not particularly happy myself during the descent: the wind smote us in fierce blasts, making it by no means easy to balance in the slippery ice steps. At last we arrived at the schrund, which we were able to jump, and after that our troubles were over. When we reached the hut we found that Miss Murray Aynsley had not forgotten to prepare for the thirsty mountaineers, and had the kettle boiling and tea made five minutes after our return, for which thoughtfulness we were exceedingly grateful. We all returned to the Hermitage the same evening very well satisfied with the results of our expedition.

The next three days were wet and cold, with a sprinkling of snow on the mountain summits, but not enough to cause us any anxiety.

On the 28th I had a wire from Alex to say he was leaving next day and would reach the Copland hut on the evening of the 30th. Of course my spirits went up with a bound, and as it was a lovely day and nobody else seemed inclined to do anything but laze, I begged for a rock scramble to keep me in condition. It was late in the forenoon, so we had no time to go far afield; but Graham said he knew of a difficult ridge on Mount Wakefield that would be good training, so we set off for it.

On our way we paused beside the Hooker River where it left the old channel in the autumn floods last year and burrowed a new course through the Muller moraine ; it runs underground for about 100 yards and comes out to freedom once more with a leap and a dash. We waited about half an hour for a tottering ice pinnacle to crash down into the river, but waited in vain ; however, as soon as we were a few yards away there was a resounding roar, and down it came, splitting into great blocks, which were swirled down the river, churning and grinding against the boulders with which the stream is strewn : finally it piled itself at the subterranean entrance until sufficiently melted or broken to pass through. In flood-time I have seen huge blocks large enough to hold a horse and cart come sailing smoothly down, to be checked by some unseen obstacle and turn clumsily over like a porpoise and disappear from sight, to emerge again yards away but little the worse for wear. The Hooker in flood is an awe-inspiring sight ; it tears down a roaring yellow stream with ice boulders crunching and grinding so as to make it impassable for days. I never see it without thinking of Macaulay's description of the Tiber :—

And like a horse unbroken
When first he feels the reign,
The furious river struggled hard
And tossed his tawny mane ;
And burst the curb and bounded,
Rejoicing to be free ;
And whirling down in fierce career,
Battlement and plank and pier,
Rushed headlong to the sea.

At last we tore ourselves away from this fascinating spot and began scrambling up a scrubby spur of the Wakefield ; hot it was, and unpleasant, but no doubt good for reducing fat. 1.30 found us on a grassy plateau with a few stunted bushes, under one of which I promptly buried my head with some faint hope of cooling down,

98 THE CONQUEST OF MOUNT COOK

while Graham got the lunch. We were very lazy, and did not move for a couple of hours, but I at last heard the call of duty and we set off for our rock scramble. We had gone a very little way when we were startled by a stone falling from above; then I heard an excited whisper from Graham: "Chamois! Look! Over there, to the right." Two of them were feeding on a little bit of grass about one hundred yards away. We stalked them breathlessly as close as we dared; one lifted its head and listened, and then went on feeding calmly. We watched them for a long time, and I could have wept for disappointment at leaving the camera behind—this day of all days we had expected to encounter nothing worth photographing. These chamois were sent out from Austria three years ago, and no one has ever had more than a glimpse of them since they were liberated. They are red-brown, about the size of an ordinary goat, and have curly horns. We saw two more later on in the afternoon; they were on the ridge above us, and bounded out of sight immediately. We did some good rock-work without a rope and arrived on the summit about 4.30 p.m. We had a few glissades and came home via the big shingle slide, which I have mentioned elsewhere.

Next day, to my joy, some Australian friends arrived quite unexpectedly, and we had long talks over home news and made plans for excursions together round the Hermitage. It being all new to them, I looked forward to showing the loveliest spots to sympathetic souls. However, my plans came to nothing, for in the morning a wire arrived from Alex to say he would reach the Copland hut that night, so all my time was taken up with preparation for the great climb.

CHAPTER IX

THE ASCENT OF MOUNT COOK

The silence and the sunshine creep
With soft caress
O'er billowy plain and mountain steep
And wilderness—
A velvet touch, a subtle breath,
As sweet as love, as calm as death,
On earth, on air, so soft, so fine,
Till all the soul a spell divine
O'ersadoweth.

ESSEX EVANS.

WE set off on the evening of November 30th, accompanied by Miss Murray Aynsley, who wished to come with us as far as the Hooker hut. After crossing the river, we wandered through grassy meadows filled with spring flowers, mostly white, as nearly all the New Zealand mountain flowers are. The path rising gently upward brought us in about three miles to the terminal Hooker moraine, over which we had to clamber—pathless, of course; we then descended again and crossed a rushing mountain torrent, over slippery boulders. This often means wet feet and an involuntary bath for the timid or careless. On this occasion we arrived quite safely at the other side, and began to struggle up the steep and stony path, which rises about a thousand feet in the three miles between here and the hut. Graham and a pack-horse joined us about an hour later; and just as we were preparing our evening meal, a distant hail from the regions of the

100 THE CONQUEST OF MOUNT COOK

Copland Pass announced that Alex was over from Westland. Soon we distinguished him scrambling down the rocks, and we were shortly all shaking hands and asking a dozen different questions that no one had time to answer. He had made a record trip, coming through in one day instead of two, being anxious not to lose any of the good weather. We were soon deep in plans and discussing our chances of a successful ascent with that rabid enthusiasm that distinguishes the sportsman of all varieties, and is usually so very boring and unintelligible to the outsider. Calming down a little, we had our supper outside on the grass; and after it was finished, wrapped ourselves in rugs, and sprawled in various graceful attitudes in the grass, watching the after-glow creep up peak after peak, till it lit the topmost crest of Mount Cook with one triumphant wave of scarlet, which overflowing, spilled down its flanks in runnels of fire, lingering longest in some rocky cavern, where it glowed orange, crimson, and red, till the very heart of the mountain seemed aglow. Shortly after sunset a bitter wind sprang up, and we were glad to retire to the shelter of our hut and very soon to bed, as we proposed an early start next morning. Alas for our hopes, by midnight the hut was creaking and groaning like a ship in a heavy sea, and straining at the wire cables that bind it to the ground, under the onslaught of a fierce westerly gale. Sleep was impossible; it seemed as if each moment we would be lifted bodily and blown over the edge of the moraine, on whose side the hut is perched, and deposited in the glacier 200 feet below. At dawn the gale showed no signs of moderating, so though the day was perfectly fine, we had to give up all idea of starting and spend the day in and about the hut. The enforced rest really did us more good than harm; but at the time, impatient as we were to get away, we did not look upon it in the light of a blessing. The following morning,

THE ASCENT OF MOUNT COOK 101

December 2nd, all was calm again, and we set off at 5.15 a.m. Both the Grahams were heavily laden with about 50-lb. swags. In vain I remonstrated; they were determined I should have every luxury as well as necessity, and they would not lighten them by so much as a pound. No woman ever had two more kind, considerate, and trusty companions. Words of mine can add but little to their reputation, for the Graham brothers are known and honoured from one end of New Zealand to the other; as guides, mountaineers, and men, their country is justly proud of them. But I would like to take this opportunity of publicly expressing my appreciation of all they so willingly and cheerfully have done for me; quite simply, and as a matter of course, in a spirit of pure-minded chivalry that would not have shamed a member of King Arthur's "table round."

Everything went well with us this glorious summer morning. Fresh from our enforced rest, we made excellent time over the tedious miles of moraine, and soon descended on to the clear ice of the Hooker. At the icefall we had but little difficulty, as the crevasses were only just opening out; not having to leave the glacier for the rocks saved us hours of work. The whole expedition to the bivouac was child's play compared to our former journey, and we shortened the time by three hours, arriving at 11 a.m. As on the former occasion, it was unbearably hot, and by one o'clock we were enveloped in a thick south fog. As this is an excellent weather sign in New Zealand, no one was at all disturbed.

After fixing up the bivouac and having an hour's rest, the guides set off to kick steps for the morning, so that we could start before dawn; returning about 5.30 p.m., they reported everything in a most satisfactory state. They had walked over the schrund at the junction of rock and snow which had blocked us the year before, and followed up a snow couloir for about 1,000 feet. These steps would

102 THE CONQUEST OF MOUNT COOK

save us some stiff rock-work in the morning and about an hour in point of time. Cheered by such news as this, dinner was a jubilant meal ; and after it was over we crawled into our sleeping-bags as a protection against the evening chill and waited for the sunset. The fog was rapidly clearing, and as the setting sun's rays pierced through the thin mist there began a series of the most wonderful colour effects it is possible to imagine. They were beautifully soft and yet extraordinarily vivid. We saw the distant mountains through a luminous curtain of softest transparency. Away on the horizon outlined against pale green evening sky rose peak after peak vivid with an edge of purest gold ; the nearer cones were touched with violet and rose, while over Baker's Saddle drifted soft little clouds of crimson and gold, which shattered themselves into rainbow mists and vanished as they touched the rugged, sun-warmed rocks that impeded their westward flight. The changes of colour were so quick it was impossible to follow them—they were here and gone in a breath. No voice was raised above a whisper ; we seemed to be watching some scene in fairyland that at a sound would vanish and leave us dazed and desolated. Slowly the colours faded and the mountains were blotted out by the shadowy twilight, and innumerable stars glinted from the deep blue sky. The pageant was over, the day was done, and we who had witnessed it crept quietly to sleep, awed by a beauty such as one sees but once in a lifetime.

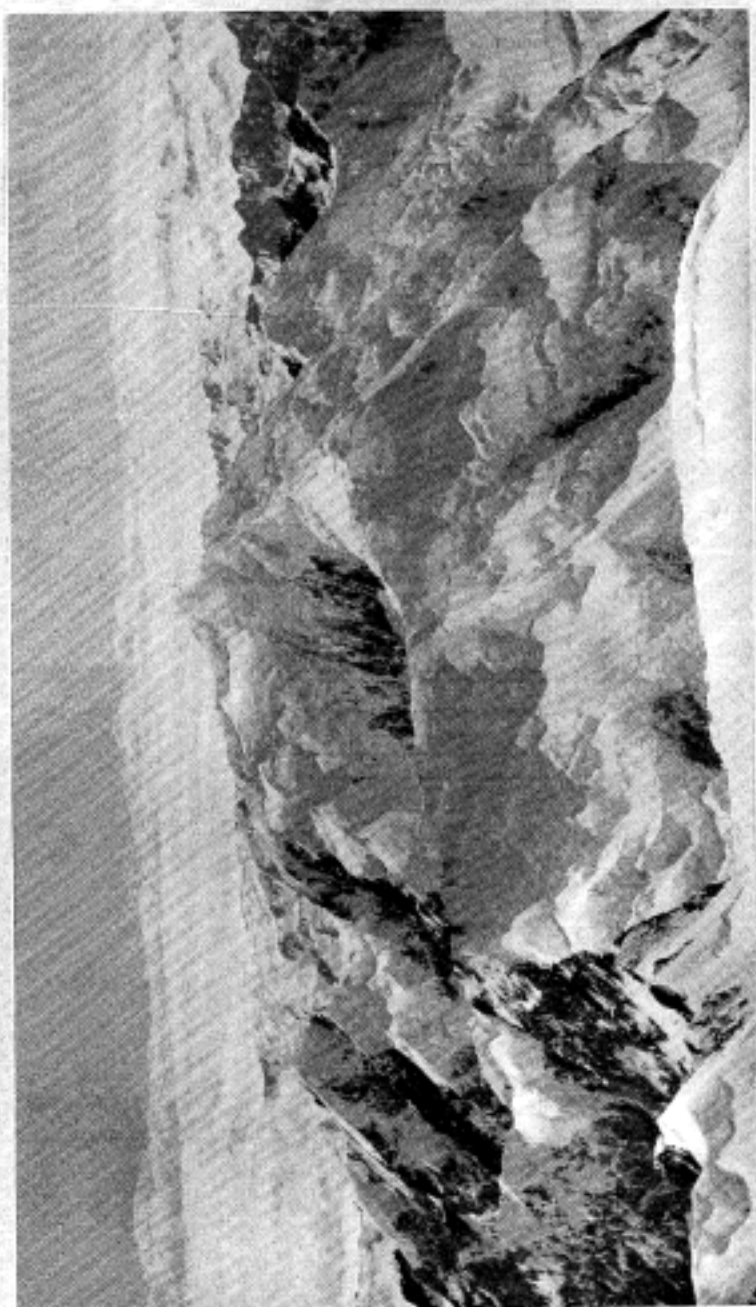
The evening turned exceedingly cold, and I decided that having already walked over most of the conventions since I began mountaineering, one more would matter nothing ; so I suggested to the guides that they abandon their tent and save me from shivering in icy aloofness till morning. The plan worked well, and I really got some sleep, especially in the early morning when Alex lit the two "cookers" inside the tent, and a delicious sense of warmth and luxury, pervaded by a smell of methylated

THE ASCENT OF MOUNT COOK 103

spirit, stole over me. The next thing I knew was a polite request to wake up and eat breakfast at 1 a.m. By 2.45 we were off; it was bright starlight, perfectly calm, and very cold. We put on the rope, lit two lanterns, and started away, Peter leading, I in the middle, and Alex bringing up the rear. The lanterns cast just enough light to show the previous night's steps. The snow was frozen very hard, and in the dim light seemed to slope away to fathomless depths. We walked along in silence for about ten minutes, then suddenly something shot past me down the slope, and an expression of annoyance followed it. Peter's candle had escaped; luckily it brought up on the edge of a crevasse, and Alex was able to rescue it, while we waited and shivered. The air was so keen that every breath I drew cut me like a knife; but after about half an hour I warmed up and ceased to feel it. We crossed over the schrund and started up a steep couloir. About half-way up we were able to put out the lanterns, and by the time we gained the rocks at 4 a.m. it was dawn. Our climb was up the western buttress directly under the high peak, where not a ray of sunlight could reach us. There was no temptation to linger: movement was the only chance of warmth. The rocks were good, and I began to enjoy myself immensely. Alex, who had never climbed with me before, smiled approval as I shinned my way up, disdaining his proffered assistance. So Peter told him a little story between breaths, and advised him to leave me alone unless I asked for help or he, too, might "catch it hot." At 5.30 a.m. we stopped and had hot tea from a Thermos and some biscuits. It was too cold to be still long, and we soon set off again. The rocks we were now on were shaly and rotten, so we had to be exceedingly careful to prevent danger from falling stones. We were very thankful when we rose above them and found something solid once more. We found we were making record time and were much elated, but the last 1,000 feet

104 THE CONQUEST OF MOUNT COOK

gave us great trouble—the rocks were coated here and there with a thin film of green ice, like glass, making hand- and foot-holds dangerous and every care necessary. We were at about 11,000 feet, and the ice was so cold that my fingers stuck when they touched it; the feeling gave me quite a shock and was most unpleasant. The same thing happened if we touched ice with the steel of our axes. At last we saw the dead-white summit gleaming above us, while the first ray of sunshine we had seen that day glinted near by. We went for it with a will, accomplishing a particularly nasty traverse over an icy couloir. When we reached the ice-cap we found it all wind-blown into projecting wavelets of ice, under which the rope caught on every possible occasion. Peter cut steps for 200 feet straight up the summit; then we turned slightly to the left, and reached some soft snow up which we could kick our way. We were within a few feet of the top. They sent me on alone the length of the rope. I gained the summit and waited for them, feeling very little, very lonely, and much inclined to cry. They caught my hands and shook them, their eyes glowing with pleasure and pride, and with an effort I swallowed the lump in my throat and laughed instead. Then we all began talking at once; it was only 8.40 a.m., and we had beaten any previous record by two hours, and I a mere woman! I felt bewildered, and could not realize that the goal I had dreamed of and striven for for years was beneath my feet. I turned to them with a flash and asked if it were “really, truly the summit of Mount Cook,” whereat they laughed very much and bade me look. Truly we were on top of the world, our little island world. Nothing impeded the eye—east, west, north, and south the country unrolled itself at our feet; range after range stretched away to the foothills in the north-east. Westward the sea gleamed in the sunshine, the waves breaking on mile after mile of silvery sand. Southward and east rolled the plains of



MOUNT TASMAN FROM THE SUMMIT OF MOUNT COOK WESTLAND IN THE CLOUDS.

To face page 104.

THE ASCENT OF MOUNT COOK 105

Canterbury and Otago. Directly beneath our feet lay the Hermitage Valley filled with morning mists to the level of about 3,000 feet, out of which rose the countless spurs of the Benohau Range, like promontories from a sea of foam. Never was such a glorious day—not a breath of wind stirred, warm sunshine lit up the shining snows of countless peaks and sparkled on rushing rivers, green valleys, and far-away blue lakes. Human nature has but a limited capacity—this wide world was limitless. My eyes strayed from point to point: everything was different; old landmarks were swept away, or unrecognizable from a new angle. With a sigh almost of relief I turned my eyes to the little patch of snow on which we stood.

Westward, where we had ascended, it sloped gently down, and on the east, as I craned my neck to look over the brink, it fell in one sheer precipice for 4,000 feet, and with a gasp I sat back again; on the south we looked down upon a snow ridge sharp as a razor, leading to the middle peak; and beyond that again showed the rocks of the third peak. We speculated on the possibilities of a complete traverse of the three peaks from north to south, and decided it looked very ugly and would only be possible from south to north, taking the razor-like ridge beneath us on the upward grade. For the time my ambitions were satisfied, and I disclaimed any desire to attempt it, and turned my eyes northward. Here again the slope was not bad, and led down to Green's Saddle, from which a wickedly jagged rock ridge led up to New Zealand's highest virgin peak and third highest mountain, Mount Dampier; and on again in varied curves to the second highest peak, Mount Tasman. We spent two hours on the summit and took many photographs. Bitterly did I regret the fact that I was the merest amateur and knew nothing, only having owned a camera two months. No one had ever taken any successful pictures from the top of Mount Cook, and none had had

106 THE CONQUEST OF MOUNT COOK

such a chance as this. The guides said the gods themselves must have been on my side; they had never known such a day on Mount Cook. For the first time I could look at last year's failure with equanimity—even rejoice in the defeat, since it had given us such a perfect day for our second attempt. At 11 a.m. we began the descent, Alex leading; the thought of descending the icy rocks was rather a nightmare, but we overcame them without harm by care and patience. I was congratulating myself that all was well, quite forgetting the rotten rocks lower down. They did not let us forget them for long; even now, after two years and much experience, the thought of the four hours we spent upon them makes me feel sick and shaky. We moved one at a time, and took every possible care, but now and again some one would dislodge a stone, and it would clatter down behind, or, if small, ping past like a rifle bullet. One fairly large one caught me in the middle of the back; fortunately it had not come far or fast, but it doubled me up for the time being. We had then only been on rotten rock for two hours, and had at least another two before us. I was afraid to put one foot before the other, my knees were shaky, and my bruised back one dull ache. Half an hour later, just as I was traversing an overhanging point, the whole thing gave way beneath my feet. Instinctively I jumped back, and heard an exclamation from Peter behind me, and felt the jerk of the rope as he tightened it. I stood with my face to a cliff, and a foot of rock to spare, while the stones rattled and fell in showers down to the glacier beneath; then I crawled on to Alex, who was round the corner, and Peter followed. Probably my face was white under its sunburn—I know the guides' were; without a word we all sat down in a safe place. I saw the Grahams looking furtively at me, and knew as well as if they had spoken that they were wondering how much more I could stand. As I did not know myself, I

THE ASCENT OF MOUNT COOK 107

pretended not to see their glances, and drank down some hot tea and ate a little with thankfulness. After half an hour's rest we went on again; we had passed the worst and had no further adventures, and at last arrived at the snow couloir. Once down it, Alex let out a whoop; I followed his example, and the three of us raced down the soft snow towards the bivouac, laughing and excited like so many schoolchildren. Arriving, just as I turned to go into my tent, Peter caught my hand and Alex stood beside me smiling. "Now we will congratulate you, now we are safe down and have beaten all previous records. Look!" and drawing out his watch he pointed to the time, 5.30 p.m. "By Jove! six hours up, two hours there, six and a half down; that time will take some beating, little lady," and Alex shook my other hand vigorously. "Thanks to the two finest guides in the mountains, it will," I answered, and I slipped past them into my tent, and throwing myself down, proceeded to rid myself of putties and boots, preparatory to a well-earned rest. We decided that we were all too tired to do justice to a large meal, so merely indulged in unlimited tea and a tin of frozen peaches, which latter will always have a kindly place in my memory as the most luscious dish ever offered to a hot and thirsty mountaineer.

After the meal was over I threw myself on my sleeping-bag and was shortly lost in oblivion. Waking a couple of hours later, I found that the preparations for a feast befitting the occasion were in full swing. When all was ready we gathered round a bubbling cooker and did justice to savoury tomato soup, cold meat, tinned fruit and bread and butter, the whole washed down with freshly brewed tea. The guides' capacity for the last-mentioned item was somewhat astounding; it vanished by the quart with astonishing ease and rapidity. The remnants of the feast cleared away, we crawled into our sleeping-bags and sought our well-earned rest. I awoke once or twice with cramped

108 THE CONQUEST OF MOUNT COOK

limbs, or a sharp stone digging into my anatomy, but soon dropped off to sleep again.

Next morning no one attempted to move until about 7 a.m. In the enthusiasm of our successful return the evening before, some one had suggested that we might climb Mount Dampier, the then highest virgin peak in New Zealand, which lay close at hand. Now, though the enthusiasm was still there, the required energy was somewhat lacking. Instead, after breakfast we lay on the rocks, basking in the sun and discussing our previous day's experiences with that intense joy in the retrospective details which means so much to the enthusiastic sportsman, and especially the mountaineer, who at the moment of accomplishment has no time to spare for anything but the work at hand. Stretched at our ease in the peaceful sheltered warmth, we could enjoy the contrasts to the full. Foot by foot and hour by hour we lingered lovingly over the details of our latest achievement. We experienced once again the eerie start in the flickering candlelight, and thrilled to the crunch of the frozen snow beneath our nailed boots or the tuneful ring of axes on some icy slope. Our numbed fingers clung once more to the death-cold rocks, as we shiveringly awaited the word of our leader seeking the way above us, we watching meanwhile the glory of the sunrise which wakens the cold-blue ice world, till summit after summit is flashed into glowing life, and our own numbed bodies are warmed once more to that dauntless energy which makes life and motion a crowning joy. We know again the pride of the steady head, the long reach, and the sure foot, muscle and brain pitting themselves against the mightiest forces of nature as when life flows wild and free in the beginning of the world. All the primitive emotions are ours—hunger and thirst, heat and cold, triumph and fear—as yard by yard we win our way to stand as conquerors and survey our realm. And then the

THE ASCENT OF MOUNT COOK 109

primitive sinks back into obscurity and all those unplumbed depths within stir at the call. Spirit, imagination, name it what you will, it steals into the heart on the lonely silent summits and will not be denied. Even as the Great Master of old, who in time of tribulation "went up alone on to a high mountain," we hear the still small voice. Haply sometimes we may heed, and carry back to the dust and turmoil of the valley a glimpse of the vision that never was on land or sea.

After some discussion we made up our minds to return that day to the Hermitage, the alternative being another night at the bivouac, in order to make an attempt on Mount Dampier the following day. As we were short of food and the weather looked threatening, we decided to postpone the latter expedition for a more suitable occasion. Shortly we set about packing our rucksacs and striking camp. By 11 a.m. all was finished and we started off for our long tramp to the Hermitage. We reached the Hooker hut at a quarter past one. Here we rested for two hours and made such changes in our toilets as circumstances permitted and a return to civilization called for. In my case a billy of hot water and a brush worked wonders, and I was ready to face the critical glances of the tourist with equanimity. We met no one on the track, but on reaching the Hermitage I found my old friend Mr. McDonald in the backyard. He read our beaming faces aright, and gripping me enthusiastically by the hands he cried, "You did it, lassie—you did it sure enough!" Up went his hat in the air and a cheer followed it, which brought some more inhabitants to the spot to see what was in the wind. Laughing, I thanked him and made good my escape. The news soon went round and my friends came to my room, from which haven I declined to budge till dinner-time.

Superstitions die hard, and being perfectly well aware that the average person's idea of a woman capable of real

110 THE CONQUEST OF MOUNT COOK

mountaineering or any sport demanding physical fitness and good staying power, is a masculine-looking female with short hair, a loud voice and large feet, it always gives me particular pleasure to upset this preconceived picture. In the year of grace 1910 a love of fresh air and exercise is not a purely masculine prerogative, fortunately, and should be quite easily associated with a love of beauty and personal daintiness, which the last generation deemed impossible except to the type of woman to whom personal adornment is the one serious pursuit in life.

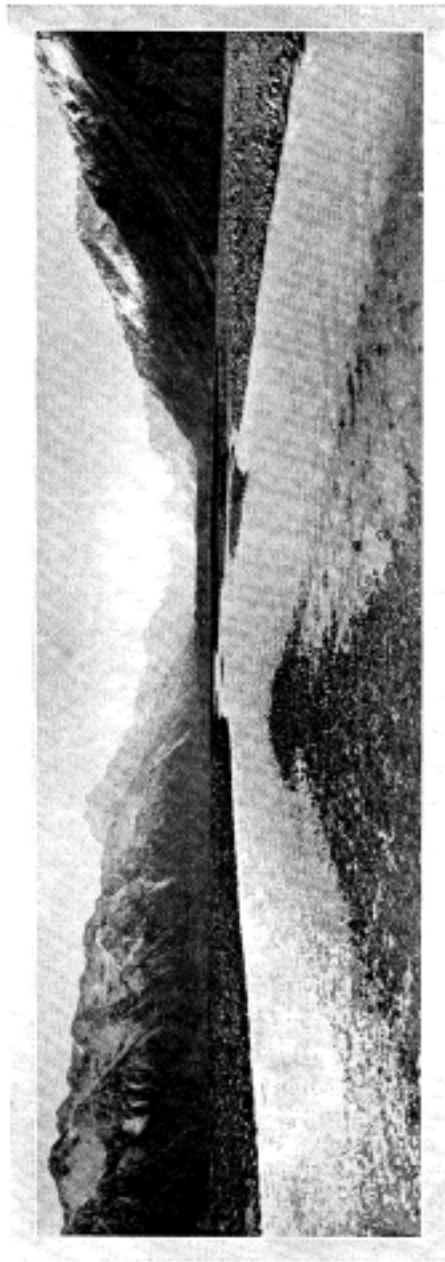
The mere force of contrast always makes it a pleasure, after days of roughing it in suitable garments, to return to civilization and clothes which combine beauty with utility. Consequently, I strolled out to dinner immaculate in my prettiest frock, and so supported was able to face the hotel full of curious strangers and the toasts and congratulations that were the order of the evening. It was eleven o'clock before I got off to my room, where a real bed proved so alluring after two nights of solid rock that I stayed there until eleven next morning and made up my arrears of sleep.

I don't know who sent the news of our ascent to the papers, only that it was not myself or the Grahams; anyhow, they got it, and after that the deluge. From the moment the post-office opened on Tuesday, telegrams and cables came pouring in. To say I was astounded is to put it mildly. I expected and was gratified by some interest in our achievement amongst mountaineers and people who knew me personally, but there I had thought it would end. Instead, from members of the Government and the Admiral of the Fleet to unknown and unheard-of admirers in out-of-the-way towns came congratulations in every shape and form. In fact, for the first time in my existence I was famous. Needless to say I enjoyed it; as for Peter and Alex, with every fresh

Mount Tasman.



THE TASMAN GLACIER AND THE MALTE BRUN RANGE FROM THE SUMMIT OF MOUNT COOK.



MOUNT COOK FROM THE TASMAN RIVER

THE ASCENT OF MOUNT COOK 111

wire of congratulation, which, of course, I duly shared with them, their smiles grew broader. Vainly they tried to keep a countenance of everyday solemnity, but a word dissolved them into the proud trainers of a prize pupil. For myself, I strove for a decent pretence of unconsciousness when pointed out to every fresh arrival as the heroine of the hour. When this began to pall, I took the first opportunity of going up the Tasman Glacier with my Australian friends, knowing that the nine days' wonder would be over on my return.

CHAPTER X

THE ASCENT OF MOUNT DE LA BÉCHE

Only a hill : yes, looked at from below ;
Facing the usual sea, the frequent west.
Tighten the muscles, feel the strong blood flow,
And set your foot upon the utmost crest !
There where the realms of thought and effort cease,
Wakes on your heart a world of dreams and peace.

G. WINTHROP YOUNG.

ON December 8th we left for the Ball hut en route once more for the Malte Brun. Peter Graham was in charge of my Australian friends, and Alex and I were intent on travelling with them to the Malte Brun hut, and there taking up our abode and climbing whatever took our fancy and was practicable for a party of two. We found another party at the Ball hut, and as the ladies' quarters there are rather cramped, I offered to rid them of one superfluous female by sleeping outside. A tiny tent, known as the "dog-box," was rigged up for me. It was just large enough to contain one person, and looked more like an ambulance stretcher with the hood up than anything else I can think of. After dinner I betook myself and a sleeping-bag to these somewhat cramped quarters and prepared for a blissful night. Unfortunately for me, the pack-horses were of a curious disposition and spent the best part of the night sniffing round my abode. Momentarily I expected to feel a hoof descending with a crash through the canvas, and soon began to wish that I

ASCENT OF MOUNT DE LA BÊCHE 113

had camped in the open, where I could at least have seen what my equine friends were about, and probably would not have attracted their attention at all. I welcomed the first signs of dawn after passing anything but a restful night.

We made an early start to avoid toiling up the glacier in the worst of the midday heat, which is apt to prove a discouraging experience. Traversed in the cool hours of the early morning, it is easy to appreciate some of the wonderful beauty with which the route is strewn.

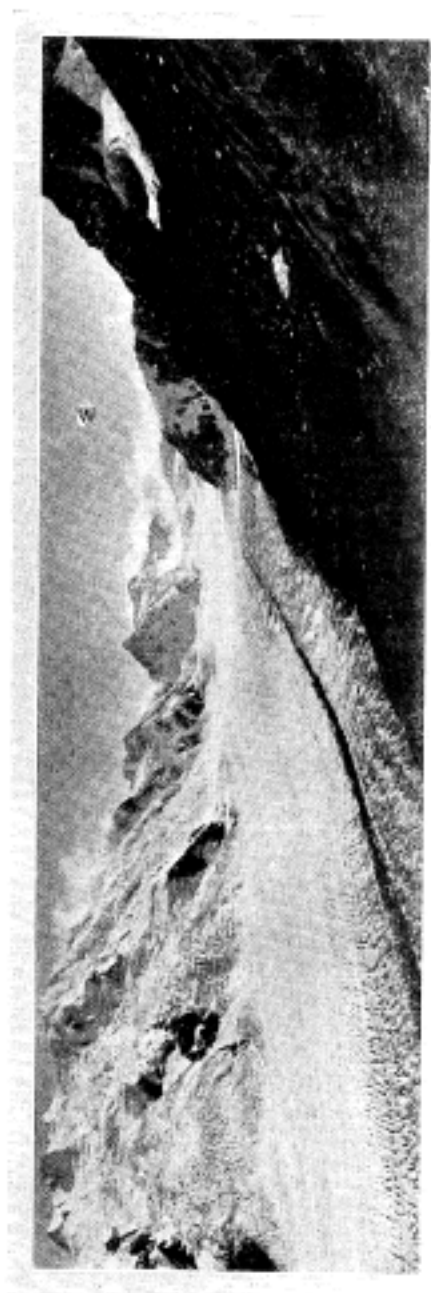
We left the hut at dawn, when all the glacier was still and silent. No rocks clattered down the great wave-like banks of moraine. Even in the troughs all was frozen; no murmur of trickling water or dull boom of underground streams disturbed the silence. Our restless ant-like procession, struggling along from wave to wave, was the only moving thing in a desolate world of piled-up stones and blackened ice. From the top of the last moraine there opens out a view of mile after mile of hummocky ice, rising steadily and crowned on either side with magnificent peaks. As we proceeded the sun rose from behind the shoulder of Malte Brun, and in a twinkling the dead ice woke to a shimmer of crystal and silver. Little streams began to trickle with a faint metallic tinkle, and underground waters murmured and gurgled in far-away caverns, while the widening cracks and fissures veined the white ice with translucent blue.

Once more the frozen world was awake in all its beauty of blues and greens, whose perfect tones serve but to heighten the dazzling silver whiteness of the ice. Not far away a glacier stream, the receptacle of many tinkling tributaries, has hollowed out a steep and narrow valley, a cañon walled with precipitous ice-cliffs, here smooth and shining as satin, there carved and moulded into a hundred fantastic shapes. At their feet the deep blue water swirls along in its satin-smooth bed, hurrying towards a distant

114 THE CONQUEST OF MOUNT COOK

spot from which reverberates a dull incessant boom. Here, with a last frolic in the sunshine, the blue water vanishes, leaping down a great moulin to the unplumbed depths of its prison beneath the ice, to emerge again far away at the terminal face of the moraine as the Tasman River.

Crossing this stream, we made our way out of the cañon and up to the hummocky ice, along which our route lay for the next few hours. Ahead of us the glacier sweeps on, mile after mile of glistening ice, which rises in a grand curve between the foot of Mount De la Bêche and Malte Brun point. As we proceeded the sun beat down upon us from a cloudless sky, and its rays were reflected back from the glistening glacier until we were enveloped in a world of heat and light. As we neared De la Bêche, the crevasses became wider and more frequent, until we found ourselves in the thick of the icefall, and wandered in and out amongst the gaping chasms, threading our way along the narrow ridges until at last we emerged on the névé above. Here the sun had done its work, and we floundered along in soft snow up to our knees. One last struggle took us over the lateral moraine and up the steep path to the Malte Brun hut. This last 300 feet is apt to prove a discouraging ending to the weary traveller, depriving him of what little energy he has left; after rest and refreshment, however, he is usually willing to concede that his labours have not been in vain. It would indeed be hard to find a more beautiful and picturesque situation than that on which this little alpine hut is perched. From the platform in front of it you look away over slopes of waving snow-grass, the bronze green of which frames the white mountains with wonderful softness. Beneath winds the Tasman Glacier, rising in gracious curves for mile after mile, at its head smoothly soft and shining, but lower down seamed and broken with crevasses, its whiteness marred by the long black streaks of the lateral moraines. On either side tower the greatest peaks



HEAD OF THE TASMAN GLACIER



MOUNT DE LA HÉCHE AND THE TASMAN GLACIER.

ASCENT OF MOUNT DE LA BÊCHE 115

of the Southern Alps; one after another they cut the blue sky, Mount Cook's great eastern face crowning them all. Beside it Mount Tasman's beautiful arête sweeps up in spotless purity, rivalling the monarch in beauty of line. Then sturdy, square-topped Hardinger, so distinctive in shape as to be prominent at any angle, even among the surrounding giants; one after another they make up an endless chain. Sharp rock peaks like the jagged teeth of some sleeping monster, or rounded snow cones of indescribable softness and beauty, their slopes shining in the sunlight or inky blue in the shadows, they march onward to lose themselves in a jumble of peaks at the head of the glacier. Ever and anon the silence is broken by the roar of an avalanche, and a spurt of silvery spray shoots over some rocky ledge and flings itself down to the valley, to pile up another heap of chaotic debris at the mountain's scarred base.

Glacier after glacier streams down the mountain sides, to add its portion to the mighty crawling river beneath, which is one of the finest glaciers in the world. Eighteen miles long by two broad at its widest point, it moves at the rate of eighteen inches a day. Switzerland has nothing to compare with it; for that you must go to the Himalayas or the mighty wastes of the Arctic regions. Small wonder, then, that we of the great mountainless continent gaze with awe and reverence on these wonders of our little island neighbour; and not we alone. From near and far come restless tourists, whose admiration is expressed in tongues as diverse as those spoken in the Tower of Babel. Slowly the New Zealanders are waking to the knowledge of their beautiful inheritance; too slowly in many cases, for year by year tourist and climber alike are turned away from the mountains because there is not sufficient accommodation. To the enthusiast, selfish in his love of the peace and beauty of the place, this is only another attraction; he looks forward with horror to the day when a snorting

116 THE CONQUEST OF MOUNT COOK

railway will penetrate into the heart of the alps and deposit its thousands and tens of thousands where now only the privileged few may roam. Happy indeed are we who have known this great playground in all its unspoiled grandeur. While we speculate on the folly of official red-tape that blocks the entrance to our Paradise for all but the favoured few, in our hearts we pray that not in our time may come the change. Some day, no doubt, instead of our primitive two-roomed hut, moored to its great boulder against the fury of the alpine gales, a great hotel will look down upon the glacier, that same glacier up which weary pioneers have toiled, hour after hour, weighted with all the necessary provisions. The very timbers of our hut were so carried foot by foot, despite all obstacles. Day after day and week after week, patient men staggered under the awkward and heavy loads—slipping on the narrow ridges, sinking waist-deep into the soft snow, battling with rain and wind—until at last they reared the little hut that has since sheltered so many weary, happy, hopeful people, who never pause to think what their comfort cost. But we who have lived in the lonely hutless heights, we know, and gratefully give our admiration and thanks to the weary toilers of those far-away years.

After the party had rested and the sun's rays were beginning to decline, it was suggested that any one who felt energetic would find some good glissading on the heights at the back of the hut. Nothing loath, some of us were soon toiling up a narrow snow-filled couloir, the cold walls of which were brightened here and there with giant golden buttercups, whose shining painted faces pushed up through the snow with a dauntless persistence that altogether puts their lowland namesake to shame. When we had all struggled to the top of the couloir, we paused for a few moments to regain our breath, and then one by one shot down the steep incline. Who ever forgets the thrill of those swift descents?—the icy breath of the

ASCENT OF MOUNT DE LA BÊCHE 117

powdery snow thrown back in the face as one's heels dig wildly into the surface, trying to put on the brake at a sharp corner, where a swerve from the confined and narrow way, far from leading to the "primrose path of dalliance," precipitates one head over heels to land at the bottom like a snow-covered hedgehog, amidst a chorus of friendly chaff and laughter. Many a joyous never-to-be-forgotten hour has passed in whizzing down those tempting slopes, hours only rivalled by those wild scrambles round the smooth faces of Malte Brun rock. Here one of the pioneers, in a moment of genius and wet-weather desperation, mapped out a series of routes, each of increasing difficulty. To the rock-climbing enthusiast anxious to win his spurs, the old rock provides many a breathless and exciting moment. The day he can proudly demonstrate the climbs from A to Z, even to the last muscle-breaking stretch and squirming traverse, admits him to the brotherhood of first-class rock climbers.

Next morning my friends and Peter Graham started back to the Hermitage at 6.30, leaving Alex and me to our own devices. The day was dull and doubtful-looking, so we spent the morning fixing up skis, meaning to have a little practice on them later. By the time they were ready snow was falling fast, so we had to abandon our programme and content ourselves with a lazy day in the hut.

The next morning, Sunday, was brilliantly fine, so at 4.45 we joyfully set out to climb Mount De la Bêche, a sharp snow-and-rock cone immediately south of the Minarets. We followed our route of last year to the saddle between the Minarets and De la Bêche. I spent some rather unhappy moments in the mazes of the broken ice as I watched Alex crawl across wobbly snow bridges and knew myself responsible for his safety if anything happened. Otherwise the climbing was uneventful, and we reached the saddle at 9.30 a.m. very well pleased with our progress. So elated were we, in fact, that we thought that all our hard work was

118 THE CONQUEST OF MOUNT COOK

done, and all we had to do was to romp on to the summit that gleamed above us. We soon found out our mistake. The steep slopes leading to the final arête proved icy; so instead of kicking our way cheerfully up them we spent an hour step-cutting in the blazing sun. The arête, when we at length reached it, was most uninvitingly sharp and steep. Half way up it I noticed that Alex seemed to be lagging, and shortly, with a stifled groan, he stopped and knelt upon the ridge. My heart went into my throat as I saw his face twisting with pain as spasms of cramp caught him. With sickening dread I looked at the precipices sloping down on either side of us. The ridge was so icy that I could not even drive in my ice-axe and twist the rope round it. There was simply nothing to do but stand holding the rope and wait for the attack to pass off. In about ten minutes, which seemed as many hours to both of us, the worst was over. I was for giving up the remainder of the ascent and turning back; it hardly seemed fair or wise to let Alex go on cutting steps for another hundred feet at the risk of a second attack. However, he assured me he was quite fit again, and would stop if he felt the slightest indication of the trouble returning, so rather reluctantly I gave my consent and we set off again. Fortunately, the last 50 feet of the arête proved to be only frozen snow, so Alex's labours were considerably lightened. It was with a very thankful heart that I finally gained the summit without further mishap.

De la Bêche seems to be an unlucky mountain; ours was only the second ascent, though several attempts had been made on it in the early days. Two of these attempts were frustrated near the summit by the illness of some member of the party. It was a curious coincidence that Alex also should be attacked with cramp on this mountain; it was the first and only time in all his climbs with me that he was ever in anything but the best of form.

The early attempts on De la Bêche were all made from

ASCENT OF MOUNT DE LA BÊCHE 119

the Rudolf Glacier, it being almost entirely a rock climb from that side. It was finally successfully conquered by Messrs. T. C. Fyfe and George Graham.

On the descent I had the, to me, unpleasing honour of leading. It was my first experience of descending an icy arête, and at this point I should have been considerably happier as middle-man of a party of three, as is usually my fate. However, in spite of many qualms, I accomplished it, quite respectably I believe. The snow slopes leading to the broken ice gave us some good glissades. It also fell to my lot to crawl first over doubtful bridges which had been exposed to the full glare of the midday sun. Fortunately a more intimate acquaintance with ice and snow conditions was rapidly robbing them of their terrors, and I think I managed to make a fairly creditable performance of the descent. We reached the hut happy and triumphant at 4 p.m. Shortly after our arrival a porter came through from the Hermitage, bringing stores and the mail. Mine was quite exciting—still telegrams and letters of congratulation; one ill-advised admirer even ran to verse, the merits of which will not, I am afraid, bear inspection, but the sentiments were excellent.

In the evening we had a consultation as to what our next move should be. For some time we had had a plan of laying siege to Mount Tasman, the greatest snow climb in the Alps, which had never been attempted since the first ascent made by Messrs. Fitzgerald, Zurbriggen and Clark in 1895. Now that we had successfully conquered Mount Cook, we were keen to put this cherished plan into action. It was of course an expedition that could not be attempted without a second guide, and might mean being away three or four days. In the present crowded state of the Hermitage it was difficult for Peter to be away for long intervals, leaving all the work to his subordinates. This was one reason why Alex and I were up at Malte Brun. We thought it better to put in a few

120 THE CONQUEST OF MOUNT COOK

days climbing on our own and give the tourists a chance of the head guide's services.

Our visit to De la Bêche had made us restless; after careful survey of Mount Tasman it looked as if the present was the time for our attempt. Finally we decided to return to the Ball hut next day and send word to Peter to join us there as soon as possible. Accordingly, we set off early in the morning. The weather had changed for the worse, so instead of staying at the Ball hut we decided it would be better to push on to the Hermitage, where wet days are more supportable. Our forebodings proved correct; all day Tuesday the rain came down in a steady pour. This had one advantage: several disgusted tourists left promptly by Wednesday's motor. In the afternoon it began to clear, so with all haste we packed up our belongings and made for the Ball hut once more.

CHAPTER XI

A GREAT ICE PEAK

Back from the summit, every muscle aching
From the jarring, harsh descent;
The will alert, and eye and nerve yet waking;
Spirit and strength half spent.

Back from the summit, victory denied us,
Retreat alone before;
No more the gates of mountain hope to guide us;
Only the hostel door.

G. WINTHROP YOUNG.

THE next day the weather was worse than ever, and we whiled away the day with what patience we could muster. The chief entertainment was accorded by the Government photographer, who taught me a charming Maori song, and induced a Maori porter who was with him to dance a haka. Next day the weather cleared and we made joyous preparations for the start. In return for his entertainment of the previous day the Government photographer insisted on us posing for a cinematograph drama. It was great fun. He started with a pastoral of "The great lady climber plucking mountain lilies," and a second of that eminent personage happily clasping an armful of flowers, like any mere female. Then came an exit from the tent in climbing costume (the scene was supposed to have shifted to a high bivouac), another of the guides packing up the tent while I looked on and gave directions. Then the scene shifted to the glacier, and we were taken climbing up ice-walls and

122 THE CONQUEST OF MOUNT COOK

crossing crevasses in a manner to thrill an excitement-loving public. At last the photographic instinct was appeased and we were allowed to take our belated way towards the Haast bivouac.

Instead of striking across for the Tasman Glacier, we followed along close beneath the Hochstetter icefall. Avalanche after avalanche shot over the scarred rock on its left-hand side, the only dark spot in all this wonderful hanging glacier, whose 3,000 feet of jagged white pinnacle, riven with crevasses and caverns of vivid colour, make a wonderful foreground for the smooth summit of Mount Tasman, which is outlined sharply against the skyline 5,000 ft. above them.

Crossing to the right-hand side of the Hochstetter, we began to scramble up the steep bank of moraine leading to the Haast ridge. This was no easy task; the soft shaly sides kept slipping away beneath our feet and tottering rocks came tumbling down, apparently desiring nothing better than to annihilate us on the spot. At last we reached the top of the moraine and scrambled on to the ridge above. Here we threw ourselves down on a great flat boulder to cool off before we attacked the 3,000 feet of rock ridge between us and the Haast bivouac. When thoroughly rested we set off again and climbed steadily up the steep arête for hour after hour. The sun beat down upon us and we found the ascent tedious, but nowhere particularly difficult, and at half-past three we arrived at our destination. The site is a tiny plateau sheltered by a great overhanging rock. Here, in 1882, the Rev. S. Green and his Swiss guides made their last bivouac for Mount Cook and began the good work of building up the little plateau, to which a succession of mountaineers have added year by year, till now it is large enough to pitch a tent upon with comfort. It is sheltered on its north side by a protecting wall about 2 feet high. Here, too, Fitzgerald and Zurbriggen spent many a cold, wet and uncomfortable night while they awaited their chance to



THE HAAST REVOLUC.

MOUNT DE LA BÉCHE.

THE TASMAN GLACIER.

To face page 122.

attack Mount Tasman. In fact, we were on historic ground, which at present in the New Zealand Alps is rare. This seems to be the only place on the steep Haast ridge where it is safe to make a bivouac, the great overhanging rock affording protection from the falling stones which rake the ridge at frequent intervals and make many otherwise more attractive and comfortable spots too deadly to contemplate.

Our tent was soon pitched, and a trickle of melting snow from a sun-warmed rock supplied us with water for our tea. Then the cooker was lighted and we all gathered round it to enjoy a well-earned meal. After this was over the guides set out to climb to the top of the ridge to reconnoitre our route for the following day. They returned about six o'clock and reported that all seemed in excellent condition for our attempt; so with minds at ease we set about preparing our evening meal and getting what rest was possible. We decided that a start must be made by 1.30 a.m. It was about 8 p.m. by the time our meal was over and everything in readiness for the morning. Then we crawled into our sleeping-bags and settled down for the night. We were all more or less excited at the prospect of the morrow's climb, and the knowledge that only four hours' rest was ahead of us seemed to effectually banish all possibilities of sleep.

At about 8.30 a wonderful orange moon rose over the Hochstetter Dome. A thin fog enveloped everything, and through it the moon loomed gigantically. As the fog thickened we could trace its upward way in a haze of golden mist, until it was obscured altogether.

I fell asleep about 11.30, to be awakened at once, it seemed, by the wild clatter of the alarm at 12.30. Alex got up and set the two cookers going just inside the tent flap. This produced such a pleasing sense of warmth that I dropped off to sleep again and had to be awakened for breakfast. Never shall I forget the strange meals I have partaken of, at unusual hours, since I took to

124 THE CONQUEST OF MOUNT COOK

mountaineering. Shivering and but half awake, one swallows a weird sequence of food, made bearable only by the hot tea with which it is washed down. Only the entreaties of my guides ever make me attempt to eat in the early morning hours.

After breakfast comes the deadly struggle into frozen boots and the endless winding of putties. A soft hat well tied down on my head completes this somewhat sketchy toilet, and leaves me free to crawl out into the cold morning breeze and wait while the guides roll up the tent and portion out the alpine rope which has served for its ridge-pole. By 1.30 all was finished, and we started off. Our golden moon was shining bravely, but threatened soon to disappear behind Mount Haast; we therefore lit a candle to assist us when the moonlight failed, and began groping our way through the loose boulders which surround the bivouac, over which we must pass to reach the ridge and the steep snow slopes beyond.

The night had been exceptionally warm, and the snow was still quite soft. Up and up we climbed, following the steps the guides had tramped the previous night. Steeper and steeper grew the slope, which loomed dimly above us for a thousand feet. At 2.30 a.m. we reached the summit of the ridge. After a short rest we began the descent into the great snow plateau, three miles long by a mile or so broad, which forms the basin at the feet of Mounts Tasman, Lendenfeld, and Haast. At its left-hand side this basin is joined by the Linda Glacier, which flows between Mount Cook, Mount Dampier, and Mount Tasman. All the accumulated drainage of these great peaks empties itself out of the narrow opening between the Haast ridge and the east arête of Mount Cook, and forms the wonderful hanging glacier known as the Hochstetter Icefall, whose chaotic splendour beggars description.

The moon had sunk behind Mount Haast, and with

no light save that cast at our feet by the flickering lanterns we seemed to be descending into a bottomless pit. It was impossible in the dim light to see where the snows ended and the mists began. All around us loomed vague shadow-mountains, whose great height but increased the awesome depths that fell away to nothingness beneath them. Fortunately the guides had tramped their steps right down into and across the plateau, to the foot of the Silberhorn, so we were able to follow the foot-marks. Otherwise it might have been both difficult and dangerous to find our way with only the flickering candle-light to guide us. By 3.30 we had reached the foot of the Silberhorn. As we paused for a moment's rest, before beginning the steep ascent to the arête, the first faint streaks of dawn began to lighten the sky behind the dark mass to Mount Malte Brun. By the time we reached the arête (Silberhorn) the surrounding mountains were lit, one by one, with flashes of crimson fire. The snowy summit of the Hochstetter Dome stood out from a sky of pale sea-green, merging almost imperceptibly to blue, which deepened and deepened, until at last it reached the intense tone of the summer alpine sky.

These lovely pea-green skies, so I have been told by English people, are a peculiarity of New Zealand, and are rarely seen by them at home. Over and over again they appear at sunrise and sunset in New South Wales as well as in New Zealand. Seen at sunset they are supposed to proclaim bad weather within forty-eight hours. I have tested this theory often, and rarely found it incorrect. For sheer loveliness and purity of colour I have never seen anything to surpass snow-capped mountains outlined against a cool green sky, and when added to that you have the merest edging of a golden sunrise, the effect is superb. As we sat in the arête and fortified ourselves with a second breakfast of hot tea, biscuits and cheese, the sun streamed down upon us from a cloudless sky.

126 THE CONQUEST OF MOUNT COOK

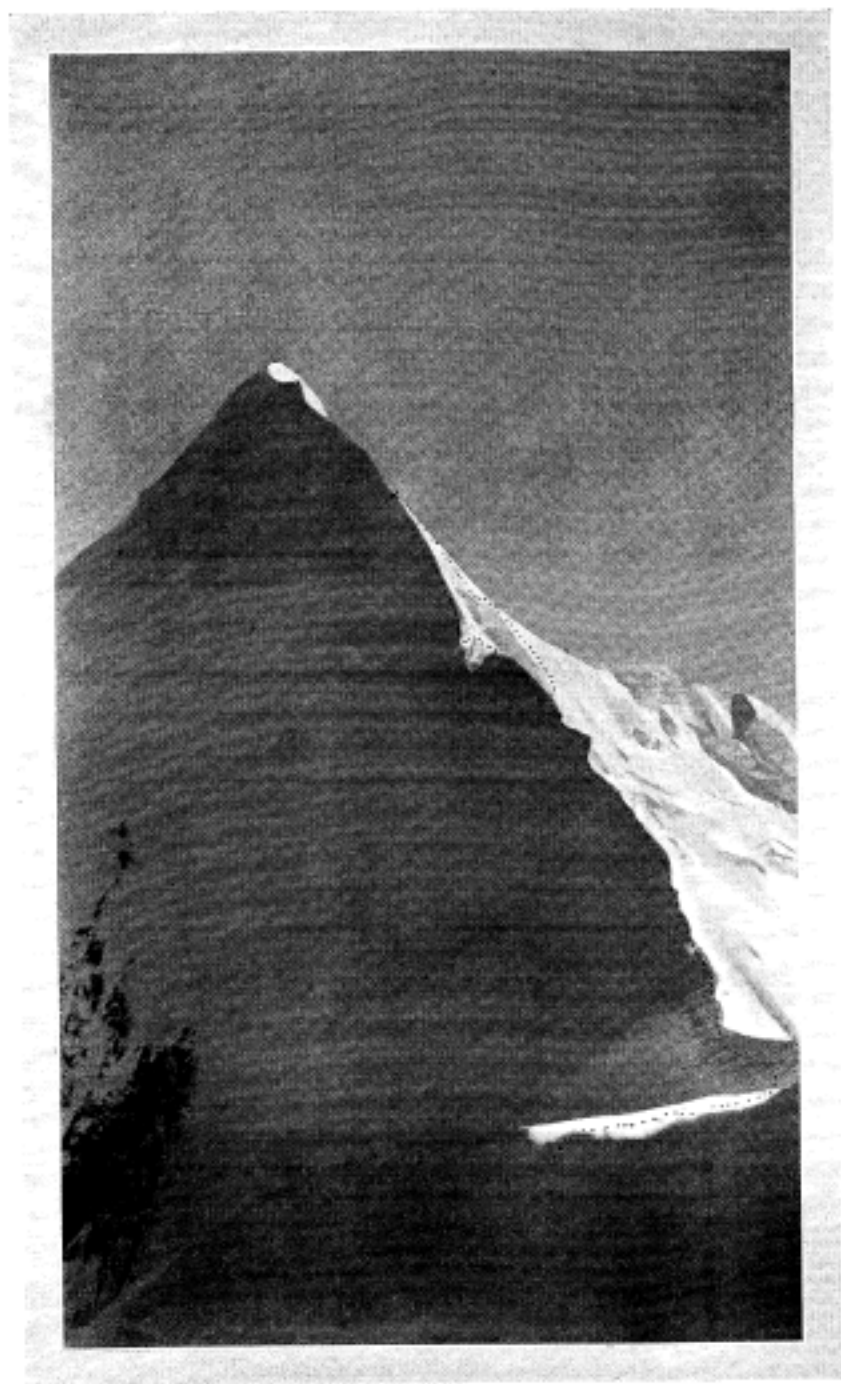
For ten minutes we luxuriated in its warmth, while we picked out a route up the sharp arête of the Silberhorn. From our position we could also take careful note of the Linda route up the north-east face of Mount Cook. This looked in such excellent condition that we were almost tempted to abandon Mount Tasman and see if it was not possible to complete the Rev. S. Green's route to the summit of Mount Cook. It is a curious fact that in spite of his statement that he believed he had found the best and most practicable route to the summit, his is the one route by which Mount Cook has never been successfully ascended. Time and again Messrs. Mannering and Dixon have attempted it, only to be driven back the extra step-cutting involved by trying to take the short cut up the couloir, between the last rocks leading to the eastern arête. The couloir ought to be soft snow, but somehow it invariably turns out to be hard ice, and is much more troublesome than the longer traverse, from the base of the rocks across the steep snow slope and directly up the east arête. Finally we decided we had had enough of Mount Cook for one season, and turned our attention once more to the Silberhorn. Perhaps it would be as well to explain here that the Silberhorn and Mount Tasman, which are always spoken of as one mountain, are really two distinct peaks. The easiest route up Mount Tasman, or rather the only one so far attempted, is to ascend the eastern arête of the Silberhorn to its summit and from there descend a couple of hundred feet to the saddle between the two mountains and continue the ascent up the eastern arête of Mount Tasman.

Our only predecessors on Mount Tasman and the Silberhorn were Messrs. Fitzgerald, Zurbriggen, and Clark, who after several attempts at last succeeded in standing upon the summit in February 1895. No one had since attempted the ascent, so it was their route we were bent on following.

The western arête was steep, and in places very icy, which involved the cutting of many steps. Contemplating these steps from the point of view of the descent did not increase our cheerfulness, as they were in rather rotten ice and would be exposed to the full glare of the midday sun. Beyond making them as deep and safe as possible, there was nothing to be done, so we proceeded upward and left the descent to take care of itself. Two nasty schrunds caused us some difficulty, but at last we conquered all obstacles and at 7.15 a.m. stood triumphantly on the summit of the Silberhorn (10,500 feet). Naturally our first thought was for the Tasman arête, which had been hidden from our view as we climbed. With one accord our glances swept it searchingly. The silence that followed was ominous—personally I felt cold shivers running up and down my spine as I viewed the last 1,000 feet of our proposed climb from close quarters. From the Tasman Glacier the ridge seems to rise out of the Silberhorn in a gentle softly inviting slope. From our newly gained summit it rears a knife-like edge for 1,000 feet, at the most appalling angle I had ever beheld or imagined. On its south side the ridge drops sheer to the Linda Glacier beneath; on its north it falls away sharply to a great schrund which runs the whole length of the north-east face. This schrund makes a great gap in the arête about 200 feet from the saddle, a gap that we must somehow overcome if we were to gain the longed-for summit. Here and there on the steep and narrow ridge shone unmistakable patches of ice, leaving us no illusions as to the kind of ascent we were up against. Silently I took in the whole appalling ridge, which could be compared with nothing in my experience but the razor-like arête leading from the summit of Mount Cook to the middle peak—and this arête we had hastily disclaimed any desire to set foot upon, except on the upward grade. If we succeeded in ascending to the summit of Mount Tasman, we had to face the infinitely worse

128 THE CONQUEST OF MOUNT COOK

problem of descending by the same route, a route on which a slip meant annihilation for all of us. All these things raced through my brain before I turned a questioning look on my silent guides. Their faces were grave, they knew by many years' experience what I could only guess at. At last Peter shook his head dubiously and turned from the icy ridge. "Looks bad, Alex?" he questioned. "Bad as it can be," his brother agreed, and we all sat down in the snow to think it over. A few moments' consideration ended in the decision to obtain a closer view of the arête and see if the schrund were an impossible chasm or no. Rapidly we skirted round the west side of the Silberhorn and descended to the Tasman Saddle and began the ascent towards the break in the arête. When we reached this, we paused to take some food and let out the rope to its full length, which gave us about 30 feet apiece. We also decided to leave the rucksac behind us, taking nothing but a bottle of brandy in case of emergencies, and a few dried fruits and biscuits which would be slipped into our coat-pockets. We managed to cross the schrund by descending a few feet of the icy precipitous south face and coming up again on the upper lip. This upper lip consisted of a 20-foot perpendicular wall, up which Peter cut steps while Alex and I hung on the steep face below as best we could. At last our leader safely reached the arête above the schrund and called to me to follow on. I crawled cautiously up the icy wall, very thankful for the support of the rope held taut above me, safely gained the arête, and waited while Alex repeated the performance. One difficulty at any rate was surmounted, and we were disposed to be somewhat elated. Our elation died a speedy death, when we discovered the arête stretching away above us was solid ice from base to summit. Breathing a curse on our luck, Peter started cutting steps where our predecessors had cheerfully kicked their way on snow. To Alex and



MOUNT TASMAN ARÊTE.

X was the point reached on the first attempt. Final ascent was made on the right of the arête.

me fell the doubtful pleasure of waiting in freezing inaction, while Peter steadily cut his way up to the length of his rope. While we waited we were severely pelted with the sharp pieces of ice sent flying by the step-cutter directly above us. Alex sustained a nasty gash in his hand from a particularly vicious piece.

My thick coat protected my arms from cuts, but at a later date I discovered some very creditable bruises as my share of the performance. With heads low bent to the icy wall in front, we heard the chunks of ice rattle over our heads, and sustained only a blow now and then. It was a wonder to me how many bits did manage to miss us, directly in the line of fire as we were, and fly harmlessly past. After about half an hour Peter paused in his work to anxiously inquire if I felt quite safe. On my replying, most untruthfully, that I did not mind a bit, he attacked the arête again. For another hour he worked without ceasing, and we progressed about 200 feet. The weather now began to look doubtful; clouds had been creeping steadily and softly up from the west, and everything but the summit of Mount Cook was lost in swirling mists, while gusts of icy wind moaned eerily past us. We paused to face the situation; as nearly as we could calculate we were still 400 feet from the summit, and that at our present rate of progress meant at least two hours more step-cutting. As we discussed the situation the mists suddenly enveloped us and the wind increased in violence. The arête ahead of us vanished in the fog, and looking backward we could see but few yards. Very reluctantly we decided that it would be folly to continue under such conditions. We had no doubt of our ability to reach the summit, but to descend this sharp and icy arête, in the teeth of a westerly gale, with our steps but faintly visible in the fog, was a very serious matter, so sadly we faced about and began to descend. It was a most nerve-racking proceeding. I, as the weakest and least skilled member of the party, felt the responsibility heavy

130 THE CONQUEST OF MOUNT COOK

upon me. I knew beyond doubting that if my nerve failed me and I made a false step, and slipped badly enough to put a sudden strain upon the rope, there would be no possible hope for any of us. The ridge was so hard that it was impossible to dig the point of the ice-axe into it; it was simply a question of lowering one's self down from one slippery step to another with nothing but the moral support of the rope to rely upon. Alex led down and I followed. Only one of us moved at a time. We all assured one another that we were capable of stopping a slip, and stood holding the rope taut while the man we were responsible for moved; but I do not think this cheerful pretence deceived any one. The minutes dragged like hours as slowly and carefully we descended step by step. The wind blew clouds of drift snow about us, and often it was necessary for each of us in turn to stoop down and clear the snow from the half-filled ice steps before we dare set foot on them. The wet rope, rigid and stiff like iron, was also difficult to manage. On one particularly bad portion my nerve deserted me somewhat, and I found I could not manage the descent with my face to the abyss below me. After several tentative attempts I turned my face to the arête and let myself down backwards, practically straddling the ridge from step to step. Above me Peter waited with the rope taut, a worried line between his eyes. Below me stood Alex, his face a mixture of horror and amusement at such an unorthodox proceeding. Arriving safely, I paused to point out that to get down intact was the most important thing to be considered, and though my methods might look peculiar they had served me well. The Grahams were splendid in the faith they always showed in my mountaineering powers. After the season's teaching, trying, and testing, they always took my ability for granted, no matter what difficulties we encountered. Perhaps one of them would give me a quiet suggestion if they thought it would be useful, but I was never worried or teased with minute directions. Their unvarying confidence in me has been

one of the great elements in my many successes. It has often spurred me on to bigger efforts, where a want of confidence would simply have crumpled me up and made me lose faith in myself. Some idea of the difficulties of our descent may be gained by the knowledge that it took us just as long to descend as it had to ascend, in spite of the fact that on the ascent the steps had to be cut, while on the descent we had simply to walk down them. After an hour we at last arrived on the other side of the schrund, all very thankful that we had not attained the summit, if the descent could only be safely managed at such a strain. We retrieved our rucksac from the mound in which we had buried it and consumed a good meal. As the day was still young we decided to cross over to the north-east face and see if there was any possibility of an ascent from there. We followed along the lower lip of the schrund for some way, looking for a crossing-place to the slope above. A very little acquaintance with this face proved it to be quite as icy and steep as the arête we had just left, though slightly more protected from the wind. As the summit was now shrouded in thick fog and the weather around us anything but promising, we definitely gave up the attempt and started for the Silberhorn with all speed. I was desperately disappointed, when on reaching it I was unable to take a photograph of the Tasman arête with our steps showing how far we had ascended. I had left this particular photograph in the morning when taking several others, thinking it would be much more interesting taken after our ascent. A little acquaintance with alpine photography soon teaches that "a bird in the hand is worth two in a bush." I thought I had learnt this lesson, and was thoroughly annoyed with myself for having backslided so badly.

Our descent down the Silberhorn arête proved a minor edition of our experiences on Mount Tasman. We had several very nasty patches of rotten ice where the steps had melted and broken away, involving the cutting of new

132 THE CONQUEST OF MOUNT COOK

ones and a deviation from the route. At last, however, all our difficulties were safely conquered, and we found ourselves plodding wearily through the soft snow of the plateau, and up the steep slopes to Glacier Dome. From here we were able to descend quickly in a series of glissades to the bivouac, which we reached at 5.30 p.m., having been out just sixteen hours. We were all tired and somewhat disappointed at the failure of our efforts to climb Mount Tasman, so dinner was not as cheerful a meal as usual. As soon as it was disposed of we tumbled into our sleeping-bags, and forgot all our woes.

We set the alarm for 4 a.m., at which hour it remorselessly awoke us. A light rain was falling, and the barometer going down. As it was no use attempting Tasman again under such conditions, we packed up and left for the Ball hut at about 6.30 a.m. Some snow had fallen during the night, so we took advantage of it, and leaving the ridge descended by snow-filled couloirs, which deviation saved us considerable time and energy. The weather cleared as we reached the glacier, and we paused at the Hochstetter Icefall to gaze at Tasman's icy ridge with a reverence born of intimate knowledge.

We had all quite recovered our good spirits, and in spite of its failure were by no means despondent over our attempt. In fact, if truth be told, we were inclined to consider our failure on Mount Tasman as a more interesting and finer piece of work than our successful ascent of Mount Cook. I particularly was the gainer by a pretty severe test of snow- and ice-work, in which I had not been found wanting, and could look forward to the time when such climbing would appeal to me perhaps as much as the rock-craft, which hitherto had been the goal of my ambitions. We reached the hut at 8 a.m., and were soon cheerfully discussing our adventures over a civilized breakfast. After three hours' rest we set out for our fourteen-mile tramp to the Hermitage, where we arrived at 3.30 p.m.

CHAPTER XII

THREE ASCENTS

Day!
Faster and more fast;
O'er night's brim, day boils at last:
Boils pure gold o'er the cloud-cup's brim,
Where spurting and suppressed it lay,
For not a froth-flake touched the rim
Of yonder gap in the solid grey
Of the eastern cloud, an hour away:
But forth one wavelet, then another, curled,
Till the whole sunrise, not to be suppressed,
Rose reddened, and its seething breast
Flickered in bounds, grew gold, then overflowed the world.
BROWNING.

FOR two days after our return from the Haast bivouac the rain came down in torrents, and we had reason to congratulate ourselves on not waiting in the bivouac to make a second attempt. The chief items on my climbing programme for the season had now been attempted, and I was in the cheerful state of not particularly minding how I put in the next ten days. Under these circumstances the suggestion that I should join a pleasant party who wished to cross to the West Coast, by Graham's Saddle, and return via the Copland Pass, met with my entire approval. At the end of the ten days I was expecting my greatest friend to arrive from Sydney; we then proposed to spend a fortnight more in the mountains and return home together.

On Wednesday, December 21st, the weather cleared,

134 THE CONQUEST OF MOUNT COOK

and our party, which consisted of the two Grahams, Miss Murray Aynsley, Mr. Hugh Chambers, and myself, set out for the Ball hut, at which we arrived without incident. We were rather late getting away the next morning, and so did not arrive at the Malte Brun hut till 4 p.m. We had decided to start for Graham's Saddle at two o'clock next morning, so spent the remainder of the afternoon and evening in gaining as much rest as possible. The trip over Graham's Saddle to the accommodation house at the foot of the Franz Josef Glacier is a long and trying one. It may be expected to occupy anything from fifteen to twenty hours, according to the state of the glacier, and the capabilities of the party, so to journey across with only a few hours' rest after the tiring ascent to the Malte Brun hut was something of an undertaking.

After a scrappy breakfast at 1.20 on the morning of the 23rd, we set out at 2 a.m. There was no moon, and we stumbled painfully over the lateral moraine by the light of a lantern, and then across the Tasman Glacier until we reached the point at the base of Mount De la Bèche. Here we scrambled up some scree and snow slopes for a few hundred feet, and then made a traverse across to the opposite side, facing the Rudolf Glacier.

The dawn was now beginning to break in a riot of colour. Mount Cook blazed blood-red as the first rays of the sun caught his gleaming summit, then peak after peak caught the glow and ran the gauntlet of colours—red, pink, golden, primrose, they gleamed in a revel of beautiful shades. Far away in the south a thunderous bank of black and evil clouds darkened the sky, and by the time the sun had finished his morning pageant a bitter, icy wind was upon us. We toiled steadily up the Rudolf Glacier for two hours, fighting our way against the wind, and casting anxious glances above us. Soon our unspoken fears were realized and Graham's Saddle was blotted out by a great bank of clouds from Westland.

THREE ASCENTS

135

At about 6 a.m. we paused at the foot of the saddle and sought shelter beneath a projecting ice block. After a long consultation and some argument, the guides decided it was impossible to proceed in such weather. The pass was thick with a raging blizzard, and on the Westland side it would be impossible to see a couple of yards ahead, and to descend the dizzy icy ridge known as the Goat Path, or to find a way through the labyrinth of broken ice and crevasses of the steeply descending Franz Josef Glacier, would be a foolhardy proceeding indeed. Very reluctantly we turned our backs on the nearly gained pass and made all possible speed to the hut, which we reached at 8 a.m. By the time we had comforted ourselves with a hot meal, and were ready to turn into our blankets again, the rain was coming down in torrents, and the temperature dropping steadily.

About five o'clock, as we were all gathered round the kerosine stove, making the best of the warmth it afforded while cooking our dinner, we were startled by a knock upon the door. Opening it, we were confronted by a dripping, shivering, snow-covered party of five. Looking abjectly apologetic they trailed in. Hut ethics demand that when a hut is known to be occupied almost to its full limit, another party shall not proceed to it. The holding capacity of the Malte Brun is eight; with our visitors we now numbered eleven. After they had exchanged their dripping clothes for blanket costumes *à la Maori* and we were all gathered round the dinner-table, they explained. Wishing to climb some peaks at the head of the Tasman Glacier they had pushed on, hoping that we had managed to sneak across Graham's Saddle before the storm broke.

Blankets and bunks were short that night; two apiece were all we could muster of the former. This, with the snow falling steadily outside and piling itself up in drifts against the walls of the hut, was but a cold

136 THE CONQUEST OF MOUNT COOK

allowance. Even apart from the temperature, there was no possibility of sleep, so wild was the night. Fierce gusts shook the hut as a terrier shakes a rat, the rafters creaked and groaned and the wire cables binding it to the rocks shivered taut with the strain. To make oneself heard it was necessary to shout or one's voice was drowned in the gale. The snow gathering on the roof melted, and little trickles found their way in here and there and dripped steadily upon the luckless individual who occupied the spot beneath. For two days the gale blew unabated and the snow piled itself around us. We slept, ate, talked, and played cards, and the cold hours wore away quite pleasantly, and at last, at about 4 p.m. on Christmas Day, the storm was over. We all rushed out and started hilariously snow-balling one another, and generally spending a thoroughly picture-postcard time of it.

We had been so long delayed by the storm that it was no longer possible for me to go over to the West Coast and return in time to meet my friend, Muriel Cadogan, on her arrival at the Hermitage. I therefore decided to drop out of the West Coast party. Mr. Chambers also gave up the expedition and decided to return to the Hermitage with me and, if we could get a guide, try our luck upon the Footstool. At 1.30 a.m. on the 26th we said good-bye to Miss Murray Aynsley and the two Grahams. Not very long afterwards Mr. Chambers and I set out unguided for the Ball hut. The morning was intensely cold and the new snow still frozen, so we made a record journey of it, in spite of getting rather mixed when threading our way through the crevasses of the icefall. We reached the Ball hut in two and three-quarter hours, and after a hastily prepared meal pushed on to the Hermitage, which we reached at 1 p.m.

Next day we had a wire from the coast telling of the safe arrival of our party. No guides were available at the Hermitage, so the Footstool plan had to be given up. That

THREE ASCENTS

137

night a cousin of Mr. Chambers arrived, and next morning the three of us set out at 6.30 to tramp right through to the Malte Brun hut again and see if we could commandeer the services of guide Murphy when he had finished with his party, whom we had met on the upward journey as we descended.

Poor Mr. McLean, who so blindly trusted himself to a pair of amateur guides, both enthusiastic and in good training, had rather a strenuous trip for a first time up the glacier. Fortunately he did not know when we occasionally lost our landmarks and took him considerably out of his way. Now and again he did mournfully request a few moments' breathing space in which to roll boulders down the fascinating moulins or contemplate the view. Mr. Chambers, however, was stern, owing to the fact that a storm seemed to be brewing from the south, and would grant but little time to play. We safely reached the hut in the afternoon. We found that Murphy's party had been turned back from their climb the day before. Two of them decided to return to the Hermitage in charge of the second guide next day. The third joined in with us and stayed on.

The morning of the 29th was none too promising, so we spent the day, which later cleared considerably, in ski-ing up the Darwin Glacier. All of us were novices, consequently we went where and how the skis chose, not where we desired. This led to much hilarity and a most enjoyable day. Friday, the 30th, the weather was perfect, and Mr. Fisher, Mr. Chambers, Murphy, and I set out in the best of spirits to climb Mount Green. This mountain is a fine, tent-shaped peak of 9,325 feet at the head of the Tasman Glacier, situated between the Minarets and Mount Elie de Beaumont. It had only been climbed once before, in 1909, when it was ascended by Dr. Teichelmann, Dr. Volmann, and the two Grahams. A steady hour's tramp brought us to the base of our peak at daybreak. After

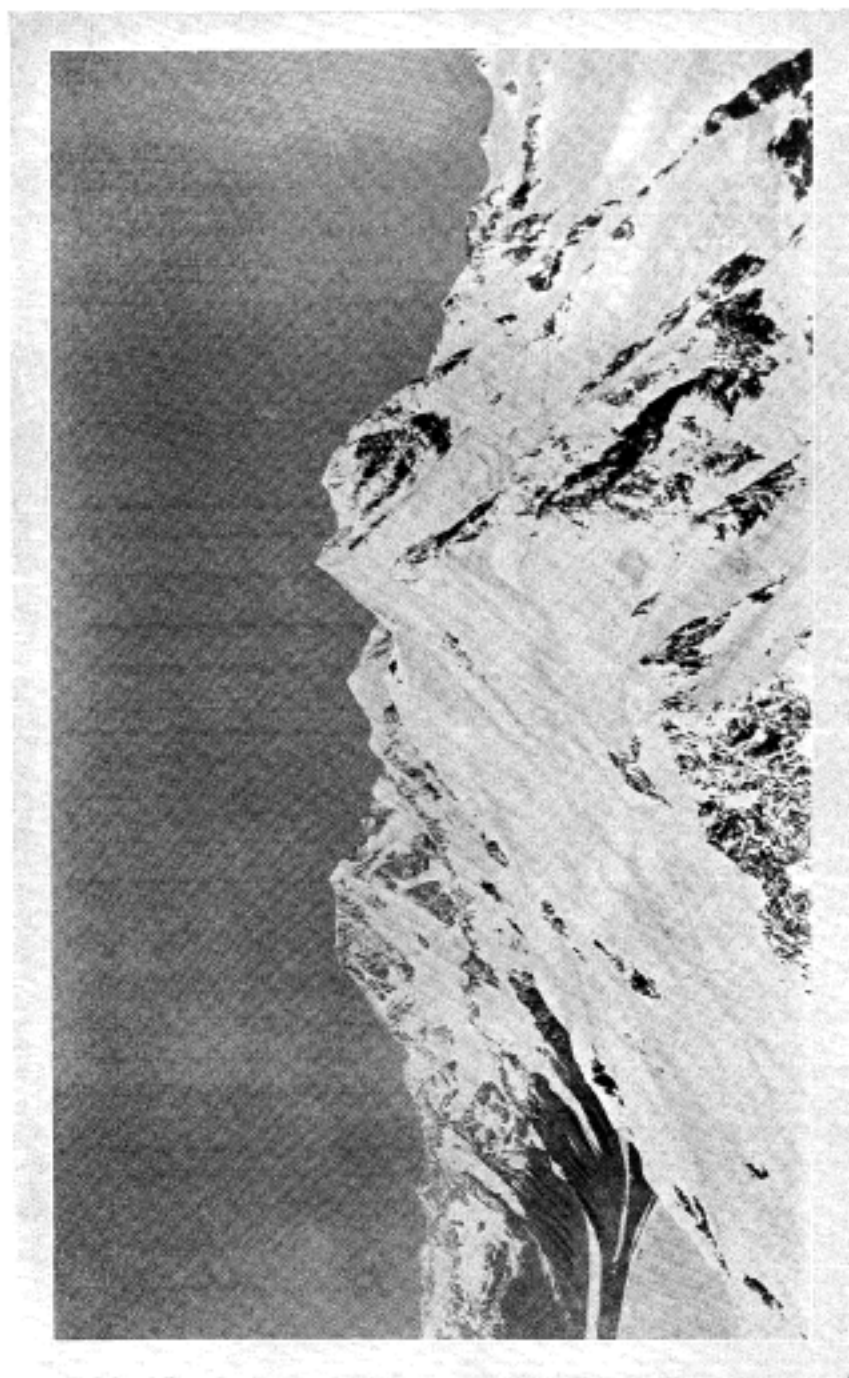
138 THE CONQUEST OF MOUNT COOK

putting on the rope we started up the snow slopes leading to the west arête. We climbed in the following order—Murphy in the lead, then myself, Mr. Fisher and Mr. Chambers last. The going was good, up steep, frozen snow slopes that only required a chip with the ice-axe now and again. As we progressed the sun beat down upon us from a cloudless sky, and not a breath of wind stirred the air. We reached the col at the foot of the main west arête after a couple of hours' hard work. Up this we climbed for some time, and then traversed off to the left. We had two hours' step-cutting on solid ice at an angle of 60 degrees on the final slopes. Murphy was in fine form, and hacked his way in zigzag traverses. The traverses were not very long, so we spent much of our time turning at the corners. Once, not so long ago, I used to be unhappy when the critical moment arrived for changing feet and manipulating the rope to the other side; now I was glad to find it came like second nature, and I was able to inspire the man behind me with confidence and keep his rope taut while Murphy went ahead with his steps. At last we triumphantly reached the summit and stood looking over into Westland. It was the loveliest view in my mountaineering experience. With the exception of the panorama from the summit of Mount Cook, I had never obtained a perfect view of Westland. Glorious as is that view, one is really too high up to take in its full beauty; the mere fact that there is nothing but the blue of the skies above you tends to flatten everything somewhat, although you realize its loneliness and grandeur; while from Mount Green you are struck by its soft and friendly beauty. White peaks nestle around you, some higher, some lower; domes, spires and minarets pierce the blue sky in ever-changing loveliness, while at their feet the white glaciers curve, mile after mile of white and silver and blue, blue, silver, and white, till the eye turns from the dazzling sheen to the wonderful contrast of the west.

Mount Cook

Mount Tasman.

The Minarets



PANORAMA FROM THE SUMMIT OF MOUNT GREEN.

To face p. 138.

THREE ASCENTS

139

Here many coloured rocks lead down to deep, dark-green valleys and away to yellow tussock, intersected with twisting rivers which flow down to a sparkling sea, reflecting tone for tone the intense blue of the summer sky. For an hour we sat on our summit warm, happy, and contented as we gazed around us, finding every moment some new beauty to marvel at. Then we began the descent. We had to go carefully down the steep ice slope and along the narrow ridge. The sun was at its height, and surrounded as we were on every side with dazzling snow, we seemed penned in a world of heat and light. A tangible wave of warmth radiated from the ice slopes as we descended with our faces close to them. When at last we arrived at the col, we skirted round to the left, until we reached the shadow of a dripping ice-wall. Here we rested, closing our eyes to shut out the eternal gleaming whiteness. When we were cooled down and refreshed we started off again, and soon reached the slopes at the base of the mountain where we had left our skis in the morning. Then followed a joyous whiz down the slopes to the glacier. We were able to ski nearly to the hut, an infinite saving of labour in the now soft snow. A weary scramble over the moraine with our skis on our shoulders, another steep pull up the grass slopes, and we were home once more and soon happily discussing our day over unlimited tea.

Next morning we all left for the Hermitage, arriving about four o'clock. After a bath and two hours' rest I was happily awaiting the arrival of the motor-car and my friend, very well pleased with the last week's exertions in spite of the telegrams that kept dropping in from the West Coast, telling us of all the fun the remnant of our party was having over there.

In spite of the fact that New Year's Day was abominably wet, Muriel and I sallied out, clad in oilskins, with our lunch in a rucksac, and spent a happy day under an overhanging rock up the Hooker Valley. Here we were

140 THE CONQUEST OF MOUNT COOK

at least sure of peace and quiet, which the crowded state of the Hermitage made impossible except in our bedroom. Even in the rain my friend was able to grasp some of the beauties of the Hooker River and Valley. We came home at four o'clock, soaked, of course, but very much the better for a few miles tramp in the fresh air, instead of being cooped up in a crowded sitting-room, where that precious commodity was exceedingly scarce.

The next was also wet, but January 3rd dawned gloriously fine, and I dragged Muriel out at some unearthly hour to show her the first glimpses of Mount Sefton and Mount Cook. Her sympathetic understanding was all I expected it to be, and I felt infinitely the richer by a thoroughly sympathetic companion, the first in all my seasons in the mountains.

After breakfast we made up a party and spent a lovely day on Sebastopol, which gave me some opportunity of finding how much mountaineering my friend was fit for after strenuous work in Sydney and a week's travelling.

As the next day was also gloriously fine, Mr. Chambers and I undertook to guide the same party to the top of the Sealy Range. They showed a blind faith in our powers which was touching, and were happily ignorant of our occasional lapses from the most direct route. The view from the summit was glorious, but our contentment was slightly marred by a cold wind. Coming down we initiated the novices into the joy of glissading. I lived my own first mountaineering hours over again as I watched my friend gallantly struggling to retain her equilibrium as she shot down the steep slope. Arriving snow-covered but joyous, she quite willingly tramped back again for a second glissade, and this time we shot down together most successfully while I demonstrated how to break with the ice-axe and generally put my hard-won experience at her disposal. We boiled the billy at the lovely little lake, whose waving, grassy banks make such a beautiful frame

THREE ASCENTS

141

for the picture of Mount Sefton reflected therein, while away across the valley Mount Cook's white cap pierced the sky. The evening was so lovely that Muriel and I considered it a sin to waste it rushing down to be in time for dinner. The others being of a different opinion, we sent them off without us. Then we threw ourselves down in the soft grass at the margin of the lake and drank in all the beauty of the ever-changing evening sky. Two happy hours slipped away, until at last, warned by the increasing darkness, we woke up to the fact that it was 8 p.m., and if we did not start for home some over-anxious individual might think it necessary to come and look for us. So reluctantly we gathered up our belongings, and turning our backs on the still, star-lit lake began struggling down the steep, stony track to Kea Point. We reached the Hermitage quite safely at 9 p.m. with the happy consciousness of a dinner well lost.

Next morning Muriel found that she had ricked her knee a little, so we lazed all day, only taking a tea-party down to Governor's Bush, having convinced several others that the missing of a five-course dinner was not a matter of life and death on a perfect summer night.

The next few days were wet, so we only took enough exercise to keep us in training, as Muriel was anxious to go up to the Malte Brun hut and see all there was to be seen in the week left of our holiday. I had not intended to do any more climbing, having specially kept these two weeks free, so as to show my friend all the best we could crowd into the long summer days. However, when an opportunity presented itself for just one more climb, and that a virgin peak, it was too tempting to be resisted, and I fell from grace, with Muriel's hearty approval. The climb only involved one day's absence from the rest of the party, as it was on the way to Malte Brun. On January 10th Murphy, Mr. Chambers, Muriel, and I left for the Ball hut at midday. We took the

142 THE CONQUEST OF MOUNT COOK

fourteen-mile walk in a leisurely manner, halting at the Blue Lake for afternoon tea, and resting there beneath the shade of the ribbonwoods until the sun had set, and so minimizing the discomfort of the usually long, hot walk up the narrow valley to the Ball hut. Next morning we all started out together: Mr. Chambers, Murphy, and I bound for a bivouac on the slopes of Mount Chudleigh, while Muriel went on with a party to Malte Brun hut, where we proposed to join her the following evening. Our ways lay together until we got well on to the hummocky ice of the Tasman Glacier; then we struck across for the grass slopes at the foot of Mount Chudleigh, while the others proceeded up the glacier towards the Malte Brun hut. As we neared the east bank of the glacier, we became involved in a maze of giant crevasses, whose long, sharp ridges, with sometimes a 20- or 30-foot drop on either side, were no easy matter to negotiate. We were all laden with pretty heavy swags; Murphy had, of course, the lion's share, but my modest possessions I found sufficiently heavy and annoying when it came to balancing on narrow, slippery ice ridges. However, we succeeded in gaining the grass slopes without accident. Then began a hot and weary toil up the slippery slopes until we gained a fine situation for a bivouac at 5,700 feet. It was a beautiful position on a small flat of thick snow-grass. Near by a mountain torrent rushed along between high walls of rock which hid the water from our view. While the men were fixing the bivouac I strolled off to explore this stream in search of a possible bathing-place. I was lucky in finding a large, fairly deep pool at the foot of a cliff. The icy water took my breath away as I plunged into it, and with a splutter I came to the surface and into the sunshine. Wonderfully invigorated, I returned to the camp and described the delights to be had at the price of a bracing shock. The men declined to be convinced that the game was worth the candle and

THREE ASCENTS

143

consequently missed a joyous rejuvenation which would have swept away all traces of their hot and tiring march.

We turned in as soon as it was dark and enjoyed quite a luxurious rest on the soft and spongy snow-grass. The alarm went off at about 3 a.m. and reluctantly I performed a sketchy toilet. I found that the unaccustomed swagging had left my shoulders horribly stiff, and I had not by any means gained my usual buoyancy when we started up the scree slopes for our peak. Mount Chudleigh had two great attractions for us—it was virgin, and promised a good rock climb, and rock climbs that season had been scarce owing to the unusual frequency of snow-storms and the early setting-in of the autumn. After the scree came snow slopes leading to the east arête. We progressed steadily; the morning was dull and heavy, and my usual feeling of elation was conspicuous only by its absence. I had never felt off colour on a climb before and the sensation was as unpleasing as new.

At 8,750 feet we paused for a second breakfast at the foot of the long snow arête. So far we had had nothing but a steady grind up scree and soft snow. Now, however, we had much more interesting work, following along the sharp curved arête; it zigzagged and turned in the most extraordinary manner, till I wondered sometimes if we might not find ourselves in the position of the famed American train, in which the engine driver can lean out and shake hands with the man in the guard's van. All our visions of a rocky climb were rapidly vanishing; it soon became evident that all the rock-work would be a few hundred feet at the summit. At one point the ridge became so precipitous and icy that we made a long traverse to the right and then doubled back till we gained the arête again, almost at the foot of the last rocks. This traverse entailed about an hour's step-cutting, and it was with joy we hailed the prospect of solid rock. Solid rock! Never was such a delusion. From below it had looked like the beautiful red slabs of Aiguille Rouge and the lower strata of Mount Malte Brun.

144 THE CONQUEST OF MOUNT COOK

But in mountaineering, as elsewhere, things are not always what they seem! Chudleigh rocks are in about as rotten a state as rocks can be and still stand upright. Mr. Chambers is frankly unhappy on rotten rock, and following below me as we worked cautiously up the crumbling mass he ever and anon cautioned me anxiously not to drop things on him. Considering the Grahams have always given me the reputation of "as clean a climber on bad rock as they have ever taken out," his warning was superfluous, and now and again Murphy gave me an understanding grin as he caught the injunctions. Nothing short of a caterpillar could have crawled up those rocks without dislodging stones occasionally; we all did it in turn, but fortunately none of them disabled any of the party, and at 10.30 we stood intact upon the summit. Our enthusiasm was considerably wilted by this time, and we made remarks the reverse of complimentary as we sat and shivered in a cold south wind. Divided from us by perhaps fifty yards of rotten serrated ridge stood the second peak. To reach it involved a sharp descent. After some discussion we came to the conclusion that the one we were on was undoubtedly the higher of the two, and that as far as we were concerned the second was not worth the risk entailed in reaching it. Murphy, who knows considerably more of photography than I do, manipulated my camera, and after half an hour's rest we began the descent. We one and all dreaded it, but the actual performance, while quite sufficiently nerve racking and unpleasing, was not as bad as imagination had painted. Anyhow, we arrived without accident and were soon seated happily on a comfortable zigzag of the ridge. I seized the opportunity to try a couple of photographs of it, both forward and back, hoping so to be able to give some idea of its unique qualities. Once off the arête we shot down in a series of the most glorious glissades. They were the saving feature of a disappointing day and enabled us to reach our bivouac at one o'clock in quite a cheerful mood. After a

good meal, and for me another dip in the snow-fed pool, we shouldered our belongings and started on the long tramp to Malte Brun. We had to descend by steep grass slopes to the Beatham Glacier. Here we encountered considerable difficulty in crossing the glacier stream, which was rushing very deep and strong. Once over we had a weary plug up the steep slopes on the other side and a long traverse on the eastern base of Malte Brun. Here we unfortunately kept too low and got into some very nasty rock-work. I narrowly escaped being crushed under some hundred tons of boulder which broke away and came tearing down the slope. We reached the hut at 6.20 p.m., thankful to be alive to tell the tale of a very strenuous day.

I found Muriel quite recovered from her trip up the glacier and desperately disappointed that she had been turned back from an ascent of the Hochstetter Dome, by the fact that the rest of the party were unequal to the ascent and were unwilling to wait in a perfectly safe spot while the guide continued with her to the summit. In fact, I saw every sign of her catching the mountaineering fever badly and was thereat greatly rejoiced.

Quarters were rather cramped, and we finished up our experiences by trying to sleep together in a top bunk three feet wide. It was an exciting experiment but hardly restful. In the morning we looked out of the window to find six inches of snow around the hut. It continued snowing steadily all day. Saturday, January 14th, we said good-bye to beautiful Malte Brun and made all speed for the Hermitage, where we arrived at three o'clock, not sorry for another taste of civilization after the primitive life of the last few days.

We spent our last three days round about the Hermitage. The hotel was terribly overcrowded and we were very little in it. We bivouacked the night of the 16th at the lake on Sealy Range. It was full moon and the scene indescribably beautiful, too much so to spend in the tent, and we decided

146 THE CONQUEST OF MOUNT COOK

to lie outside on the grass covered with our sleeping-bags till midnight. The only drawback to our happiness was the keas. About half a dozen of the birds were apparently consumed with curiosity as to why two young women should invade their solitude. Their interest soon became altogether too personal for comfort; one would gravely sit down opposite us and stare steadily for a few minutes with his head on one side and an air of incredible wisdom. Then he would advance with ridiculous sideling hops and make a dig at the nails in our boots, whose brightness no doubt attracted him. Not content with our boots, he would hop right on to us if we lay still and pluck at anything with his strong, sharp beak. It soon ceased to be a joke; we found it impossible to do more than scare the birds a couple of yards away, and then they always returned as soon as we lay quiet. To open your eyes suddenly and stare into the inscrutable face of a parrot who is sitting only about a foot from you, and apparently wondering which is the softest spot to dig in his falcon-like beak, is most uncanny. At last it got to a point when we were scared to go to sleep both at once, so took it in turn to keep an eye on Mr. Kea. It sounds ridiculous, but any one knowing the strength and impudence of the birds, especially young ones that have hardly ever seen a human being, will sympathize as well as grin. At last they routed us completely and we crawled into our little tent and reluctantly tied over the flaps, shutting out fresh air, moonlight, and our tormentors.

When we awoke in the morning we went off to a not far distant tarn for a bath. I being dressed first went back to the tent, and taking our billy walked over to the lake to fill it for breakfast. As I stooped a black soggy mass, half in, half out of the water, caught my eye. I could hardly believe my senses, but the truth was beyond dispute: the mischievous birds, determined to get some fun out of our presence, had dragged my camera from under the rock where I had placed it. This was a hole where a few tinned

THREE ASCENTS

147

stores, a billy and some mugs are always left for the convenience of parties coming across Sealy Range. The camera, a good 3A Kodak in a thick leather case, weighed something over three pounds, and they must have had a regular tug-o'-war over it before they succeeded in dragging it into the lake. The top of the case was gnawed through and the camera half pulled out, and its leather cover had soaked off, leaving the tin underneath exposed. As I took in the full extent of the damage and extracted the water-soaked film my language was unparliamentary in the extreme, and any stray kea would have had short shrift at my hands, in spite of the fact that I loathe hurting things. This incident so damped our spirits that we partook of a frugal breakfast almost in silence, and after rolling up the tent and sleeping-bags ready for the porter who was to come up for them later in the day, we made all speed for the Hermitage. Various people who examined my camera said they thought it was not ruined beyond repair, so slightly cheered I packed it up with my other belongings and next morning we reluctantly said good-bye to the mountains and set off for Christchurch.

CHAPTER XIII

TWO VIRGIN PEAKS

So try man's foot, if it will creep or climb,
'Mid obstacles in seeming, points that prove
Advantage, for who vaults from low to high
Makes of the stumbling-block a stepping-stone.

BROWNING.

THE 1912 season opened most inauspiciously for me. I was booked to reach the Hermitage early in January, but the night before my boat sailed from Sydney my father met with a serious accident. For some time I was unable to procure the services of a trained nurse, and by the time I eventually did so and my father was convalescent I was on the edge of a nervous breakdown. The doctor packed me off at once for my delayed holiday, with strict instructions to leave serious climbing alone until I was thoroughly fit once more.

I reached the Hermitage the second week in February, too tired to have the faintest desire to do anything strenuous. Mr. Chambers was already there with a private guide, and was anxious I should join in with him for some big ascents. When people have never known you except in the pink of condition, it is somewhat difficult to convince them all at once that you are physically unfit for violent exertion. At last I made the point unmistakably clear, and reluctantly refusing some very tempting propositions joined in with two friends who were going up to the Malte Brun hut,

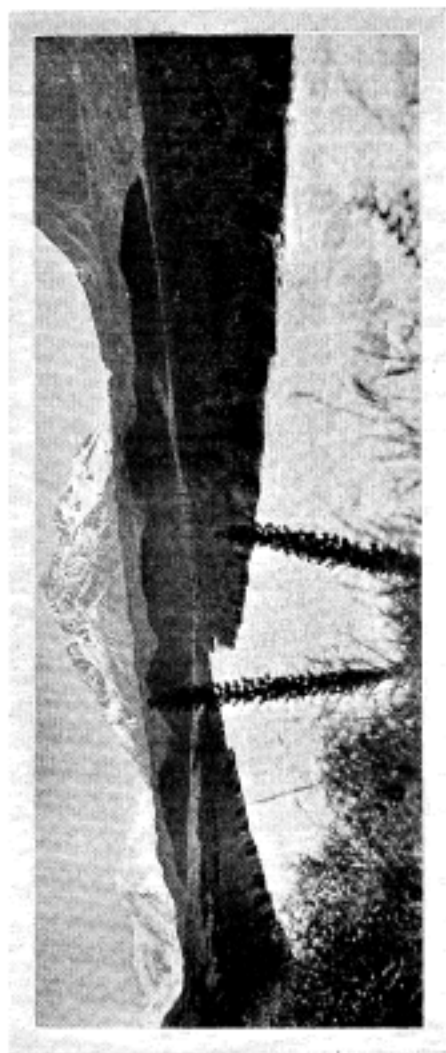
Mount De la Blanche

Mount Tasman

Mount Cook



THE TASMAN GLACIER FROM THE MALTE BRUN HUT



THE BLUE LAKE STREAM

To face page 148.

with the express purpose of staying there and loafing in the invigorating air. If I had had any illusions as to my present physical condition, the trip deprived me of them. We took five hours to reach the Malte Brun hut from the Ball. Several times on the journey up I would cheerfully have cast myself down on the glacier and said I was incapable of further exertion ; but for the fact that my climbing reputation was so firmly fixed in the minds of my companions, that nothing short of my fainting by the wayside would have convinced them that I was not merely adapting my pace to theirs, and could at any moment race full speed ahead. Graham, who was in charge of the party, had not climbed with me for three seasons for nothing. He was able to grasp, after observing me for a few hours, that I certainly was not in mountaineering form, so I knew I would not be bothered with suggestions from him until I was more fit to attend to them. We spent a happy, lazy, invigorating week at Malte Brun. The weather even was kind, it was never fine for one whole day together. Showers in the early morning would clear away too late to make anything but trifling scrambles worth while. We did a little ski-ing and glissading, and day by day I felt myself picking up. It was so strange to be in the heart of the mountains and without the faintest desire to do anything more than gaze at them ; all I asked was to lie in the soft grass and absorb beauty, air, and sunlight. When we returned to the Hermitage I was feeling considerably better and once more interested in consuming good food in large quantities. Another week of changeable weather still further assisted the cure, and at the end of it I was fit and willing to attempt something ; though my faith in my climbing powers was considerably shaken, and would not be likely to return until I had accomplished a creditable climb with the old joyous thrill in fighting against heavy odds. Mountaineering excitements had been scarce at the Hermitage owing to the bad weather ; but now we seemed in for a good spell,

150 THE CONQUEST OF MOUNT COOK

and all was active preparation for high ascents. Messrs. Chambers and Wright, with guides Clark and Murphy, set out to climb Mount Cook. On the same day Graham and I started for the Hooker hut, to attempt a virgin peak north of the Footstool. We hoped from its summit to view the other party on the top of Mount Cook.

We were late in leaving the Hooker hut on the morning of February 25th, so made all haste down the couple of miles of track that lay between us and our proposed climb. The peak we were bound for is a beautiful snow cone, the next peak but one north of the Footstool. We did not anticipate any difficulty in the ascent. We scrambled up the scree and grass slopes to the rock ridge leading on to the Stuart (?) Glacier. We crossed over some rather bad broken ice, until we gained the first of three rock buttresses that lead directly to the summit of the peak. These rocks seemed good, so we started up them without taking the precaution to put on the rope. As we progressed upward, the rocks, though good and solid, increased considerably in difficulty. Still we did not bother to pause and get the rope out of the rucksac, but went straight ahead. Soon Graham seemed to be getting into difficulties above me; I followed on till suddenly I found myself in a very unpleasant position, with one passable foothold, one knee against the rocks and both my hands stuck in snow-filled cracks high above me. I was reluctant to move either up or down. Graham was balancing himself a few feet above me in an exceedingly precarious position. I called out to him for directions. Seeing my predicament, he told me to hang on and he would get the rope round me. To this day it remains a mystery to me how he succeeded in getting the rucksac off his back, and where he put it while he hastily uncurled the rope, for which feat he must have used one hand and his teeth, I imagine. I could not see what he was doing and was mainly concerned in hanging

on. My fingers in the snow-filled crack got more and more numb, till I began to wonder if I could possibly hold out much longer. I took a fleeting glance at the consequences of a fall; 30 feet below me was a snow arête, on which I might land, but the possibilities were against my stopping there, in which case I would end on some rocks 300 feet lower. Tentatively I removed one hand from the numbing snow, and rubbed it backwards and forwards on my serge skirt to restore the circulation, thrusting it back in the crack just as the other hand threatened to strike at doing double duty. Out of a jumble of thoughts one clear fact emerged: if I fell, Graham would be held responsible because he had not put on the rope. That he had not done so was at my own expressed wish, but no one would take any account of that even if they believed it. So I set my teeth and hung on. After what seemed an age I heard my guide moving down, and soon felt the rope passed round me and safely knotted. "Can you hang on while I get to a safe place?" he asked. "It's my fingers; they are frozen," I answered. "All right; stick them in my coat for a while, I can hold you." There we hung for perhaps ten minutes; the pain was sickening as the circulation slowly returned, but at last I told him to move and I hung back again in the old spot, while he hastily scrambled above me to a safe place; then I was more or less rather ingloriously hauled into the same position, and we sat down to recover. Graham was distinctly white about the face, and my fingers were stinging as if some one was pulling the nails off with hot pincers. We stayed where we were for perhaps half an hour, and drank hot tea and ate biscuits. Then, quite recovered, we set out again. I was surprised to find I was much steadier instead of more shaky after this unpleasant incident, and we proceeded without trouble for some time. Graham supplied the next excitement. I was waiting

152 THE CONQUEST OF MOUNT COOK

while he looked for a route above me. I was quite safe, but had no place where I could wedge in my ice-axe or secure the rope in case of accidents. Suddenly a queerly quiet voice called to me: "Get out of that, quick to the right; out of the way!" I shifted with haste to the only available place, looking wildly about for something to twist the rope round; there was nothing, so I held it in both hands and waited with a sickening dread, expecting to see my guide fall from above. Instead there was a scrape of nails on smooth rock, a rattle of stones, and with a bound a huge boulder rolled from above; missing me by a couple of feet, it crashed down the slope to the glacier beneath. "You will have to let me haul you up the last bit," came a voice from above; "it's beastly smooth, and you can't reach the hand-hold. I jumped for it." So for the second time that day the rope proved a good friend in time of need. You might have thought the rest of those rock buttresses were made of gold, from the cautious and respectful way in which we treated them. However, we had no more difficulty, and shortly stood upon the snow arête leading to the summit. It was a teaser; it rose at an angle of 65 degrees straight to the sky. Fortunately the snow was in perfect condition, and we just kicked up it to the summit, which we reached in twenty minutes amidst no little excitement. There a cold wind was blowing from the west, and everything was shrouded in mist. The disappointment of having no view was somewhat alleviated by the joy of achieving such an exciting peak. We only stayed a few moments on the actual summit as it was so cold, and then found a sheltered spot on the east side wherein to eat our lunch. After burying a tin with our names scratched upon it on the summit, we began the descent at 2 p.m. We decided to give the rocks a wide berth, and descended wholly on snow to the Eugénie Glacier, and then made a traverse across it, and beneath

the buttress, and so on to the Stuart Glacier and down to the ridge we had ascended by in the morning. We found the Hooker hut in the possession of some members of the Medical Congress, which had lately been held at Timaru. That night the wind howled round the hut, and next morning, after a fruitless attempt to gain the Copland Pass, and see if there were any signs of our friends on Mount Cook, we returned to the Hermitage, very much pleased with our first climb for 1912.

Mr. Chambers came back in the evening with his Mount Cook honours thick upon him. His attitude to the climb amused me somewhat; it seemed to be mainly thankfulness that it was over. So far as I could discover the doing of it, instead of being a pleasure, had been merely a monotonous grind. Mr. Wright, who had also made the ascent for the first time, had suffered considerably from mountain sickness, so it was hardly to be wondered at if his enthusiasm was slightly dimmed. For the hundredth time I was up against the problem as to why men who were not merely seeking notoriety should climb at all, when they apparently enjoyed the doing of it so little. If one is nervous, or bored, or tired to death by mountaineering, why do it? And if one isn't any or all three of these things, why not enjoy it? I have still to meet the enthusiastic New Zealand mountaineer who counts all discomforts but a minor part of a very joyous game. I may have been unlucky, but I have never met any one, apart from my own guides, who has been as keen and enthusiastic as myself.

As Mr. Wright had to leave the Hermitage shortly, and was now finished with Murphy, who had been acting as his private guide (he left the Government service at the end of the 1911 season), I engaged him for a few days until Alex Graham came over from the coast.

Mr. Chambers asked me to join him and Clark for a last climb, as he was leaving at the end of the week.

154 THE CONQUEST OF MOUNT COOK

We made all arrangements to attack a virgin peak up the Muller. On the morning we were to set out they suddenly changed plans and insisted on trying for a virgin peak immediately south of Mount Cook. This right-about-face did not suit me at all, as the two Grahams and I had decided at the end of last season to attack this peak as soon as we got together again. However, as it was going to be attempted, I thought I might as well be in it, and did not withdraw from the expedition, as I felt half inclined to do; so on the morning of the 27th the four of us set off for the Hooker hut.

We left the hut next morning at 4.30, my first early start that season, and very depressing I found it. The morning was hot and muggy, even at that early hour, and crossing over the Hooker moraine and glacier was far from exhilarating work. After some discussion between Clark and Murphy as to the best route, they decided to follow up the Mona Glacier to the broken ice, and from there gain the rocks on its left-hand side, making a traverse till we could reach the main west arête leading direct to the summit. The Mona is a small but most precipitous glacier, and we had a tedious time toiling up it until we gained the rocks. We had some difficulty in getting on to these, as the ice of the glacier was much broken at the junction between it and the rocks. When we did at length achieve it, the guides had another discussion as to the best route. This time they could not agree, so as we were climbing on different ropes we each took our own line. The work was pretty stiff, but Murphy and I found no insupportable obstacles in our way, and proceeded upward. After about half an hour Clark hailed us for assistance. He was not far away, as we had been climbing parallel to one another, but they were hidden from us by a projecting buttress. Finding a safe ledge for me to rest upon, Murphy took the rope

off me, and hurried towards the sound of their voices. Clark said that the rocks they were on were too difficult to climb with a rucksac. So Murphy threw them one end of our rope, and presently hauled up the swag and ice-axes. He then sent the rope back to them, and with its assistance they landed safely. We resumed our upward way together, but still on separate ropes. Clark led and we progressed well for a time. Soon, however, we had to make a long traverse over a smooth face, where the hand- and foot-holds all sloped the wrong way. This traverse was by no means easy, and when in the middle of it Clark stopped and announced that he could not continue with a rucksac on his back, it complicated matters considerably. Mr. Chambers and I both happened to be badly placed at the moment; Murphy was slightly better off.

We were on icy cold rocks as yet untouched by the morning sun, and soon became most unpleasantly cold and numb with inaction. It took Clark twenty minutes to secure his rucksac to a thin cord he carried for the purpose, then he left it behind him and climbed round his obstacle. Meanwhile we hung between sky and glacier, I at any rate exceedingly uncomfortable and impatient. Murphy called out sharply once or twice to Clark, "Hurry up; we are all freezing." At last Clark hauled up the rucksac and we were free to proceed. Mr. Chambers went first, then Murphy, who made no bones about carrying his rucksac round the difficult corner, and I followed last.

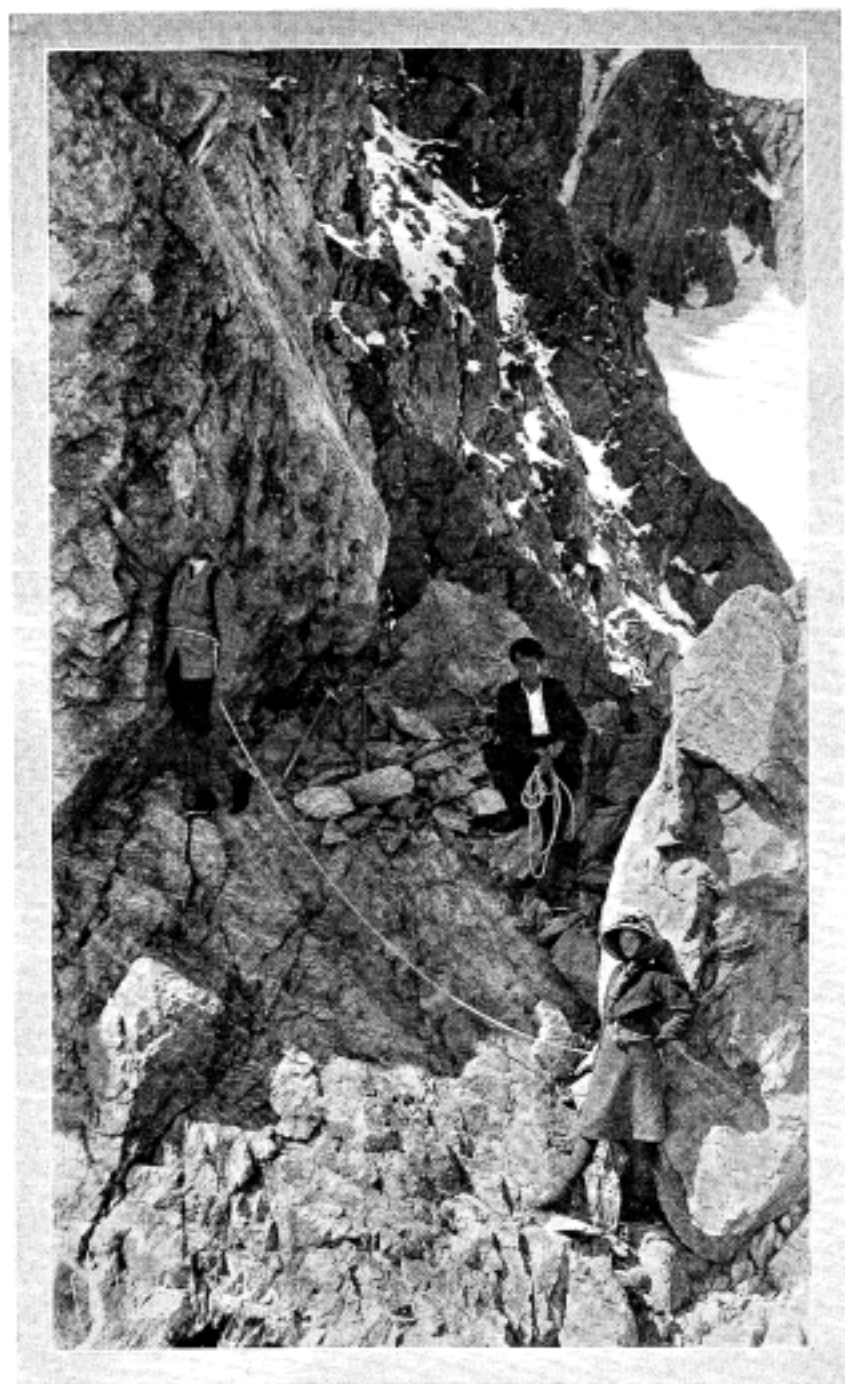
I had a word of consultation with Murphy while Mr. Chambers was joining Clark. We decided that this kind of climbing was no use to us. When we reached the others we announced we meant to take the lead, and they could follow us or take a separate route, as they pleased. We had taken two hours to ascend as many hundred feet, and though the rocks were undoubtedly difficult, they were not such as to warrant taking up so much time. We

156 THE CONQUEST OF MOUNT COOK

halted at the first sunlit spot and had something to eat, as it was now 9.30 a.m. and we had tasted nothing since leaving the hut at 3.30. The rocks we now ascended were steep and difficult, but nowhere impossible, and at 12.20 we at last gained the western arête.

We were disgusted to find that we were only at an altitude of 7,100 feet, which meant we had only accomplished 3,000 feet in eight hours, leaving the summit still 2,100 feet above us. We progressed up the arête a little, until we came to an impassable rock tower, which we could neither climb over nor round. The only alternatives were to descend a considerable distance, and climb back to the arête at a point beyond the aiguille, or to give up the ascent. Sitting on the arête, we discussed the matter; we had wasted so much time that our chances of reaching the summit that day were practically nil; the arête was regularly riddled with aiguilles, any of which might prove as impossible as the one we sat beneath.

Disgustedly the guides concluded that we had chosen an impossible route (a fate that may happen to the wisest on an unknown peak) and that we must abandon the ascent, as the time at our disposal was too limited to permit of us seeking out another one. I am afraid I was annoying enough not to look particularly damped at this news, and could not resist remarking, "How the Grahams will grin over this failure of ours"—a remark which was received with the silence it deserved. We had had a most interesting rock-climb, and the failure to reach the summit troubled me not at all, as I meant to return to the attack with the Grahams on the first opportunity; consequently I began the descent with no doubt aggravating cheerfulness. We managed to avoid the long traverse by descending to the glacier above the broken ice. This involved some exciting moments



ROCKS OF MOUNT NAZOMI.

TWO VIRGIN PEAKS

157

dodging falling stones, which were unpleasantly active from a couloir above. We also had some trouble finding a way through the crevasses, but once below them, we descended the steep glacier quickly, much aided by some crampons which Clark had thoughtfully brought with him. We reached the Hooker at 6 p.m., having been out just thirteen hours. After a meal, feeling wonderfully refreshed I suggested we should go on to the Hermitage; as it was full moon a seven-mile tramp was nothing to the joy of a bath and a bed at the end of it. Clark, who had undoubtedly been very much off colour all day, asked Mr. Chambers' permission to remain till the morning. Murphy decided to keep him company, so Mr. Chambers and I went down alone, and arrived at nine o'clock.

CHAPTER XIV

A DIFFICULT CLIMB

For Mankind springs
Salvation by each hindrance interposed.
They climb; life's view is not at once disclosed
To creatures caught up, on the summit left,
Heaven plain above them, yet of wings bereft;—
But lower laid, as at the mountain's foot.
So range on range, the girdling forests shoot
'Twixt your plain prospect, and the throngs who scale
Height after height, and pierce mists, veil by veil,
Heartened with each discovery; in their soul,
The whole they seek by Parts.—

BROWNING.

MR. CHAMBERS left for Christchurch two days after our defeat, and I was once more left entirely to my own devices. That evening Graham, Milne (a new guide), and myself set out, and bivouacked in the Hooker Valley, intent on making an attempt on the Footstool the following morning. The weather, however, turned bad, and hastily packing up we returned to the Hermitage at daybreak.

The following day (Sunday) it cleared in the afternoon, and the Footstool being out of the question owing to the fresh fall of snow, we made all speed to the Hooker hut, and joined a party who were waiting to cross the Copland Pass.

The following morning we accompanied our friends to the top of the pass. The day was so beautiful that we all spent an hour there in the greatest contentment. We

watched Thomson lead his party down the farther side of the pass, and then set out ourselves for the virgin peak immediately north of us. The climb was absolutely uneventful, being up good and easy rock, and we reached the summit in an hour. The day was still and warm, so we spent four hours on the summit drinking in beauty and making the most of a splendid photographic opportunity. Our situation afforded us a fine view of the three peaks of Mount Cook, which was the chief reason of our being there. Long and earnestly we studied the great ridge leading from the lowest summit to the highest. We had conceived the daring plan of attempting a complete traverse and descending by the Linda route to the Haast bivouac. Graham shook his head over our prospects as far as this season was concerned; the lower rocks were already covered with ice and snow, and the great ridge itself gleamed blue with unmistakable patches of ice. Another pet project on the season's programme, namely the traverse of Mount Sefton from east to west, also looked as if it would not be feasible, so we were forced to consider what it was possible to attack to make up for these disappointments. Our work so far had all been on virgin peaks; therefore we decided that we could not do better than continue on the same lines. If we could conquer Mount Dampier, and our old enemy Mount Tasman, we could very well leave Mount Cook and Mount Sefton for the following season. After settling up these points we turned a last look at the beautiful west, where the setting sun was turning the sea to a sheet of rippled silver, and began the descent. We had tea at the Hooker hut, and returned to the Hermitage by moonlight, arriving at nine o'clock.

The next few days were persistently wet, and nothing could be attempted in them. We had word from Alex that he would be over on the 11th, so willingly left all plans in abeyance until he should arrive.

160 THE CONQUEST OF MOUNT COOK

Monday, March 11th, turned out a perfect day. Tired of a week's inaction I suggested to Graham that now was the time to put a long-talked-of scheme into practice: this was to make an attempt on Sebastopol by the eastern face; a climb that experts had declared impossible, and no one so far as we could find out had ever troubled to put the theory to the proof. It was an excellent way of occupying an off day that would not permit of us going far afield; so at 11 a.m. we left the Hermitage intent on seeing what we could accomplish. So much snow had fallen during the week that all the low peaks were white as I had never seen them before; it was a regular foretaste of winter, and looked as if all high climbing would soon be altogether out of the question.

We followed the motor road to the foot of Sebastopol, and then after studying the almost perpendicular and terribly smooth cliffs, Graham picked out what looked the only possible place for an attempt, and we set off. Struggling up the slippery grass slopes to the cliffs was a trying work in the noonday sun. We halted once or twice in the friendly shade of a sheltering bush until we somewhat cooled down. Hardly had we started up our chosen road than we spied three beautiful rata-bushes, making a crimson splotch on the cliff somewhat to our left. We turned aside to look at these. By the time we had gained them we had ascended a good distance and were loath to return again, so decided to go on where we were—this was a narrow cleft between two cliffs. We got into difficulties almost at once, the smooth, water-worn rocks being practically devoid of hand- or foot-hold. After several fruitless attempts Graham took off his boots, and leaving them, the rucksac, and ice-axes with me, managed to get enough hold with his stockinged feet to climb upward. When he reached a convenient place to anchor, I took off the rope and tied on boots, sack, and axes, and he hauled

them up, sending back the rope with strict injunctions to be sure I tied myself on properly. Having reassured him on this point I succeeded in scrambling up with considerable help from the rope. Three times we had to repeat these manœuvres, but finally we landed in a place where even they were of no avail. By this time the only reason we continued the attempt was the fact that it seemed possible that we might get up above, but to go down again was more than either of us cared to tackle. We decided that if the worst came we could sit on the cliff all night, till some one lowered us a 200-foot rope from the shoulder, and hauled us up. However, we had not got to the giving-up point yet. We took the only possible route left us, and succeeded in making an ugly traverse to the right beneath a steep grass slope. This we thought should be tolerably easy. It wasn't; it was so steep it overhung in places. The only way we could do anything with it was to dig in our ice-axes above us and crawl up inch by inch. It was a horrible place, and any kind of rock seemed preferable after we had battled with it for half an hour. At last we were able to cross back to the cliff and the worst of our woes were over; one more nasty traverse, and we crept into safety on the shoulder. We had climbed 1,600 feet and taken four hours in the doing of it; add to this the fact that we are reckoned the fastest climbers the Hermitage has ever known, and it may give some idea of the problem we had been up against. In those four hours we had never rested except while one waited for the other to move. I dare say it was rather a foolhardy affair (that certainly was the Hermitage opinion when they came down to view the route taken), but we managed the whole of it without one slip. Of course the main credit of it is Graham's; he did some most extraordinary feats absolutely unaided, feats that proved beyond doubting that he is capable of rock-climbing of the highest order.

162 THE CONQUEST OF MOUNT COOK

We arrived at the Hermitage at dinner-time, to find that Alex was already over from Westland. He shook his head at us on hearing what we had been up to. We only laughed, and pointed out that in years to come many of our "great climbs" might be everyday affairs, but our route up the eastern face of Sebastopol would probably never be attempted again; as only under very special circumstances and to particular people would it appear worth attempting.

The Sebastopol climb, too, had another aspect; it proved effectually that I had absolutely recovered my physical fitness and need not be afraid of my nerves or muscles playing me tricks, and that I might once more attempt the highest peaks with safety. When I thought of my condition on arrival at the Hermitage just a month ago, and compared it with my now abounding energy and fitness, it seemed to me that the many detractors of mountaineering as a pursuit for women were amply answered.

An eminent professor of biology has often attempted to convince me that the mental and physical strain of sixteen hours' mountaineering is too great for a woman's constitution. I certainly do not agree with him. The strain on a woman who is physically fit is not so heavy as he thinks it is, and is not to be compared to the nervous and mental tension which has to be endured by a trained hospital nurse who tends a dangerous case for sixteen hours. I have tried both, and I *know* that the exercise, the invigorating air, and the healthy excitement of a big climb outweigh the nervous and physical strain. A few hours' sleep and the latter are forgotten, while the effects of the former are in evidence in a sense of physical fitness which I never experienced until I took up mountaineering.

With nursing, which I undertook for love of the profession, as I did mountaineering, the cases were

reversed. Unable to finish my training I came out of hospital a wreck, simply because the mental strain on a sensitive, highly strung nature had been too great. Many times since then I have nursed friends and relations, and I know nothing in mountaineering so trying as being solely responsible for a delirious patient, whose very life may depend on your ability to persuade him to do the thing he does not wish to; that kind of strain, unduly prolonged and attended by want of proper sleep, air, and exercise, ends in a breakdown. Mountaineering, on the contrary, daily increases one's strength and vigour.

Do what you will, modern life demands stress and strain; the biologist may regret it, but the time has passed when the great majority of women could, even if they would, lead the life of an animated jelly-fish. To live at all means to grow, and growth, mental, moral or physical, is not attained by floating with the current, but by fighting against it. The men and women who develop physically, mentally, and morally, are surely worth more to the race than those that attain maturity at twenty-one, and at that advanced age settle all life's problems, and then live in bovine placidity to a green old age.

My good friend the professor was once rash enough to admit, that for me mountaineering had been perhaps worth while. I do not know whether he referred to my physical condition, or the fact that I might count myself in the front rank of mountaineers, but to any woman interested in the subject, and doubtful of her right to indulge in the sport, I say neither lightly nor unthinkingly "Do." But "Do it sensibly." First be sure that you are sound of heart and lungs, and then work up from small beginnings to climbs of increasing difficulty, and you will gain health, strength, self-reliance, and poise which will be an advantage to you, no matter in what corner of life your lines are cast.

164 THE CONQUEST OF MOUNT COOK

March 12th was wet, but the following day it cleared up, so the Grahams and I set out for the Hooker hut intent on conquering the peak immediately south of Mount Cook, which had beaten me the previous week.

March 14th was not a very promising morning as a strong north-westerly wind was blowing, but fine days being so rare this season we decided to make an attempt in the hope that conditions would improve later in the day. We left the Hooker hut at 5.30 a.m. and followed the Hooker Glacier as far as the last rocks on the right, at the foot of the icefall. From there we climbed straight up the glacier, which leads round to the base of the last rocks of our peak. The Noeline is a particularly fine and impressive glacier, running back for about a mile and a half to the base of the Mount Cook arête. None of us had ever seen such wonderful crevasses as we encountered on our route. The widest must have been about 60 feet, with sheer walls on either side and a beautiful ice arch at one end leading down to unknown blue depths. Another, slightly narrower, seemed bottomless, but at last we saw away down one end a rippled snowy floor. I suggested to Alex we should let him down on our 100-foot rope to explore, but he concluded he might be frozen in the process, so it is still waiting for some more adventurous spirit to discover all its inward loveliness. The head of the glacier is an amphitheatre walled round on three sides; on the left the low peak of Mount Cook towered above us, great icicles hanging from the rock, and in one place what looked to be a frozen waterfall about 50 feet in height. In the middle stood our peak of rugged red rock, square at the summit, from the right of which a jagged red ridge leads down, broken by six fine aiguilles, then a perfectly straight ridge for perhaps 80 yards, and another series of aiguilles, leading down to the Hooker Glacier. I have never seen such glorious colouring before; the sky was intensely blue, and the red rocks towering against it, with the snowy



MOUNT COOK AND MOUNT NAZOMI.

glacier floor beneath, formed a most lovely contrast. We found the rocks very steep at the beginning, but in good repair, and they improved as we progressed. The chief drawback was the wind; we could hear it howling on the heights above us, and every now and again a fierce gust would sweep up the narrow couloir on which we were climbing. Fortunately, it was at our backs, or we could hardly have fought against it.

We reached the summit at 12.30, but were not able to enjoy the glorious view for long on account of the icy wind. The aneroid registered 9,850 feet, which makes this about the third highest hitherto-unclimbed peak in New Zealand. We had a particularly fine view of the low peak of Cook, of which we took several photographs. Mount Sefton also was very fine, towering high above everything else. The sea on the West Coast was hidden by a wonderful bank of yellow clouds like a tremendous breaking wave. The Grahams considered this a very bad weather sign, saying that on the only occasion on which they had seen it before two days' rain and snow followed upon it. We had also an extensive view north, from the head of the Tasman Glacier to far beyond Lake Pukaki in the south. We found the summit too cold for a prolonged stay, so retired to a sheltered spot lower down to eat our lunch. Peter Graham was rather anxious to traverse the peak and join the previous route on the Mona Glacier, so he went off to have a look at the south arête. On his return he reported it excellent as far as he could see. However, we decided to return as we had come, mainly because on the ascent Peter's ice-axe had been smashed close to the head by a falling stone—axe, stone, and all ending on the glacier 1,000 feet below and we wished to secure the axe. It had to be remembered, also, that if we came to any difficulties, two axes among three were too little for comfort, and, possibly, safety; so rather reluctantly we returned as we had come. We reached the Hooker hut at 7 p.m., having been out just 13½ hours,

166 THE CONQUEST OF MOUNT COOK

which was only half an hour longer than the previous unsuccessful attempt had taken us.

The Grahams proved only too excellent weather prophets, and for two days after our ascent of Nazomi, as I christened the newly conquered peak, the weather was about as bad as it could be. Though it was still wet, Alex, Miss Murray Aynsley, and I set out for the Hooker hut on the evening of the 17th, in the hope that it would clear the following day. Peter had taken a party up the Tasman Glacier. We wished to climb a fine virgin rock peak south of La Perouse called Mount Ruareka. Next day it alternately rained and snowed, so there was no question of leaving the hut. The following morning we got away early, leaving Miss Murray Aynsley to a day's painting and botanizing. We had a weary tramp for the first hour over scree slopes and moraine leading down to the Hooker Glacier. Just before the icefall, we turned off and began climbing up a rock ridge leading to the saddle south of our peak. We found the recent snowstorm had come very low, and the rocks, up which we must climb, were thickly powdered with snow. The sun had not yet risen, and it was intensely cold; our fingers soon got numb with clutching the snowy rocks. More than once we had to stop and rub our hands to restore the circulation; the sickening pain which resulted considerably damped our spirits. However, we persisted, and as soon as the sun got to work the snow melted away as if by magic and gave us no further difficulty on the rocks. We crossed on to a steep snow slope which led us, after an hour's hard work, to the saddle before mentioned. From here we obtained the first near view of our peak. It is a wonderful aiguille rising sheer from the Straughn Glacier to a most inhospitable point. The rocks were all covered with freshly fallen snow. Considering what we had already suffered, the prospect of a second edition did not please us. We traversed round to the



SOUTH-WEST FACE OF MOUNT RUAREKA.

To face page 166.

north-east side of our peak, by steep snow slopes, and then followed a snow arête to within about 800 feet of the summit. From here it was no longer possible to avoid the snow-covered rocks. We soon discovered there was not only snow, but often a thin glaze of green ice upon them. In addition the rocks were difficult, great oblong slabs with little hand- or foot-hold. We progressed about 50 feet on the north face; then we got blocked by a precipice, and had to return and try again on the south-east. Here it was in the shade and the rocks more icy than the side we had left. A hard battle with an ice couloir saw us again turned back, this time for good. We descended to the arête again, and climbed till we were immediately above Baker's Saddle. Here, deeply disgusted with our defeat, we rested for an hour, and had lunch. We got some splendid photographs; Alex taking a special one of the great rock slabs of La Perouse for Dr. Teichelmann. I also got a beauty of the ridge between the three peaks of Mount Cook, our situation being the best possible view-point from which to study it. Then deciding that we would have to leave Mount Ruareka for another day, until it had put off its mantle of snow and ice, we made all speed for home. We managed some splendid standing glissades, the tracks of which were seen by Peter and his party, who crossed over the Ball Pass a few hours later. They concluded we had succeeded in gaining our peak. After tea at the hut we strolled back to the Hermitage in the evening, thankful to have had a climb at all and not particularly damped by its failure.

CHAPTER XV

THE ASCENT OF MOUNT TASMAN

Who shall hear, O Nature, messages thou wouldst send
In thy desolate places, far from the moving throng?
Ah, but the soul that loveth thee best may comprehend,
The voice of the silence speaketh louder than song!

GEORGE EVANS.

THE day after our return from Mount Ruareka we decided that the time had come for another attempt at Mount Tasman. Other climbers and guides at the Hermitage laughed the idea to scorn. As the season was a doubtful one and already far advanced, they were inclined to consider the attempt rather ridiculous. Even we looked upon it somewhat in the light of a forlorn hope. A season which so far had rarely afforded two consecutive fine days, with only thirteen hours' daylight in each, was not, we admitted to one another (but to no one else), the most promising time to attack the greatest snow climb in the New Zealand Alps. Bivouacking at 6,600 feet was hardly likely to be pleasing, however invigorating to our systems the cold might be; we thoughtfully considered these objections, and admitted the chances were ten to one against our success; but the fact that there was one slender chance for us was quite sufficient. Gaily we set about packing rucksacs and overhauling our camping outfit. As a concession to the cold, we added a piece of felt to line the floor of the tent and a blanket apiece, as well as a sleeping-bag; then we set out on March 21st for the Ball hut.

THE ASCENT OF MOUNT TASMAN 169

The following day we made the Haast bivouac at an early hour. After a rest the men went off to tramp steps across the plateau as on our first attempt. As soon as they came back we had our evening meal and turned in, intent on all the rest we could gain. We planned to leave the bivouac at 3 a.m., but when the alarm went off at 1.30 a.m. we found the whole ridge was enveloped in a dense south fog, and it had also been snowing lightly during the night. There was no question of starting, so we turned in again to await events.

About 3 a.m. it began to clear rapidly, and we decided to set out, late though it was, and see what we could do. It was 4.30 by the time all was ready, and we set forth by lantern-light, following the steps the guides had tramped the evening before. Up and up we went, our course over a seemingly endless white slope, with nothing but the bright stars twinkling in the sky above us. I counted 900 steps, and at every hundred looked up, thinking surely now we must be near the top. But there was still only the white slope and the twinkling stars staring down upon me. In desperation I called out, "Peter, are we going up to heaven? I don't feel quite prepared." I heard a chuckle from Alex, and Peter turned round to say mildly, "It is rather a long slope; we will have a spell in a moment when it is less steep." And on he went again, the lantern casting its flickering light at my feet, and strange shadows lurking in the half-light. At last we reached the top, rested, and began the descent into the great snow plateau, three miles long, that forms the basin at the feet of Tasman, Lendenfeld, and Haast, and empties itself out on to the Hochstetter Icefall. Down we went into a seemingly bottomless abyss, but gradually the daylight crept upon us, and the glorious morning star shone out above the Malte Brun ridge to light us on our way. As we crept up the opposite slopes the wind began to rise, and drift snow showered down upon us from the

170 THE CONQUEST OF MOUNT COOK

Silberhorn ridge. We climbed to the lip of a great crevasse, and saw our shadows reflected deep blue on the white ice of the other side. As we followed along the side of the crevasse, "the sun looked over the mountain's rim," and we welcomed his warmth on chilly hands and feet. Above us spiral whirlwinds of drift and snow were circling on the arête, and these were turned to a golden mist by the rising sun, making a new beauty to store away in my mind among all my mountain treasures. But beautiful though the effect was, it was not encouraging, and our prospects of climbing looked rather dim. We went on for another half-hour, and sought what looked like a sheltered spot in which to revive ourselves with Thermos tea and biscuits. The shelter proved *non est*. Drift snow poured down upon us, melting at once and trickling down our necks. We promptly cut our breakfast short, and, after one look at the windy ridge above us, turned tail and made for home. Once back at the bivouac all was warm and still again, but up above we could see that the wind was raging, so settled ourselves down for a lazy day with no regrets.

The following morning was beautifully fine, and we set off in great spirits at three o'clock. We gained an hour on our previous time by having our steps to follow to the Silberhorn arête. Two hours we climbed by lantern-light, and just as day began to break reached our breakfast-place of the previous morning. The sunrise was glorious. Every rocky ridge and peak of the Malte Brun Range was outlined sharp against a green and primrose sky, rapidly deepening to orange and red. As we climbed we found ourselves enveloped in the alpine glow that coloured Mounts Cook and Tasman with its rosy light. Except for several schrunds to cross and one steep ice slope to traverse, we had no difficulty upon the Silberhorn. We reached the summit at 8.30 a.m., and looked once more round the western ridge at Tasman, and again we were

THE ASCENT OF MOUNT TASMAN 171

appalled at its steepness. We thought we knew this time what to expect, but it merely struck us after a year's absence as a little more wicked-looking than before. An icy wind swept up La Perouse Glacier, so we fled back for shelter beneath the cone of Silberhorn, and sat in a little patch of sun, while we had something more to eat to fortify us for the coming struggle. Alex braved the wind and took a photograph of the Tasman arête, and returned shivering and none too pleased with the prospect ahead of us. Our meal finished, reluctantly we faced the wind, of which we received the full force as we skirted to the west of Silberhorn and joined the Tasman arête. It was so cold that in five minutes one of my gloves was frozen to a solid ball of ice at the finger-tips and I lost all feeling on the left, or west, side of my nose. I mentioned my state to Alex as we scurried along in Peter's wake, and, after feeling my icy glove, he called to Peter, "Come back; we can't stand this." But not far off I saw sun on the east side of the ridge, and hoped for shelter from the wind. It was nearer also than to turn back to the Silberhorn, so I called out, "Go on; I can stand it if we can get shelter soon." So on we went in the teeth of the wind and across the ridge. The snow slope was steep, so they cut out a hole for me to sit in and another wherein to rest my feet, and then took places on either side of me and helped to thaw out my frozen fingers. The process was not pleasant—rather like having one's nails touched with red-hot pincers. But fortunately it did not last long. We were soon beautifully warm, and began to consider what we were to do next. It was quite evident that we must give up all idea of ascending by the arête, under the present conditions. The only alternative left us was to make an attempt to gain the summit from the north-east face. When we were thoroughly warm and rested, we decided to do so. Alex reconnoitred as far as the rope would allow him, and called

172 THE CONQUEST OF MOUNT COOK

to us to follow, as he thought the route feasible. After traversing across a steep snow slope, we found ourselves beneath the lower lip of the great schrund that runs across the north-east face. We followed this along until we came to a large ice cave where the upper lip shelved backwards. It was a wonderful place, about 50 feet long by 20 feet broad, with gleaming icicles hanging from the roof, and rounded pillars like marble columns. Stray gleams of sunshine lit the ice to rainbow colours, while the deep blue of the shadowed depths made a wonderful contrast to the silvery-white stalactites and columns. The lower lip of the schrund sloped gently downward, making the floor of this fairy cavern, and down it we cautiously felt our way and were soon buried in the cool blue depths, which proved a wonderful contrast to the blinding glare and heat of the outside world.

We paused in the cavern for a meal, and then leaving one rucksack there, we set off again carrying the other, into which we had packed all that was essential to us. We followed the lower lip for some time looking for a crossing-place, but could find no sign of a bridge anywhere. Retracing our steps, we halted at a spot where the upper lip was only about 8 feet above the lower, and considered it carefully. "Climb up on my shoulders," said Alex, "and see if you can do it that way." So Peter cheerfully availed himself of Alex's 6 feet 1 in. While he balanced upon his brother's broad shoulders I handed him up the two ice-axes. These he drove into the snow slope above the schrund, and by their aid pulled himself over the intervening gap. My turn came next. I felt some compunction at walking over Alex in large nailed boots; when I asked if it hurt he laughed, and declared I was only a featherweight after Peter, which was no doubt true. The latter had kicked some steps for me, and when I safely crossed the schrund I stood in them and out of the way. Alex made a spring, and catching the head of the half-buried ice-axe



**NORTH-EAST FACE OF MOUNT TASMAN, SHOWING LAST PART
OF THE ASCENT.**

To face page 172.

THE ASCENT OF MOUNT TASMAN 173

was assisted into safety with the rope. No little elated we began to climb.

The slope became steeper and steeper, and it was necessary to make very large "soup-plate" steps to ensure safety in the descent. The Grahams took turn about, and then Alex got the worst of the bargain, as his turn came at a very nasty traverse beneath an overhanging wall and round a steep corner. It was solid ice, which came away in great flakes, like shale, and made steps very difficult to cut. He also had to cut finger-grips, as the grade was so steep. We were about half an hour negotiating this corner, and it tried our patience badly, as, once round it, we hoped for a view of the summit and a good knowledge of what lay ahead of us. At last there was a sigh of relief from Alex, and a murmur that sounded like "Tasman, I've got you," and he disappeared out of sight. When, in our turn, we got round we saw we were only about 100 feet from the ridge leading to the summit, and the icy conditions were changing for the better at every step. Above us we could hear our old friend the west wind whistling on his way, and we knew we were in for one more fight before we gained the summit. Fortunately for us, the ridge sloped gradually at the last, and we crossed it and made our way quickly up the western side; but, quick as we were, we were frozen once more when we gained the top, which was a small triangular plateau sloping gently downward, and afforded us some shelter from the worst of the wind. It was 1.30 p.m., so it had taken us just five hours to climb 600 feet—as long as the whole ascent of the Silberhorn, when we accomplished 4,196 feet in five and a half hours. Our aneroid gave the height of Mount Tasman as 11,880 feet, but the Government maps make it only 11,475 feet, so the aneroid is probably high. As we were seeking shelter on the top, I slipped on a bit of glazed ice and measured my length, falling on my right arm and giving it a nasty jar. This was the

174 THE CONQUEST OF MOUNT COOK

only accident during the day, which speaks well for all of us, considering what we went through. We were all wildly excited to gain the summit at last, and let forth a joyous "Hurrah!" while shaking hands warmly all round. The view was magnificent, though unfortunately the whole of Westland and away to the north beyond the Hochstetter Dome was a mass of floating clouds. Mount Malte Brun for once looked insignificant, but Mount Cook towered serenely above us as imposing as ever. On everything else we could look down, so we all agreed that if Mount Cook were King of the Southern Alps Tasman made him a very worthy and beautiful Queen. We took several photographs, including one of Peter and me on the top, where it was so cold and windy we could hardly stand. Just as we finished and started down, an extra strong gust whirled my hat from my head. It hovered round for a few moments uncertainly, then fluttered gracefully off to Pioneer Pass. Fortunately I still had my motor veil, which I tied over my head, and we began the descent. Thanks to the excellence of our steps and finger-grips, we descended without the slightest slip by any one. We jumped the big schrund and landed safely on the soft snow beneath, and were soon back to our blue cavern, where we had left one rucksac with most of the provisions; here we finished up our tea and biscuits and started for home.

The descent of the Silberhorn seemed endless, though our steps were as good as when cut in the morning. At last we came to the last steep snow slope, crossed the last schrund, and hurried down to the Great Plateau. The snow was very soft, and we sank waist-deep in places. It was now 6 p.m., so we pushed on as fast as we could so as to reach the bivouac before dark. The last quarter of an hour was cruel, hard work. We floundered in soft snow to our thighs at every step, and it seemed as if we would never reach our destination; but at last we sighted

THE ASCENT OF MOUNT TASMAN 175

the bivouac rock and arrived at 7 p.m. We had been out just sixteen hours, exactly the time of our previous attempt, but oh! the difference in our feelings. The glad knowledge of rest well earned, and a fine foe well conquered, after strenuous and unceasing effort, left us with that "peace which passeth all understanding," which surely is the reward of those who come close to the heart of the mountains.

The following morning we set off for the Ball hut in the best of spirits, and after an hour's rest there proceeded on to the Hermitage, happily conscious that once again we had succeeded despite the prophecies of the multitude.

CHAPTER XVI

MOUNT DAMPIER AND MOUNT LENDENFELD

O mellow air! O sunny light!
O hope and youth that pass away!
Print thou in letters of delight
Upon each heart one golden day—
 To be there set
 When we forget
There is a joy in living yet!

ESSEX EVANS.

FOR three days after our return the weather was too bad to attempt anything further. However, emboldened by our success on Mount Tasman, we decided that as soon as it cleared up we would make an attempt on Mount Dampier. The term of Alex Graham's engagement with me was now over, and as he was needed in his home on the West Coast, and there were now Government guides to be had for high climbing, he left us with the best of good wishes for our success, but apparently thinking our chances were not very good, as the last storm had plastered the top rocks with snow and ice which would take some days to clear off.

Mount Dampier is the third highest peak in New Zealand, being 11,267 feet, only 200 feet lower than Mount Tasman. Owing to its position immediately beneath the high summit of Mount Cook, its height is considerably dwarfed, making it look but an insignificant rocky mountain with a sharp snow cone. Nevertheless, it is the highest virgin peak in New Zealand, and it is a marvel that so many seasons have come and gone without any attempt

MOUNTS DAMPIER AND LENDENFELD 177

being made to climb it. I believe in 1909 Mr. Earle, A.C., thought of attempting it from the Hooker side, and while camping at the Mount Cook bivouac went over to look at it, only to find he was cut off by the large schrund at the junction of rock and snow. This is, so far as I know, the only attempt ever made upon it, though most of the mountaineers who frequent the Hermitage season after season had thought they would climb it "sometime" when they had conquered Mount Cook, or the particular peak that was engrossing their thoughts and efforts at the moment. Like Mr. Earle, I would have much preferred to climb it from the Hooker side, where it offers some interesting rock-work, but owing to the rocks being heavily coated with snow and ice it was impossible to think of it. Knowing that two climbers at least had it in their minds as the first mountain to be climbed at the beginning of next season, spurred me on to make an attempt from the Tasman side, though I have always said that nothing would induce me to climb by the long, tedious route up the Linda Glacier, which was the only route possible at this season. Mr. Chambers had given me a good idea of how wearying it could be when describing his ascent of Mount Cook made by this route in February last. However, as there was no other way by which we could climb, we made up our minds to see it through, and did not indulge ourselves with hopes of too much enjoyment—merely determined to reach the summit if possible.

On the 29th of March, just as the days were drawing in and becoming fatally short from a climbing point of view, the bad weather broke, and in its stead reigned a succession of still, bright days, with a tinge of cold in the clear air that set the blood racing, and made mere living a matter of delight. On such a day Peter Graham, C. Milne, and I set off for the fourteen-mile ride to the Ball hut en route once more for the Haast bivouac.

As we rode in single file along the narrow track cut in

178 THE CONQUEST OF MOUNT COOK

the mountain-side, we saw beneath us the great expanse of the Tasman river-bed, intersected here and there with silvery streams, which looked but a thread in the grey expanse of shingle; and rising from its right-hand bank, the Nun's Veil reared its beautiful snow-caps against the cloudless blue of the autumn sky.

We had perforce to ride at a foot's-pace, the track being rough and narrow. Infected by the perfect day, we planned expeditions enough to last a month, and scaled in imagination all the mountains hitherto undefiled by the foot of man, much less by that of mere woman. To the tune of these joyous speculations the miles slipped by unheeded, and we found ourselves crossing the half-mile of tussock plain which leads to the entrance of a narrow valley, walled on one side by the terminal Tasman Moraine and on the other by the Mount Cook Range. The path follows beside a gay little mountain stream dashing itself in cascades of silver over brown boulders, and deep blue in the shallows, the grassy left-hand bank fringed with giant Spaniards, which lifted their spiky yellow heads high above great clumps of celmisias with their stiff, silver-backed green leaves and lovely aster-like white flowers. Beside our path the stony bank was gay with all kinds of Coprosma in full berry. The blue of glacier streams seems to have hidden itself in the transparent oval berries of the *acerosa* variety. They are more like beads than berries, and in some places turn the grey river-beds into a sheet of misty blue of indescribable loveliness. Beside the blue are bushes of red and orange, and a little farther on a big crop of the palest pink, these latter being opaque. After about half a mile the path leaves the stream, but comes out again at its source, a tiny fan-shaped lake of a beautiful chalky blue, strangely streaked and mottled with reddish brown; the result of a water-weed growing several inches below the surface. This tarn is the haunt of a pair of paradise ducks, which never fail to greet the intruder with protesting squeaks. Leaving the lake, the

MOUNTS DAMPIER AND LENDENFELD 179

path rises over a saddle of moraine, and then descends again into a valley narrower than the last. Here the ribbon woods had put on their autumn dress, and stood out in patches of pale gold against the olive green and grey of the surrounding mountain scrub. Narrower and narrower grows the valley, and steeper and more rugged the track; the sun had set behind the mountains, and with a mind full of grand opera I compared the stately old white pack-horse, climbing the path before me, and the stalwart, brown-faced guides, swinging along beside him in the fast-gathering dusk, to the scene in "Carmen" where the smugglers seek shelter in the hills, and I longed for some gay Mexican blankets and toreador caps wherewith to drape them and so add the finishing touch of local colour. At length we came to the top of the last stony ridge, and looked down upon our destination, a little hut of galvanized iron built on the scene of Green's fourth camp. Opera vanished before anything so mundane as our hut and the preparations for our evening meal. After this was over we gathered round the open fire-place and discussed plans once more, until it was time to turn in and enjoy our sleep in comfortable bunks, for the last time in many days.

Daybreak saw us setting forth for our final bivouac, laden with all the necessities, but few luxuries, required for five or six days in a high camp. We made good time in the chill morning air over the hummocky ice of the Ball Glacier. All was absolutely silent at this early hour, and one missed the usual tinkle of glacier streams, or the dull boom as they leaped down into some deep moulin, to disappear underground and see the light no more until they plunge into the Tasman River. As we left the glacier, on the far side of the Hochstetter Icefall, and climbed the rough hill of moraine leading to the Haast Ridge, we saw creeping up the glacier a dense bank of south fog. As we stood on the ridge just above the fog level our shadows were thrown on the ice beneath. They were gigantic, and each head

180 THE CONQUEST OF MOUNT COOK

was surrounded with a halo; move how we would the halo followed us, till at last the strengthening sun dispelled mist and halo alike, and we were left to tread our upward way beneath his all-too-burning rays.

We arrived at the Haast bivouac early on Saturday morning. After a few hours' rest the guides set out to tramp steps over the plateau, as this always means such a saving of time and effort next day. We could only count on thirteen hours' daylight; but fortunately the moon was at the full, and its light would help us considerably. The guides returned about 5 p.m., reporting the snow soft, but the route, as far as they had been able to see, quite feasible; so immediately after our evening meal, regardless of the temptation to linger out in the glorious moonlight, which bathed the surrounding mountains and turned the Tasman Glacier into a sheet of rippled silver, we turned in to get what rest we could before the wretched alarm, which was set for 1.30 a.m., should rouse us. We each had a sleeping-bag and blanket, and were quite warm and comfortable; but somehow sleep would not come, and every now and then some one would consult a watch in the moonlight streaming through the tent door, then heave a weary sigh and turn once more to try and sleep. We got up punctually, and by 3 a.m. we were roped together and ready for the start. The way up to Glacier Dome was by now all too familiar after our two trips to Mount Tasman the previous week, and the long, long snow slope, on which I had counted 1,400 steps, loomed before me like a nightmare. It is such a waste of energy to spend the first hour, when one's enthusiasm is at a low ebb, in climbing 1,000 feet and then immediately descend them again, which is the unfortunate fate of any one who climbs from the Haast bivouac, and has to gain the Hochstetter Plateau. On reaching the plateau we turned to the left and traversed the slopes at the base of Mount Silberhorn. We followed



LOOKING DOWN LA PEROUSE GLACIER.

To face page 186.

MOUNTS DAMPIER AND LENDENFELD 181

the previous day's steps through deep, powdery snow, and had to cross the remains of a large avalanche¹ which had evidently descended from the rocks just above us. I noticed that Graham considerably quickened the pace here, though at that early hour of the morning (4.30) there was little danger of another fall.

We soon came to the end of the steps, and Milne plodded stolidly on, breaking fresh ones and sinking to the knees at every step, we following in phlegmatic silence. Even the rising of the beautiful morning star shed but a passing beam of cheer as we struggled on. Just about daylight we found ourselves among the large crevasses, where Graham took the lead. The snow was, if possible, a little worse than before, and we wound wearily backwards and forwards and round about looking for bridges over their yawning depths. Once we thought we were cut off altogether, and would have to give up our attempt to reach Dampier: a tremendous crevasse loomed up straight in front of us, blocking all possibility of progress that way. We turned back on our tracks, till Graham at last found the only way open to us. It led us down into one of the widest crevasses. We descended a very steep snow wall to the bottom of the crevasse, and traversed along its left-hand side, the right side being a perpendicular wall of solid blue ice 100 feet high. From the bottom it sloped up gradually to the left, forming a wide basin, up which we ascended, and so out on to the glacier again, having made a detour round our first obstacle. We managed to cross several more crevasses on distinctly frail snow bridges, and at last emerged out of the region of broken ice and began toiling up the

¹ Somewhere near this spot there occurred, in February 1914, a fatal accident which involved the loss of three lives. A party, consisting of Mr. S. L. King and guides David Thomson and Jock Richmond, were overwhelmed by an avalanche from between Mount Dampier and Mount Tasman.

182 THE CONQUEST OF MOUNT COOK

steep snow slopes at the head of the Linda Glacier. The sun now began to beat down upon us with its full force, and as we waded desperately on in the soft snow Geoffrey Young's verse struck me as distinctly appropriate :

Choked with the grit, and dust of barren ranges,
Parched with the pitiless snow,
Heavy with sleepless night, and strident changes
From frost to furnace-glow.

All that is left, monotony of faring
On sullen stumbling feet
Along the interminable glacier, glaring
With white uneasy heat.

It about expressed all our feelings. We plodded on for an hour, with no one uttering a word. At last we climbed a particularly steep and sunny slope and reached the edge of the large crevasse which runs straight across the Linda about 600 feet from Green's Saddle. We crossed this without much difficulty, then traversed to the right and gained the rocks on the eastern face of Dampier. I thought it would be a great relief to do some rock-climbing after six hours' snow-plug, but found to my sorrow and surprise that, for the first time in my mountaineering experience, I was distinctly shaky. My knees seemed to give under me and my fingers fumbled for the grips. Fortunately the rocks were pretty good. Shortly we found a good snow-filled couloir, up which we climbed until we reached the ridge. Graham had a tin of Brand's essence in his pocket, which he had carried around all the season, but I had never needed it. Now, however, I was quite glad to drink it down, or rather half of it. It was so nasty I pressed the remainder on Graham, who took it without protest, while Milne had some lime-juice and an orange as his share of stimulant.

The ridge before us looked far from pleasant, being very steep and jagged and much covered with ice and



NORTH-WEST ROCKS OF MOUNT COOK FROM MOUNT DAMPIER.

MOUNTS DAMPIER AND LENDENFELD 183

snow. We looked at it with no enthusiasm, merely a grim determination that, having come so far, we were not going to be beaten at the last. Our progress was slow and careful, the glazed ice in places making every precaution necessary. The rocks, too, were very sharp, and we cut our hands in several places when clinging to their jagged edges. Fortunately most of the loose stones were frozen tight, or I can imagine this being a very unpleasantly exciting ridge. We climbed over and around sharp rocky teeth for something like two hours, and at last a shout from Graham, who was leading, announced that the summit was in sight. A steep and narrow snow ridge led up to it, one of the three arêtes of Mount Cook, La Perouse, and Mount Tasman, which have their culminating point in Mount Dampier. We found the summit most inhospitably sharp and narrow, so, only pausing there a few moments, passed on to a more sheltered and comfortable spot on the Tasman main arête, and there paused for a well-earned rest and meal.

We reached the summit at twelve noon, after just nine hours' hard going. I was suffering from want of sleep and the alternate cold and heat of the glacier, all of which combined to make me feel that Mount Dampier was the most tiring climb I had attempted in the Southern Alps. I have no doubt the rocks would have been most enjoyable and interesting if we had not had such a weary plug before reaching them. However, we were all very pleased at having gained our peak. It was Milne's first high climb, he only being in his second season at the Hermitage, so he was naturally very pleased at having conquered the third highest mountain in New Zealand, and that also a virgin peak, for his first attempt.

We rested for an hour, taking photographs and admiring the view. The west was, as usual, under white billowy clouds; Mount Cook towered above us, shutting out most of the view to the south-east; while Tasman occupied the foreground.

184 THE CONQUEST OF MOUNT COOK

At 1.30 we began the descent. It took us the best part of three hours to reach the schrund on the Linda, as we had to return even more carefully than we had come. We attempted to follow the ridge down to Green's Saddle, thinking it might be quicker to descend the snow slope there, but we found the ridge so jagged and icy that we concluded it would be wiser to follow our old route down the couloir, which we did without any mishap, arriving at the schrund on the Linda at 4.30 p.m. As soon as we had crossed it and travelled down past all danger of avalanches, which were now coming down pretty frequently after the hot midday sun, we settled down for a rest and some tea, having taken thought on the summit to boil some water in the small "cooker" and refill our Thermos. Of this we were now exceedingly glad, as we needed something to stimulate us to our three hours' plug home. The only incident that beguiled the tedium of the way was the glimpse of a glorious after-glow. We were too shut in, the Linda being quite a narrow glacier, walled on either side by Mounts Cook and Tasman, to see the best of it, but directly in front of us the summit of Mount Malte Brun glowed like a burning coal above the snow ridge leading to Glacier Dome, making the most vivid spot of colour imaginable amongst the surrounding snow-clad peaks. The glow soon faded and the mountains changed to their usual cold blue-white in the evening dusk. About 6.30 the full moon rose grandly in front of us, lighting our weary footsteps over the great plateau and up the toilsome slope to Glacier Dome, only forsaking us for a few moments just as we neared the bivouac and traversed round the last snow slope under the shadow of the Haast Ridge. We arrived at 7.30 p.m., and crawled into our little tent, weary but well satisfied, and after a cheery meal forgot all our strenuous labour in sound and dreamless sleep.

Next morning the weather was still fine, so we decided

MOUNTS DAMPIER AND LENDENFELD 185

on a day's rest at the bivouac. The following day, weather permitting, we would make an attempt on Mount Lendenfeld, a fine snow peak immediately north of Mount Tasman. It is 10,551 feet in height and ranks next to Mount Dampier, being the fourth highest mountain in New Zealand. Mount Lendenfeld was first ascended by the Rev. H. E. Newton and Alex Graham, in February 1907, and had not been attempted since then. They climbed from a high bivouac situated at about 8,000 feet at the head of the Fox Glacier. On reaching the saddle between Lendenfeld and Haast, they first ascended Mount Haast, and then descending to the saddle again, followed the north-east arête to the summit of Mount Lendenfeld. Ours would thus be the first attempt made from the eastern side; if we could once make our way through the maze of broken ice and gain the saddle, we could follow their route up the north-east arête.

In the afternoon Graham and Milne set out to cross the Great Plateau and take a look at the morrow's route. On their return they reported that it seemed practicable as far as they had gone. Well satisfied with our prospects, we made all possible preparations to ensure an early start, and crept into our sleeping-bags at 8 p.m. After sundry twistings and turnings in search of the softest and least stony spot, we relapsed into silence which unfortunately was not always that of sleep.

On April 2nd, at 4 a.m., we stood in the chill starlight outside the tent, putting on the rope and enumerating the contents of the rucksac, to be sure nothing was forgotten. Then we set off, stumbling in the dim light over the boulders that surround the camp. An hour's work brought us to the Great Plateau. The snow was crusty in places, and I reaped the advantage of being about four stone lighter in weight than my guides. They were continually breaking through where I just managed to skim over the surface.

186 THE CONQUEST OF MOUNT COOK

At 6 a.m. we came to the end of our steps, but it was not yet daylight. We crossed the plateau, keeping to the right of the south-west arête of the Silberhorn, and made for the broken ice through which we had to pass to gain the saddle between Mount Lendenfeld and Mount Haast.

We arrived at the first séracs just at the most trying time, between dark and dawn. The lantern was not of much use, so we put it out and groped along as best we could, following up a snow valley that looked promising in the half-light. We soon found ourselves in a regular well, the only exit being up an almost vertical snow wall. The place was most eerie, so dim and shadowed it seemed bottomless. We decided to climb the wall rather than turn back. The slope was so steep and soft that one's knees bumped one's chin; but we arrived at the top without adventure, and, once there, gained the benefit of the dawn. We were now in the midst of the sérac ice. Great rocks and pinnacles towered around us, intersected with huge crevasses. Peter spent about twenty minutes looking for a way out of this labyrinth, and at last found one possible, but by no means pleasing. It led us down into a crevasse and across a snow bridge, then round a steep overhanging wall of ice. To traverse round the wall of ice was our problem. It bulged out in a most annoying manner, making it almost impossible to keep one's balance in the narrow steps, and below was a nice little drop to the bottom of a crevasse. After a lot of manœuvring, Peter managed to get round and cut his way to the top of the wall. The rope was a little short and unpleasantly tight on me by the time he reached a place of safety. I made several attempts before I got round the corner; then Milne came after me, and we all reached the top in safety; we were rather inclined to be proud of ourselves when Peter acknowledged it to be one of the most ticklish pieces of

MOUNTS DAMPIER AND LENDENFELD 187

ice-work he had encountered. We spent about half an hour more among the broken ice, which gave Graham an opportunity of displaying his splendid ice-craft, for which he is well noted. At last we emerged in the snow at the head of the glacier, and climbed slowly but steadily up till we reached the foot of the saddle. Here we called a halt, and indulged in a second breakfast while picking out a route. The wall of the saddle rises at an angle of 70 degrees, and is only comparable with Harper's Saddle at the head of the Hooker Glacier. Like the latter, it is seamed across with a great crevasse. We found it impossible to continue straight up for the lowest point of the saddle, the crevasse being uncrossable except at the extreme left. Even if we could find a bridge there we must then traverse back the whole length of the slope. We looked in vain for any other route, so decided to attempt it there. We quickly climbed the soft slopes to the bottom lip of the crevasse; then followed this along till at last we found a nasty but possible crossing-place. The edge of the crevasse dipped sharply down, making a bridge that ended in a pillar of snow about 2 feet broad and 5 feet high. From the top of this it was possible to reach the upper lip of the crevasse. Peter cut his way up it, and with my ice-axe well driven into the snow I played the rope round it. Suddenly I heard a sharp crack. Peter heard it too, and he stood very still on top of the pinnacle. Nothing more happened, so with a laugh he looked down to me and said, "False alarm," and proceeded to cross the crevasse. It was a long stretch, but with the aid of his axe dug in the wall above he managed it, then kicked his way up a snow slope for about 20 feet, and anchored himself safely until Milne and I arrived successfully.

About 50 feet higher up we had another crevasse to cross, and at last found ourselves clinging like flies to a window-pane, on a wall of ice, at an angle of 70 degrees.

188 THE CONQUEST OF MOUNT COOK

This wall had to be traversed for about half a mile before we could reach the saddle. The great drawback to the proceeding was that the step-cutting must fall on Graham alone. Milne, being unused to ice-work, was quite unable to cut steps on such a traverse. I pointed this out to Graham, and asked him if he thought it wise to go on under the circumstances. He said he was willing if I was; also, he hoped that farther on the ice would turn to snow, so it might not be step-cutting all the way. We agreed to start and see how we got on, and if necessary give it up later. Graham cut very large steps and I picked out hand-holes with the point of my axe in the wall above, more for something to do than for the assistance they gave us. Waiting for steps to be cut becomes trying if unduly prolonged, and I found it took me about as long to cut hand-holes as it did Graham to cut the steps. The ice was very hard, necessitating the use of the pick end of the axe always. About the middle of the traverse we came to snow, but not the kind we had hoped for. There was about eight inches to a foot of soft snow lying on hard ice—a thing that every mountaineer abominates, and one of the worst dangers to be met with in climbing. At first Graham tried clearing it away, and then cutting steps in the ice beneath; but the snow soon became too deep to make this possible, so he had simply to tread it down to a hard step and trust to luck it would hold us.

I don't think I ever spent a more uncomfortable half-hour than in crossing this snow. Nothing could have saved us if the slope had slipped away. We must have gone with it, there being no possibility of hand- or axe-hold anywhere. We would have shot straight down that terrific slope, landed in the crevasse, and ended our alpine experiences for ever. Fortunately we took that slide only in my imagination.

Soon we came to hard ice again, and at last, after two

MOUNTS DAMPIER AND LENDENFELD 189

hours' strenuous work, we arrived at the saddle. We all drew a breath of relief when we climbed into safety on the Westland side, and Graham acknowledged it was the longest and worst traverse he had ever made. A bitterly cold westerly wind was blowing up the Fox Glacier, so we only paused on the saddle long enough for a drink of hot tea from the Thermos and some bread and jam. We were looking straight on to the Haast Ridge. The approach from the saddle was bad, the rocks being heavily iced, and the ridge itself broken into sharp, tooth-like projections, and, according to Fitzgerald's account, fearfully rotten. So we concluded we had made a wise choice in deciding for Lendenfeld, which is an easy snow climb from the saddle, and has the advantage of being 700 feet higher.

In the enthusiasm of the early morning we had thought of attempting both, but gaining the saddle had taken us so much longer than we expected and the Haast rocks looked so icy, that we gave up all idea of it. We soon made our way to the summit of Lendenfeld, and experienced a pleasing glow of triumph as we surveyed the scene outspread before us. We had a splendid view of the eastern face of Mount Tasman, and I was able to take a photograph illustrating our climb of the previous week. The west coast was under low-lying clouds, only the tops of the mountains showing above them. Peter took a photograph of Milne and me standing on the summit, or as near as we dared, it being very much corniced, and then we began the descent, as it was much too cold for any prolonged stay. We were soon back at the saddle, and accomplished our return traverse without accident, Milne leading and doing exceedingly well. When we reached the foot of the glacier, and had had a good meal in a sunny spot protected from the wind, we really began to enjoy our triumph to the full, and plodded home quite cheerfully through the now soft snow. On reaching

190 THE CONQUEST OF MOUNT COOK

the broken ice and our overhanging buttress, we decided the easiest way was simply to lower one another over it to the length of the rope, and then drop the remaining few feet. This was soon done, and we went merrily over the Great Plateau and up the slopes of Glacier Dome, arriving at the bivouac at 4.30 p.m., just twelve hours after we had left it.

Next day we made an early start from the bivouac, which will always be associated in my mind with so many pleasant memories of happy days, and is in itself one of the loveliest view-points in the Tasman Valley.

This was the longest sojourn I had so far made in a high bivouac. Four days amongst the eternal glitter of snow and ice makes one thoroughly appreciate a return to the valley.

The soft greens, browns, and yellows of the well-known track from the Ball hut took on a special beauty and restfulness in contrast to the white world amongst which we had been living. We reached the Hermitage the same day, and not all the luxuries of life as there enjoyed could compensate me for the knowledge that I had had my last climb for the season, and that I must now pack up my belongings, turn my back upon the mountains, and go my way, the better, happier, and stronger for my days and nights spent among them, but a prey to that longing which all the excitement, gaiety, and turmoil of city life cannot deaden, for just one glimpse of snow-clad heights, and the peace of the vast silent places, that draws the mountain lover back year after year with a force undreamed of by those who have never felt the lure and magic of the hills.

CHAPTER XVII

ON THE MOUNT COOK RANGE

Hark! fast by the window
The rushing winds go,
To the ice-cumber'd gorges,
The vast seas of snow.
There the torrents drive upward
Their rock-strangled hum,
There the avalanche thunders
The hoarse torrent dumb.
—I come, O ye mountains!
Ye torrents, I come.

MATTHEW ARNOLD.

I RETURNED to the Hermitage the first week in December 1912 intent on making two long-deferred ascents: the complete traverse of Mount Cook and the traverse of Mount Sefton from east to west. Both these ascents had been the cherished plans of years, and as this was to be my last season in New Zealand, it was more than ever important to at least make an attempt on them.

Unfortunately I had been ill the previous winter, and arrived at the Hermitage not by any means in the best of form. For a week after my arrival the weather was warm and fine, but the westerly winds were so strong as to make all climbing impossible, and the days were spent in expeditions around the Hermitage.

I had tried to secure Alex Graham as my second guide, but learnt on arrival that owing to sickness in his home it was impossible for him to come over. This

192 THE CONQUEST OF MOUNT COOK

was a bitter blow, as the Grahams and I had always planned to make these two big expeditions together—they were to be the crowning-point of their ambitious pupil's career and the triumphant proof that their faith in her powers and years of training had not been wasted.

After blowing steadily for a week, the westerly gales moderated, and on the evening of December 10th Peter Graham and I set out for the Hooker hut, intent on conquering the virgin peak immediately south of Nazomi. If we were successful, I should then have climbed every peak on the Mount Cook Range except one. This range is not, as is generally supposed, a portion of the main divide, but a spur branching off from it at Mount Dampier and extending to Mount Wakefield.

We left the Hooker hut at 3.30 a.m. on the 11th, and crossing over the moraine of the Hooker Glacier reached the base of our peak at 4.45 a.m. A strenuous struggle ensued before we gained the main western arête. I soon became painfully conscious of my lack of wind, and sighed regretfully for the form of 1910, when I could romp gaily up the western ridge of Mount Cook with no effort worth mentioning, where now I had to drag a seemingly dead weight up rocks that were no more difficult, though the ridge was considerably longer. We had a clear 5,000 feet of good rock-climbing such as I can confidently recommend to any one in search of training and hard work. For the first four hours I was mainly conscious of my many deficiencies. I had not done a big rock-climb since Malte Brun in 1909, as the seasons had all forced me, much against the grain, to learn the art of snow- and ice-work.

Now I looked back regretfully to the easy hours on some icy slope, where I could contemplate the view at my leisure for ten minutes at a time, while the guides did all the hard work of step-cutting. This continuous work of climbing obstacle after obstacle at a steady pace was



MOUNT SEFTON.

To face page 192.

ON THE MOUNT COOK RANGE 193

a very different matter, and it took every ounce of energy I possessed to keep up with Graham and not altogether disgrace my earlier reputation. Then quite suddenly I woke up, gained my second wind, and climbed happily for the last two hours. It was good rock-work ; nothing sensational, but neither was it particularly easy. It was fairly cold, as the sun had not yet risen high enough to reach us. We gained the summit at 9.50, after six and a half hours' hard work, during which time we had only had half an hour's rest for a second breakfast. Our old enemy the westerly wind had meanwhile got to work, and was now driving up great banks of soft white clouds from the west, which obscured the head of the peaks at the Hooker Glacier. We had some wonderful cloud effects as Mount Sefton kept hovering in and out of the mists, which lent a truly imperial splendour to its frowning heights. Mount Cook managed to keep its head above the threatening mass, and we had a splendid but by no means encouraging view of the east face of the arête between the third and second peaks. This is a most appalling place, the slopes falling away sheer from the edge for thousands of feet. From the third peak to where we stood, the range descended in a series of seven snow-covered aiguilles like the jagged teeth of a saw. On its north side our peak sloped steeply down to the broken ice of the Mona Glacier, and on the east we had a magnificent view of the head of the Tasman Glacier and the Malte Brun Range. The day was still and sunshiny, and avalanches thundered into the valleys at frequent intervals. We spent two hours on the summit, and then descended by the north face to the head névé of the Mona Glacier. Below this we had some fine ice-work, threading our way through the séracs and crevasses. I was not at all sorry to leave the former, as a big thaw was in progress and some of the séracs seemed already tottering on the brink of ruin. We reached the hut at four o'clock, and

194 THE CONQUEST OF MOUNT COOK

after a pot of tea and a rest walked on to the Hermitage very well pleased with our day's experiences. I was tired, but not at all done up, and as we had been out 14½ hours it was not such a bad performance as my feelings of the early morning had led me to expect, and I could feel reasonably sure of soon being in condition to attack the big climbs.

The next week was wet and windy, so all training had to be renounced until the weather could be relied upon once more. I was the only climber at the hotel, so there was no danger of being short of guides when the time for mountaineering arrived. I engaged David Thomson to take Alex's place as second guide for the Cook Traverse. I had never climbed with him, but knew him by reputation as a splendid guide with a record-breaking knack of cutting ice-steps that would make him a valuable asset for Mount Cook.

By Christmas week we were inundated with tourists, and as the weather was hot and fine the guiding staff was kept busy taking them up and down the Tasman Glacier and the usual side trips. On the 22nd Graham snatched a day off, and we climbed up to the Ruareka Saddle to take a last look at the Mount Cook arête, and decide if the rocks of the third peak were free enough from ice for us to make our attack. The summit of Ruareka was still plastered with snow and ice as when Alex and I had first viewed it the previous season. In addition pieces of ice kept flying down our intended route, so we had to give up any hopes of reaching the summit and content ourselves with the view from the saddle. Graham decided that in another week we could make our attempt if the weather kept warm, and we descended to the Hermitage much elated with our prospects.

Between Christmas and New Year the Hermitage guides were kept very busy, so I tried my hand as leader and made up several little parties for Sebastopol and Sealy

ON THE MOUNT COOK RANGE 195

Range. An old acquaintance from Timaru turned up with two Dunedin friends, who rapidly became enthusiastic about the mountains. These three men, Miss Westmacott and myself did all the small climbs round the Hermitage. The men then decided on a trip to Glacier Dome, so we accompanied them to the Ball hut and on the following morning set out with them in the dark across the Tasman Glacier. It was Miss Westmacott's first experience of moraine and glacier, and as making one's way over the slippery ice ridges in the half-light is no easy or pleasant task, she had rather a trying initiation ; she got on so splendidly, however, that we soon forgot she was a novice. We only accompanied our friends as far as the Hochstetter Icefall. Here we had the full benefit of a glorious sunrise and a guideless journey home. We took advantage of the latter to play about the glacier looking for ice caves and rolling stones down the deepest moulins, spending altogether a very happy morning ; we returned to the Hermitage the same evening.

I was now only waiting for the rush of Christmas tourists to slacken before starting out for either Mount Sefton or Mount Cook, whichever seemed in the most favourable condition. On January 1st we decided to start for the Sefton bivouac next day, but that night a fall of snow left the top rocks untouchable. We therefore promptly changed our minds and decided to try the Mount Cook Traverse instead.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE FIRST COMPLETE TRAVERSE OF MOUNT COOK

From depth to height, from height to loftier height
The climber sets his foot and sets his face;
Tracks lingering sunbeams to their resting-place,
And counts the last pulsations of the light.
Strenuous by day and unsurprised by night,
He runs a race with time, and wins the race;
Emptied and stripped of all save only Peace,
Will, Love, a threefold panoply of might.

CHRISTINA ROSSETTI.

ON January 2nd, Peter Graham, David Thomson and I set out for the Hooker hut. A party of New Zealanders who had decided to climb Harper's Saddle accompanied us under the charge of C. Milne, and we all spent a pleasant evening together.

On January 3rd at 4 a.m. we all set out from the hut. The morning was still and cold, the start so like many another, that I found it hard to realize we were putting all our hopes to the test. The New Zealanders accompanied us as far as the Hooker Icefall and kindly helped to carry my guides' heavy swags.

When our ways parted, they to climb Harper's Saddle and we to seek a suitable bivouac, their hearty hand-clasps and wishes for good luck sped us on our way, over the glaring snow slopes and through the melting heat of a perfect summer morning. Eleven o'clock saw us at our destination, a patch of rocks at an altitude of 7,000 feet.

COMPLETE TRAVERSE OF MOUNT COOK 197

immediately beneath the western ridge leading to the third, or lowest, peak of Mount Cook. While I endeavoured to shade my head beneath a projecting boulder from the all-too-burning rays of the sun and the reflected glare of the surrounding snow slopes, the guides set to work to clear a space on which to pitch the tent. The only suitable place dropped steeply away on its north-west side to the glacier beneath; here they built a protecting wall of stones, and then with their ice-axes began a vigorous hoeing match on the flat shingle bed they had selected as the camping ground. Soon the place resembled a nicely dug garden plot, all the stones being removed and piled upon the wall. With a sigh of satisfaction they contemplated the result of an hour's work, and, deciding the ground was too wet to pitch the tent upon, left it to dry while they prepared the lunch.

Snow had meanwhile been melting into all our available vessels from a sun-warmed rock, so water was soon boiling merrily in a methylated spirit cooker, and the whole party were revived with unlimited tea and food. Then, lazily stretched out on the sun-warmed rocks, we watched our friends, mere moving dots of black, crawl slowly foot after foot up the steep slopes of Harper's Saddle, and felt a pharisaical satisfaction that we were not, even as they, doomed to hours of heat and toil. When the last dot disappeared over the saddle we turned with a grunt of approval from the glaring glacier, and sought what shade was available for a midday nap. I was invited to transfer myself to a nest of sleeping-bags under the shadow of an overhanging boulder. Here I experienced such extremes of heat and cold as have seldom fallen to my lot. My head in the shade against the ice-cold rock was somewhere near the South Pole; my feet in the burning sunshine were most emphatically in the tropics, and but little of my person in the happy temperate zone. Consequently I twisted and turned at frequent intervals till the scraping of my nailed boots on the stones roused Graham from his

198 THE CONQUEST OF MOUNT COOK

attempts at slumber. He managed to rig the tent over a rock for me, and I soon fell asleep, only to be awakened apparently next moment by a hail from the glacier below. Our successful friends were returning, not by any means in silence. We shouted and waved good-byes to them until they were lost to sight round the corner of the Hooker Icefall, and with them vanished our last link to civilization,

At 4 p.m. the guides set off to tramp steps for to-morrow's route, while the snow was still soft, and I was left to my own devices for three hours. They passed quickly enough in observing a phenomenon I have met before in the great silent places. Every now and then a voice seemed to rise from nowhere in a faint cry. Again and again I have started up, sure that some one was calling me, to confront only the silent snow-clad mountains. Some stone falling from the heights, the gurgle of an underground stream, or the wind sweeping into a hidden cave and raising an echo from the distant ridges—clear and distinct it comes, this call of the mountains, sometimes friendly and of good cheer; but often eerie, wild, and full of melancholy warning, as if the spirit of the mountains bade you beware how you tread her virgin heights, except in a spirit of reverence and love.

About 6.30 p.m. my guides returned, and while they prepared the evening meal I sat and watched the ever-changing colours the setting sun cast upon the scenes around me. Looking westward the jagged tooth-like range of the Sierras was outlined sharp against a green and primrose sky, while Mount Sefton and the Footstool stood out from a background of palest blue, which merged into green and orange behind the distant foothills. Close at hand the red rocks of Mount Nazomi towered up into the intense blue sky, lending a wonderful contrast to the white ice of Mount Cook, whose lower slopes merged into a glow of pink and lilac, broken here and there with deep narrow crevasses, which were filled with ever-changing colours—sea-green, yellow, and blue. They glowed with living fire. Beneath

Mount Nazomi

Mount Damnic



THE WESTERN FACE OF MOUNT COOK.

X marks the biviouac, and dots the line of ascent on the first traverse

To face page 198

COMPLETE TRAVERSE OF MOUNT COOK 199

us the Hooker Glacier fell away in great circular waves, one after another, till all regularity was lost in the chaotic splendour of the steep icefall, which descends with a rush to the comparatively smooth ice beneath.

One o'clock on the morning of the 3rd saw us sleepily consuming breakfast, hunched up in our sleeping-bags in a vain attempt to keep out the chill morning breeze. By two o'clock we stood outside in the clear starlight, roped together and ready for the start. Turning to the left, we followed the previous night's steps (by candle-light) to the base of the western arête, and then up a narrow and very steep slope, leading directly to the saddle between the third and second peaks of Mount Cook. At 3.30 a.m. we came to the end of our steps, and as the dawn was breaking, we put out our useless candles. The slope was frozen hard, and soon the tuneful ring of ice-axes and the patter of falling crystals broke the morning stillness. Over the saddle a brilliant crescent moon sailed in a sky of velvet blue, while towards the west the sky flushed with the breaking dawn. The clear rounded headland of Bruce Bay rose from a silver sea, and the whole coast curved before us. The Cook River twisted and turned, stream intersecting stream in a waste of yellow tussock. Dominant on sea as well as land, Mount Cook threw its shadow over the shining waters, a phantom pyramid stretching up the horizon. The first rays of the rising sun caught the corniced east face of the highest peak, turning it to glittering gold in a wonderful contrast to the deep blue shadows of the still unlighted west.

After an hour's step-cutting we turned to the right, and gained the western arête. The rocks were heavily hung with icicles, and here and there coated with a thin film of green ice, which necessitated careful climbing. Slowly we crept up, the icy rocks chilling hands and feet. At last we emerged at the foot of the final snow-cap. Here we paused for a second breakfast, gratefully clasping our cold

200 THE CONQUEST OF MOUNT COOK

fingers round the hot cups that held our Thermos tea. Much revived by our meal, we cut our way up the final snow slope, reaching the summit and the sunlight at seven o'clock. Strictly speaking, there is no summit, but only a narrow ridge falling away sheer to the Tasman Glacier. It was so narrow that the party preferred straddling it to standing upright. So with a leg on either side we contemplated the view. It was indeed our lucky day. Not a breath of wind stirred, the sun shone warmly from a cloudless sky. The whole of New Zealand lay spread beneath our feet, limited only by the vision of the human eye. We gazed in silence on rolling plains, deep green forests, and far-away seas. But longest and most earnestly our eyes dwelt on the cruel ridge on which we sat. It stretched away before us, onward and upward in zigzag curves. From the summit on which we rested it dropped sharply to a jagged saddle, then up again steeply to the mighty ice face of the second peak. Always to the east the ridge falls away sheer for thousands of feet, while on its west side it slopes steeply for a few yards to a big outward bulge, which overhangs the Hooker Glacier. After studying our perilous way for ten minutes, we started down the steep ridge to the saddle. The rocks were jagged and much covered with loose snow. We made our way with the utmost care, the guides considering this would probably be the worst part of the traverse. More than once my knees shook under me as I followed Graham round the saw-like teeth of the arête, or let my eyes follow the flight of a dislodged stone, falling, falling, falling into the abyss beneath. It did not require much imagination to feel oneself sinking into those horrible depths. One little slip or false step and then—the end. At last we reached the saddle and started up the ridge leading to the middle peak.

We found to our joy it was frozen snow, and we chipped rapidly up, our spirits rising with every yard as we began to realize that if the weather held we might really accomplish

COMPLETE TRAVERSE OF MOUNT COOK 201

this great traverse, which the most experienced mountaineers in New Zealand had declared impossible. Looking at the Mount Cook arête from below it seems one continuous ascent, with two well-defined drops between the third and second, and the second and high peak. In reality it is a series of ups and downs stretching away for a mile and a half, at an altitude varying from 11,800 feet to 12,349 feet. So narrow and exposed is this ridge, that to attempt to follow it, except under perfect conditions, would be madness. A still day is absolutely essential. If a party were caught on the middle of the arête in the bitter winds that so often rage above 10,000 feet, retreat would be impossible. Frozen stiff and helpless, in half an hour they would be powerless to fight against it, and would either slip from the narrow ridge into the abyss beneath, or die of exposure and inaction.

Our progress up the middle peak was better than we had dared to hope for ; but when we arrived at the foot of the final snow slope, we found it impossible to follow the arête, owing to a bad overhang at its steepest point. So we turned our attention to the south face, and there the guides spent two hours' hard work cutting steps at an angle of 60 degrees. The ice was of the hardest variety, and the sun blazed down upon it. The brilliant surface reflected the rays back again, till our eyes smarted and our heads swam. At last a shout of triumph announced that the summit was in sight, and at half-past nine we stood upon the second peak.

The view from here was our most perfect of the day. To the west blue sea surged into blue sky, till it was impossible to tell where the one ended and the other began. Clouds soft as down hung motionless above the Sierras, or drifted slowly over the rolling golden tussock of the MacKenzie plains, out of which shone here and there the turquoise blue of a snow-fed lake. Directly in front of us towered the high peak of Mount Cook, and between

202 THE CONQUEST OF MOUNT COOK

it and Mount Tasman ran the curved coast line, till it lost itself behind the maze of northward mountains. Beside us the Tasman Glacier swept its fourteen miles in gracious curves, crowned on either hand with New Zealand's greatest peaks, their white summits shimmering in the sun, or contrasted boldly against some rocky giant, on whose precipitous side no snow might lodge. We spent half an hour on this summit drinking in beauty at every breath. Also, it must be confessed, since this is a practical world, we fed and took photographs. Then we were ready to start on the last and worst part of our long journey.

Ever since we had decided to attempt the traverse, the steep knife-edge ridge between the middle and high peak had been to me a haunting horror. From wherever you look upon it it appears impossible. Now, the moment I had dreaded had arrived, and the reality was all that imagination had pictured it. Steep, narrow, and horribly corniced, the ridge dropped sharply for a hundred feet. More than once as we descended it an icy shiver ran down my spine, as the ice-axe sank deeply into the overhanging cornice, and on withdrawal disclosed through the tiny hole the awful gap between us and the glacier thousands of feet beneath. Later, when we compared notes, we all confessed to wondering what would happen if a cornice broke away. Would the shock startle us into eternity? The mere noise and vibration of the falling mass would be enough to shake the strongest nerves, and we only stood about two feet from the junction of solid ice and cornice. At last we accomplished the many windings of the arête, and started up the highest peak. The relief of ascending with a wall in front to look at was tremendous, after the nerve-racking, downward ridge of the last hour. Fate was kind again, and we only had an hour's step-cutting on the final slope.

At half-past one we stood on the highest summit of Mount Cook, conquerors indeed. We were filled with mingled



THE HIGHEST PEAK OF MOUNT COOK FROM THE MIDDLE PEAK



THE MIDDLE AND THIRD PEAKS OF MOUNT COOK FROM THE HIGHEST SUMMIT

COMPLETE TRAVERSE OF MOUNT COOK 203

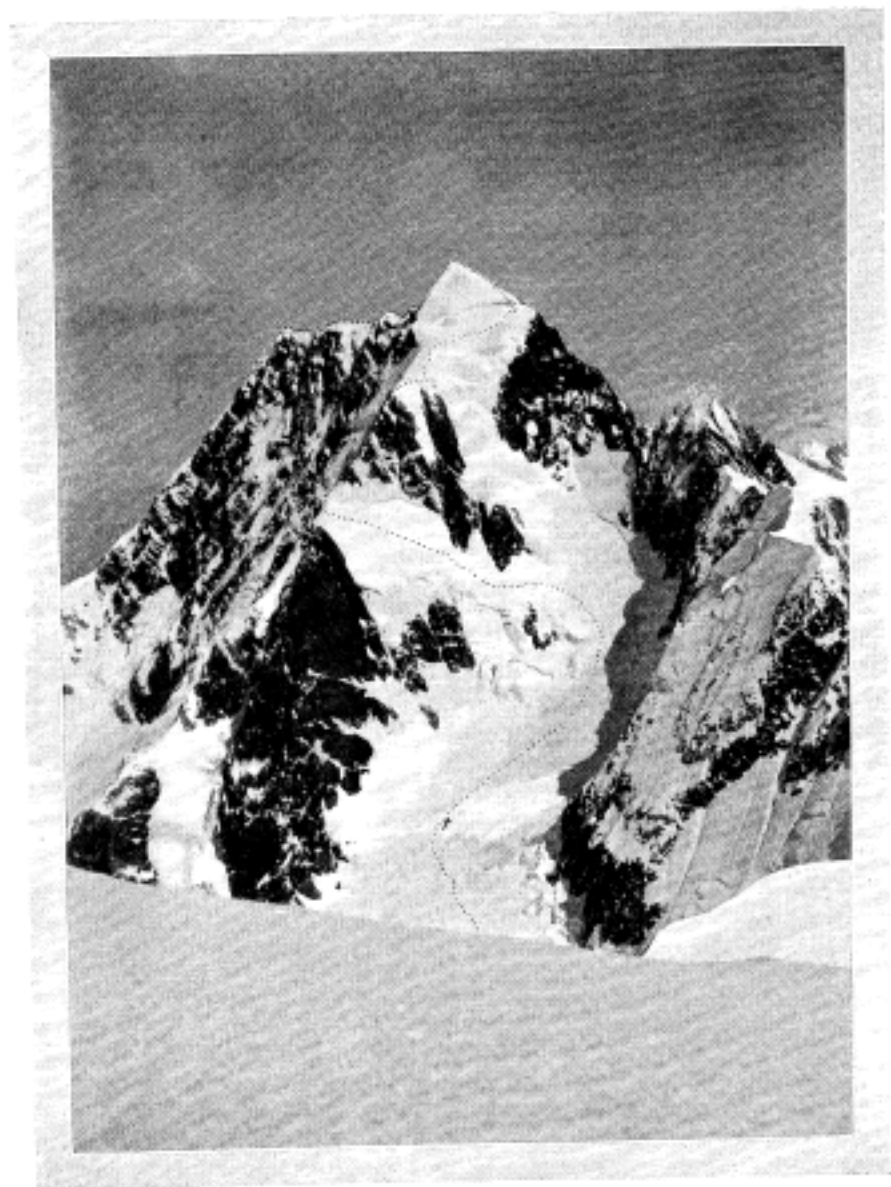
pride and thankfulness, as our eyes roved backwards over the great ridge we had spent the last six and a half hours in vanquishing. Very heartily we wrung one another's hands, and marvelled at our phenomenal luck in obtaining weather conditions which had enabled us to accomplish the greatest climb in New Zealand at the first attempt. Very happily we lay at ease on the summit, and putting all thoughts of the descent out of our minds, concerned ourselves only with the joy and triumph of the present.

We left the summit at three o'clock, and found, to our surprise, that we could kick down the first few hundred feet in soft snow. This proved a great saving in time and energy. The traverse leading to the eastern arête gave us two hours' step-cutting. This accomplished, we started carefully down the snow-covered rocks. All was going well when suddenly a great boulder leapt from the ridge above us, and, bounding harmlessly past Graham and myself, made straight for Thomson. Helpless and horrified, we watched its onslaught, powerless to do anything but give a warning shout, and brace ourselves for the coming strain. With a quick glance backwards Thomson grasped the situation, and with a wild leap evaded the danger by jumping on to a frozen snow slope on the left of the ridge. His feet shot from under him when he touched the slippery surface, and he sped down the steep slope. Fortunately I was ready and well placed, and was able to stop his wild career almost immediately, and bring him to a standstill with the rope. Soon we were all rather shakily congratulating ourselves on a tragedy averted. We proceeded onward with the utmost care, and soon reached the slopes leading to the Linda Glacier. We were all now beginning to feel thirsty, and looked about everywhere for some water, for we had no time to spare to melt snow and make tea. None was visible close at hand, but the guides said there was sure to be some dripping from the north-east face, where

204 THE CONQUEST OF MOUNT COOK

it joined the Linda Glacier. We travelled rapidly in that direction, and were rewarded shortly by the sound of running water. The stream, however, proved to be in rather an unpleasant spot, exposed to a continual hail of small icicles from above. I was for giving up the idea of water at such a risk, but the guides thought otherwise. Eventually Graham untied himself from the rope, and started off with the empty water-bottle and Thermos flask. We watched rather anxiously as he cut his way along, and breathed a relieved sigh when he took shelter under a projecting rock, and proceeded to fill the bottles from a drip there instead of making a dash for the stream. In twenty minutes he was safely back to us, and after quenching our thirst we made all speed for the Linda Glacier, which we reached at 6.15 p.m. We quickly traversed its upper slopes, it being important that we should reach the much-crevassed lower portion before the fall of darkness made crossing it a difficult proceeding. The last gleams of daylight saw us emerging safely from the broken ice, and wearily toiling through the soft snow of the Great Plateau, and up the slopes to Glacier Dome. It was nine o'clock when we stood on the summit of the latter, so we had to face the descent of the 1,000 feet to the bivouac in the dark. We scrambled down the rocks as best we could; and finding the snow slopes below in good condition, we decided to glissade.

It was a strange sensation, sliding smoothly down into the darkness. A faint blur indicated the leader's back. Now and again would come the warning cry, "Crevasse." If it was little we shot over it. If large, we slowed down and sought a bridge. We would hardly have dared this glissade in the dark but for the fact that Thomson had been over the ground a week previously and knew the whereabouts of all the crevasses. Even so, had we examined our route in the cold light of day and common sense, we might have murmured of the valour of ignorance.



NORTH-EAST FACE OF MOUNT COOK.

Dotted line shows the route of descent used on the traverse.

To face page 204.

COMPLETE TRAVERSE OF MOUNT COOK 205

Presently the slope diminished and we glided to a standstill. Ahead of us a faint blur indicated the rocks near the bivouac. In ten minutes we were stumbling over them seeking the flat place on which the tent is always pitched. While the men lit lanterns and fixed up the tent I threw myself down on the stones and fell asleep. Presently a gentle voice suggested I would be much more comfortable in the tent; so sleepily I betook myself there and took off boots and putties, while the bubbling "cooker" gave forth grateful warmth and an appetizing hint of good things to come. It was ten o'clock, and we had been twenty hours on the tramp, with nothing to eat but fruit, biscuits, and tea. It was a happy, hungry, but distinctly sleepy party that rapidly disposed of a good meal and crept into their sleeping-bags at eleven o'clock.

I awoke before daylight feeling uncomfortable and at first unable to say why. Very soon, however, I located the sensation to my lips, so lit a match and had a look at them; they were a woeful spectacle, swollen, with the skin stretched tight, and protruding like a negro's. The rest of my face was immaculate, not a patch of sunburn anywhere, thanks to a thick coat of grease-paint I had put on before leaving the Hooker bivouac. Whether I licked the paint off my lips, or never put any on, I can't remember; at any rate, the sun's rays had concentrated on this one unprotected spot with most disastrous results, and I did not appreciate the idea of arriving at the Hermitage in this condition, for I knew we were in for a triumphal reception when we returned.

By eight o'clock we had breakfast, every one being rested and too excited with our victory to stay still. I found it impossible to do more than drink some lukewarm tea out of a spoon, my lips were so swollen and sensitive. I tied a handkerchief well anointed with face cream over them, and we began the descent to the Ball hut. On arriving there we found that three horses had

206 THE CONQUEST OF MOUNT COOK

been sent up to meet us, so guessed that we must have been seen on the summit the day before. We were thankful to be spared a fourteen-mile walk, and rode home gaily enjoying the restful green of the lowlands after our two days mid nothing but snow and ice.

We arrived at the Hermitage at 4.30 p.m., and were greeted with cheers from the assembled household. I still had a handkerchief over the lower portion of my face, which apparently caused some consternation. One imaginative tourist set the theory going that I had all my teeth knocked out by a falling stone. I managed to mumble a decided denial to this theory, and escaped to try what hot water fomentations would do for me. By dinner-time I was not normal but quite presentable, and was glad to appear in public and enjoy the congratulations on our successful ascent. The whole thing had been done so quickly and simply that sometimes I found myself wondering how it had all come about—Providence certainly does seem to favour my Cook climbs—to walk out of the Hermitage without any fuss and conquer the greatest climb in New Zealand at the first attempt, and return in the best of health and spirits two days afterwards, was undoubtedly rather an extraordinary feat. My guides were so proud and pleased, the Hermitage would hardly hold them, and they had the pleasure of saying, "I told you so" (which is not a purely female prerogative), to their doubting and now envious brethren, who had professed nothing but disaster could come of such a risky expedition. Luck had indeed been with us, but the perfect day would have been no use without the enterprise and energy to use it. I wonder if this great traverse will ever be done again? Time alone can prove, it requires such a combination of favourable circumstances, and must always be undertaken at so great a risk, that few climbers will care to attempt it, or have the time and patience to await the opportunity. Thomson



MOUNT COOK AND THE HOCHSTEVTER ICE-FALL.

X marks the Haast bivouac, does the line of descent to the Bull Hut.

To face page 206.

COMPLETE TRAVERSE OF MOUNT COOK 207

prophesied that it would not be done again for twenty years, if ever. From the other side of the world I shall eagerly watch and wait in the years to come to see who will be the next party to thread their way over that long icy ridge, which may well prove a terrifying pathway not to be undertaken lightly by even the most dauntless mountaineer. Graham has always declared that I do not realize what a great climb we have accomplished; that I took it all so lightly and easily. If this is so it is simply because I have no standard with which to compare it; I know nothing of mountains except the New Zealand Alps, and until I climb elsewhere how can I realize that successes which have come to me easily are perhaps phenomenal? A letter of congratulation from a member of the English A.C. the other day made me realize this as perhaps I have never done before. The writer is an experienced climber who knows pretty well all the great mountain ranges in the world—I quote his letter because it is a comparison which my own so far limited experience leaves me unable to make: "That ridge of Mount Cook would be shuddersome at the best of times. I have walked underneath it on both sides, and looked along it from the top, and I can confidently say that there is not such a ridge in Switzerland; mixed rock and ice perhaps, such as the Teufelsgrat of the Taschhorn and maybe others, but nowhere that endless stretch of knife-edge snow perched far above everything else in the world as it must seem. It was daring to tackle that long descent by the Linda Glacier too, instead of the west face—the precipice on the Tasman side must be appalling, though of course one never thinks very much of that when one is actually climbing."

This is the opinion of a fine climber of wide experience, and I would like to record beneath it my gratitude and appreciation to my guides, Peter Graham and David Thomson, who staked their lives and reputations on the

208 THE CONQUEST OF MOUNT COOK

expedition. Theirs is the real triumph: they planned and thought out and led the expedition to a triumphant finish; their knowledge and hard-won experience, their courage and endurance made it possible. I have been accused of being hard on the New Zealand climber in an earlier chapter of this book; if I have been, it is because my admiration and belief in the New Zealand guides is so great that I fail to understand how, with such men ready and waiting to lead them, the average climber remains so unenthusiastic and unenterprising. If my friend's comparison of Mount Cook holds good, I think it may be carried farther, and extend to the small but splendid body of New Zealanders who have from sheer love of the life become professional guides. I doubt if anywhere in the world finer men will be found. They are pioneers, these daring colonials, exploring their own country, learning by hard experience what generations of teaching has made comparatively simple for the European guide. Twenty years ago a few English mountaineers gave them a lead, taught them the use of ice-axe and rope, and to-day there is hardly a mountain in New Zealand up which they have not found a route. Some day, if my dreams come true, I hope to tackle some of the giants of the Himalayas, and I ask no better fate than to be led up them by one of my New Zealand guides. I am sure they would serve me as splendidly there as in their own land, having all the resource and adaptability of the best type of the colonial man.

CHAPTER XIX

THE HERMITAGE FLOOD

And this is in the night :—Most glorious night !
Thou wert not sent for slumber ! let me be
A sharer in thy fierce and far delight,—
A portion of the tempest and of thee !
How the lit lake shines, a phosphoric sea,
And the big rain comes dancing to the earth !
And now again 'tis black,—and now, the glee
Of the loud hills shakes with its mountain mirth,
As if they did rejoice o'er a young earthquake's birth.

LORD BYRON.

As if to further emphasize our good luck, the weather turned bad the day after our return from Mount Cook. For ten days the rain came down steadily and the only suitable garment in which to take one's daily walk was a bathing dress. To add to the melancholy caused by the weather, I received news that the photographs taken on the Mount Cook Traverse were all ruined—this was a bitter blow indeed. I had had the chance of a lifetime, and had taken advantage of it to the full, to make what I hoped would be a splendid series of pictures of the arête. I carried two cameras, a 3A Kodak, which had done splendid work for two seasons, and a new panoramic, purchased specially with an eye to views from high summits. This latter camera was the saving clause. From it I got two good pictures and two inferior ones ; owing to my not being used to manipulating it, all pictures had too much sky. My old camera, on which I had put the burden of the work, must have got wet either

210 THE CONQUEST OF MOUNT COOK

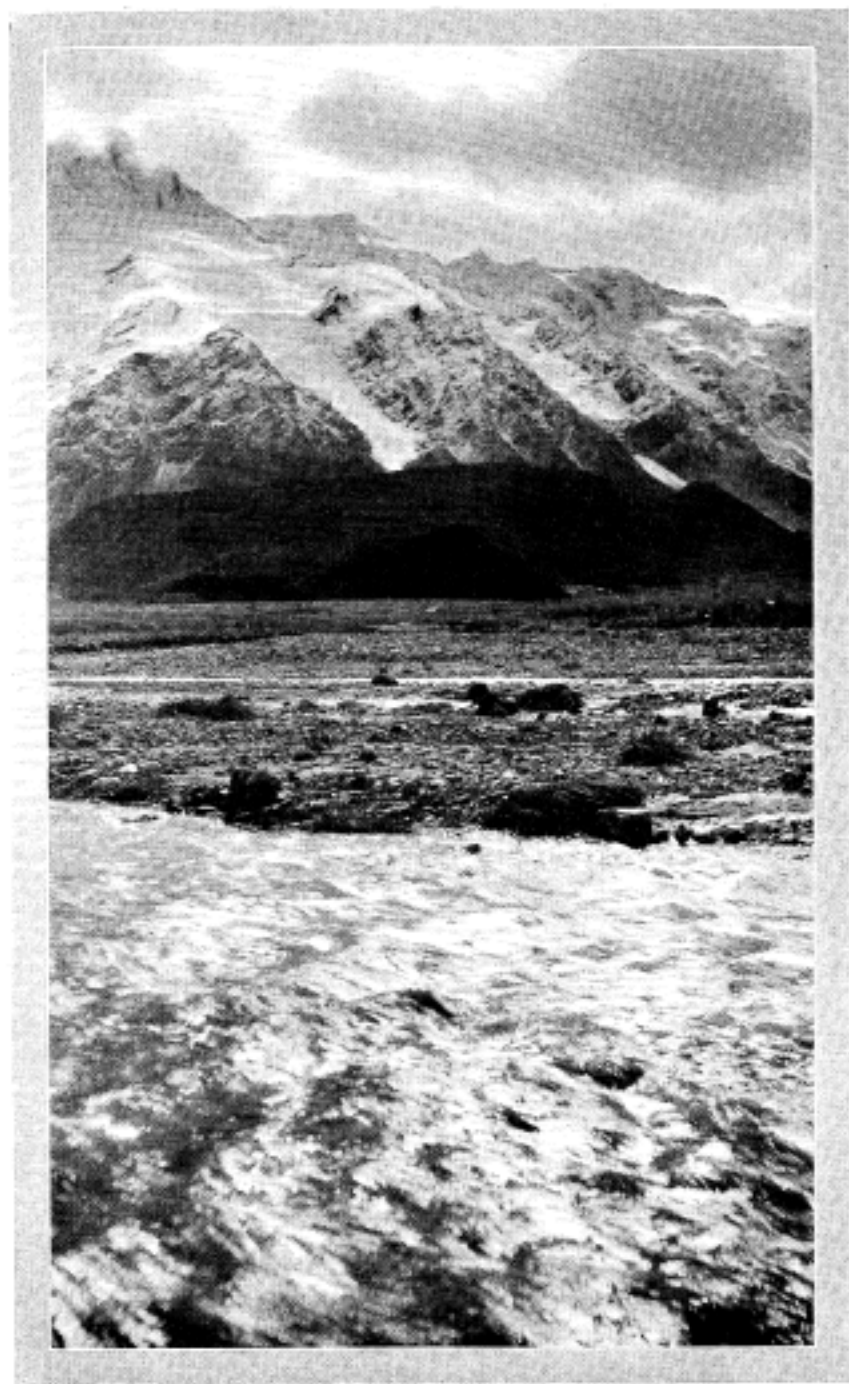
at the Hermitage or the bivouac; it rusted and the lens remained open the whole time. A roll of twenty blank films returned to me by the man who does all my photographic work caused me much grief. Impetuously I planned with Peter Graham to go back at any rate as far as the middle peak, and take the photos again. I could not bear the thought of having so little to show of our greatest climb. The guides too were woefully disappointed at the failure and quite willing to make another expedition. Somewhat comforted by this arrangement, we settled down again to wait for the weather. This remained more than usually bad. For sixteen days we never saw the sun; the first fourteen it rained steadily day and night, but the last forty-eight hours it came down in solid sheets, each drop seemed to contain about a bucketful. After twelve hours of this the hotel manager rushed to Graham, with whom I happened to be talking, to say the Muller River was coming down Kea Point. We frankly didn't believe him, but of course went to see what was the matter. When we reached the front of the hotel we beheld a yellow flood coming straight for us, sweeping everything before it—shrubs, uprooted trees, boulders, and ice were churned about in its raging waters. Fortunately for the writer and the rest of the inmates of the hotel, it received a check at the front gate; here the stream divided in two, one rushing down the road towards Pukaki, and the smaller one making for the Hermitage. A few yards from the front door is a small pond (dignified by the name of a lake) with an isle covered in willow-trees in the middle. The on-coming stream flooded this, and soon the front of the building was surrounded by water. However, no one seemed particularly alarmed. In fact, we all took it as a pleasant excitement after our two weeks' deadly dullness. There were various excitements: two calves were stranded on an island at the side of the house, their ropes twisted round them, and a raging torrent between them and the

mainland. It looked for a while as if the poor little brutes would surely drown. At last an oilskin-clad figure, which looked suspiciously like my favourite guide, began wading towards them, amid the appreciative silence of the onlookers. Twice he was nearly carried off his feet, and it looked as if those calves might cost us dear. At last he safely reached them, cut the ropes, and drove and persuaded the frightened little beasts on to a bit of higher ground, which their ropes had prevented them from reaching. Then he returned by more perilous ways. I was dying to cheer, but knew I would never be forgiven if I did, so held my peace, and listened to the murmurs around me: "There's a fine man," "Always on the spot, that chap," "Easy to see who has the coolest head in this place," etc., all of which was quite true, as the tourists who did not know it already had ample time to discover later.

It was now about six o'clock in the evening; the rain seemed to have ceased slightly, and as most of our new river went down the road, nobody entertained thoughts of any damage accruing from the storm. We went inside to dinner and later to our rooms as usual. The people in the front rooms were a bit uncomfortable, but were told there was no need for alarm, and those of us who were in the older part of the hotel at the back, which is on higher ground, were still high and dry. I must have fallen asleep, though I was under the impression that the flashing of the lightning, which was very vivid, and the roar of the thunder had kept me awake all night. Some time in the dim hours of the early morning I was awakened by a terrific crash: it sounded as if Mount Sefton was falling into the valley, and shook the house from end to end. I tumbled out of bed, slipped on a coat, and flew down the hall. The lamps were all alight and the drawing-room filled with a shivering, whitefaced crowd and their most cherished possessions. The water was flowing under the front door and over the floor of the

212 THE CONQUEST OF MOUNT COOK

new building—twenty rooms added the year before and known as the annexe. These rooms are joined to the drawing-room by a small hall, to which one descends by a couple of steps. Outside fitful flashings of lightning and the first gleams of daylight showed a raging torrent sweeping beneath the annexe windows and gurgling through the piers on which the building is raised. The roar that had waked me was the grinding together of a great mass of boulders swept down from the Muller moraine by the river and deposited not ten yards from the front door. If instead of being blocked by a slight rise in the ground they had been dashed against the walls of the annexe, the latter would have caved in like so much brown paper. Fortunately it was only water that swirled and swept about the doomed building. For about half an hour no one knew what was going to happen, then the water began to recede slowly but steadily, and as no more moraine came down the danger was over for the time being. It was some time before the more nervous of the crowd could be persuaded to believe it, but at last they all returned to their rooms. Now thoroughly waked up, sleep was the last thing that occurred to me; I went to my room and put on a climbing costume with all haste, and then withdrew to the smoking-room, whose window was a good spot from which to view the flood. Here I found Graham and a couple of the maids and we soon all enjoyed a cup of tea. My eminently more sensible friends went to bed and slept till breakfast, I wandered round. Graham had flung a couple of 6-inch rafters across a raging torrent in the backyard, and had gone to the rescue of Duncan McDonald, who had been cut off the night before while away across the road (now river), milking the cows. When he was out of sight I got my camera and sneaked across too. They sagged in the middle, those rafters, in a most uncomfortable manner. I found a spot where the water was not deep and pro-



MOUNT CADOGAN AND MOUNT DU FAUR FROM THE HOOKER RIVER.

ceeded to take photographs of the hotel surrounded by the flood.

Presently Graham returned, accompanied by Duncan and the milk-pails. I was promptly hustled over the torrent because the bank was being washed away. Having once tasted excitement I flatly declined to go in, and as nobody else seemed to want rescuing, I suggested to Graham that we might go up to Kea Point and investigate the cause of all this trouble and try for some photographs. We waded through water up to our waists on the road to the left of the pond, and made across the flats for the new river. It had already cut itself a channel half as big as the Hooker, and was racing down, bringing with it moraine, blocks of ice, uprooted trees, and shrubs. It was still raining hard, but I tried some time exposures, and then we went on. Twice I had to be carried across side streams, where the water was running so swiftly that my additional weight helped Graham to keep his feet. We battled along inexpressibly wet, but cheerful, and eventually reached the Muller Moraine. In fine weather there is a tiny lake at the junction of the Kea Point and the old grass-covered moraine beside which the Hermitage is built. This lake is usually only a few feet deep, and sometimes dries up altogether. The last fortnight's deluge, besides being of considerable volume itself, was a warm rain that had melted the snow in all directions; these conditions caused the lake, which is a well that receives a large portion of the drainage of the Muller Moraine, to rise about 20 feet, then the pressure of the water burst the bank of moraine separating the lake from the valley, and came down as described. Above the lake the sides of the next wave of moraine were washed to a clear wall of ice, through the cracks of which water was gushing in every direction; but the main stream came from round Sealy Point and was the drainage from the head of the glacier. We

214 THE CONQUEST OF MOUNT COOK

followed along the shores of the lake, on shingle slopes saturated and unstable. Here I had the doubtful pleasure of watching the shingle give way under my guide's weight and deposit him in the lake; certainly it did not make him any wetter than before he fell in, as that was not possible; however, I took considerable precautions not to follow his example. After seeing all there was to be seen, we returned home via the old moraine and had a look at the Hooker River, which is always a grand sight in flood. We arrived home in time for breakfast, and I there raised the envy of my friends by describing our doings while they had been peacefully sleeping.

After breakfast it was decided that if a breakwater could be built to turn the main course of the stream away from the Hermitage it would be a great advantage. After watching a couple of the guides at this work for about half an hour, three of us (all women) decided we could not bear inactivity any longer, so shedding as many garments as was compatible with decency, we started out to help. Never have I spent a more strenuous morning. We dragged the trees, shrubs, and boulders deposited by the flood, and piled them upon the wall. We were working all the time in icy water, which varied from ankle to waist deep. After two hours we had dragged all that our strength, single and combined, could cope with, but the stream was diverted and the wall well on the way to permanency. The hard exertion kept us moderately warm, and when the icy water began to be too much for us, we had only to take a wild sprint up the valley in search of more driftwood to return glowing and ready for the fray once more. We all enjoyed the fight immensely, and wondered how the rest of the tourists (not a man offered to help) could sit placidly on the verandah and watch the proceedings without wanting to join in. They in their turn, no doubt, thought we were qualifying for a lunatic asylum, if not already fit to be

inmates. Leaving the guides to finish the good work, we went down to view the Hooker River once more before we changed into dry garments. During the afternoon the rain almost ceased, and the waters receded steadily. Next morning it was fine, but the prospect was desolate: our front lawn was a mass of slime; our lake had disappeared, and instead there stretched a waste of grey water-worn boulders of every shape and size, and most surprising of all, the new river had dwindled to a tiny stream flowing between the high banks that the flood of the previous day had cut. Most people seized the opportunity of flying from such a desolate region as soon as a car could be got down to Fairlie.

CHAPTER XX

A TRIAL CLIMB

“To die be given us, or attain
Fierce work it were to do again.”
So pilgrims bound for Mecca, pray’d
At burning noon : so warriors said,
Scarf’d with the cross, who watched the miles
Of dust that wreathed their struggling files
Down Lydian mountains : so when snows
Round Alpine summits eddying rose
The Goth bound Rome-wards. So pray all
Whom labours self ordain’d enthrall.

MATTHEW ARNOLD.

By Wednesday the 22nd the Hermitage folk were once more leading a normal existence, and all the excitements of the flood a thing of the past. As the weather was fine we decided to make an attempt at Tuckett's Col, and from there gain a close view of the Sefton top rocks, to obtain some idea if it were possible to attack them in the near future. The Hermitage was now filling up with climbers, all anxious to secure guides, except those lucky individuals who had brought one with them, and I began to wonder how I was going to fare when I wanted a second guide for Sefton. I had been negotiating with Alex Graham ever since my arrival, but one obstacle after another had cropped up to prevent him joining me, and I began to feel rather hopeless about ever securing him. However, I determined to make one last appeal after we had been to Tuckett's Col and could definitely state when we expected to make the attempt.

We decided to climb from the Hermitage and dispense with the usual bivouac. The latter always seems a doubtful gain to me, when it only means saving a couple of hours. It is really better to spend four comfortable hours in a decent bed than eight on the hard ground, sleepless and generally uncomfortable. We decided to take Jock Richmond, a young guide who had not so far had much chance of high climbing, with us, and at 2.30 a.m. on the 22nd we left the Hermitage. The morning was warm and dark, and we plodded up the Hooker Valley by lantern-light. Crossing the river by the swing-bridge at the Bluffs, we made across the flats for the foot of the Stocking Glacier. We reached the bivouac rock at 5 a.m. Here we paused for a second breakfast, and then began the ascent. We had first to climb a steep snow slope and then across a patch of rock to the Huddleston Glacier. Here we spent some time finding our way through the broken ice and looking for bridges over the crevasses. After we gained the last rocks above the glacier, we found the snow slopes leading to the col appallingly steep. We made one bad traverse, which necessitated a considerable amount of step-cutting, and eventually gained the col at 10.15 a.m. We were no little delighted with our progress; we had only taken seven and a half hours from the Hermitage, while Fitzgerald and Zurbriggen had spent the same amount of time in gaining the col from a high bivouac above the Stocking. In our hearts all of us were cherishing a plan of going on to the summit of Sefton if it were possible; it seemed such a dreadful waste to be within 1,000 feet and then to turn back. We had only a little food and no extra clothes, but we decided if we could once make the summit we would descend into Westland and gain the camp of the men who were making the new track up the Copland Valley; they would gladly feed us, and we could sleep at Douglas Rock.

From Tuckett's Col the arête looked rather appalling,

218 THE CONQUEST OF MOUNT COOK

but it was not as badly plastered with ice as we had expected it to be. We decided it was possible to attempt it. The col itself is an eerie spot, a narrow ridge which drops sheer into Westland on one side, and on the other is faced with a great schrund from which the snow slopes fall away steeply to the broken ice and the Muller Glacier beneath. Perched on a small patch of rocks with our feet dangling into Westland, we discussed our chances over some tea and chocolate. We had been so absorbed in our plans, we had simply not thought about the weather. We were startled by a puff of icy wind, and ten minutes afterwards we were enveloped in a great bank of clouds that had been drifting quietly up from the sea. There we sat, alone on a few square feet of rock, with a precipice on either side, while the mists blotted out the world. The sensation was extraordinary; we were the only solid objects in a world of wraiths. We sat very still, afraid to move; I was never so uncomfortable in my life. Sitting on the clouds may sound poetic, but it is apt in reality to be more awe-inspiring than comfortable. After waiting some time the mist thinned a little, and we were able to discern our upward tracks. We made all haste to reach them, reluctantly turning our backs on all plans for the conquering of Mount Sefton on this occasion. Descending the steep icy slope in the shifting fog was unpleasant; the snow was in bad condition, and here and there the steps had melted into one another and had to be most cautiously treated, to prevent a slip. Jock led down, I was in the middle, and Graham brought up the rear. We reached the broken ice at last, and threading our way through it gained the rocks above the bivouac. Here we had two glorious standing glissades which brought us down to the foot of the last snow slopes in less time than it takes to write; they considerably revived our spirits, which had been somewhat damped by the inopportune mists. We reached the Hermitage the same afternoon. We had gained considerable knowledge on our tour of inspection and had made a route

through the broken ice of the Huddleston Glacier, so on the whole we were satisfied with the results of our exertions.

The next few days the weather was worse than ever, and I really began to wonder if I might not as well pack up my belongings and start for home. I think only the knowledge that this was the last time that I would be in New Zealand for many years prevented me from doing so. I had always wanted to climb Mount Sefton, and it must be now or never, so I stayed on, hoping, as usual, for better things in the future. The rain finished up with a heavy fall of snow, which came quite low down, leaving Sebastopol white below the level of the red lake. This put Mount Sefton out of the question for the next ten days, so I decided to join a party of girls who were going over to the West Coast, just to get some exercise.

We left the Hooker hut on the morning of the 30th in charge of Peter Graham; there were three other women besides myself. We spent several strenuous hours toiling up the Copland Ridge. On reaching the snow slope leading to the summit, we found that the usual small crevasse had opened out into a big schrund running straight across the face, and there was not a vestige of a bridge to be found. I had been at the end of the rope all the morning, but on reaching this impasse Graham called me up, and asked me if I would lead. My Mount Tasman experience now came in very useful, as the only course open to us was a repetition of our tactics then. I climbed on Graham's shoulders and grasped an ice-axe dug into the upper lip of the schrund and by its aid pulled myself into safety on the slope above. Then I cut a big step to stand in and another beside it, and pulled up the other women one by one, cutting a step for each as they arrived. They were all awfully good, and, if nervous, did not show it; I soon had them ranged out in a neat row beside me. Then Graham tied on the swag and we hauled that up. Lastly Graham was ignominiously dragged up, and a very heavy load he proved. He

220 THE CONQUEST OF MOUNT COOK

arrived with a pleased grin and a gleam in his eye that meant entire satisfaction with the whole proceedings; he gave me a word of thanks as he passed, which left me feeling I had been just decorated with a D.S.O. There was a bitter wind blowing, so we scuttled across the pass and down the other side as quickly as possible. We were soon in the balmy air of the West Coast, with ten miles to walk before we could reach our bivouac. I had not been over the Copland since my first visit in 1910. Since then things have been made considerably easier for the tourist. The track now comes right up to the snow-grass, and the old battle through the scrub which was such a waste of time and temper is consequently done away with. It is only a tiny track at present; when finished, however, it is to be good enough for a pack-horse, and there is to be a hut on the Westland side of the Copland Pass—luxury indeed for the climber of the future.

The opening up of the bush by this track not only gives a charming peep of the Copland River and snowy summits, but also allows a little more air to penetrate into the dank forest, taking off some of the feeling of being in an overheated glass-house, which is so distressing to people not accustomed to a warm, moist air. In spite of these improvements, we were rather a limp party by the time we reached Douglas Rock. Here we had to gather up some sleeping-bags and blankets, as the new hut at Welcome Flat where we expected to pass the night was not yet finished or in any way stocked. Each laden with something, we proceeded on our way, and at last emerged out of the forest on to the grass flats. The river was full from bank to bank owing to the late rains, and flowed like a streak of silver through the forests. On the right-hand bank the ribbon woods overhung the water and showered their sweet-scented white blossoms into the swift current. On the left they were interspaced with the dark green of rata-trees, whose glossy foliage was crowned with



THE FOOTSTOOL.



THE COPLAND VALLEY.

a wealth of crimson blossom. Soft puffs of white cloud hung half-way up the mountain sides, and the distant hills in the west were deeply blue. Such a soul-satisfying colour scheme I have seldom seen, and tired though we were with our long tramp, we all appreciated its restful beauty, so different from the ice-world from which we had just come, or the yellows and blues which make the dominant note of colour on the east of the mountains.

We had each to be carried across the river, and then a few moments' walk brought us to a clearing in the forest on which the new hut is situated. We found that several of the men engaged on the Copland track were camping there. As the hut is intended solely for the use of tourists, we had no compunction in asking them to clean up and remove themselves to the main camp. The hut was only partially finished, the dividing partitions being but half erected, and no bunks or fittings of any kind yet begun. Consequently we slept on the floor, and exceedingly hard we found it. The whole night rain came down in torrents, and next morning being no better, we had to await the clearing of the weather and the guide who was to come up from Waiho to take charge of the rest of the party, while Graham and I returned to the Hermitage.

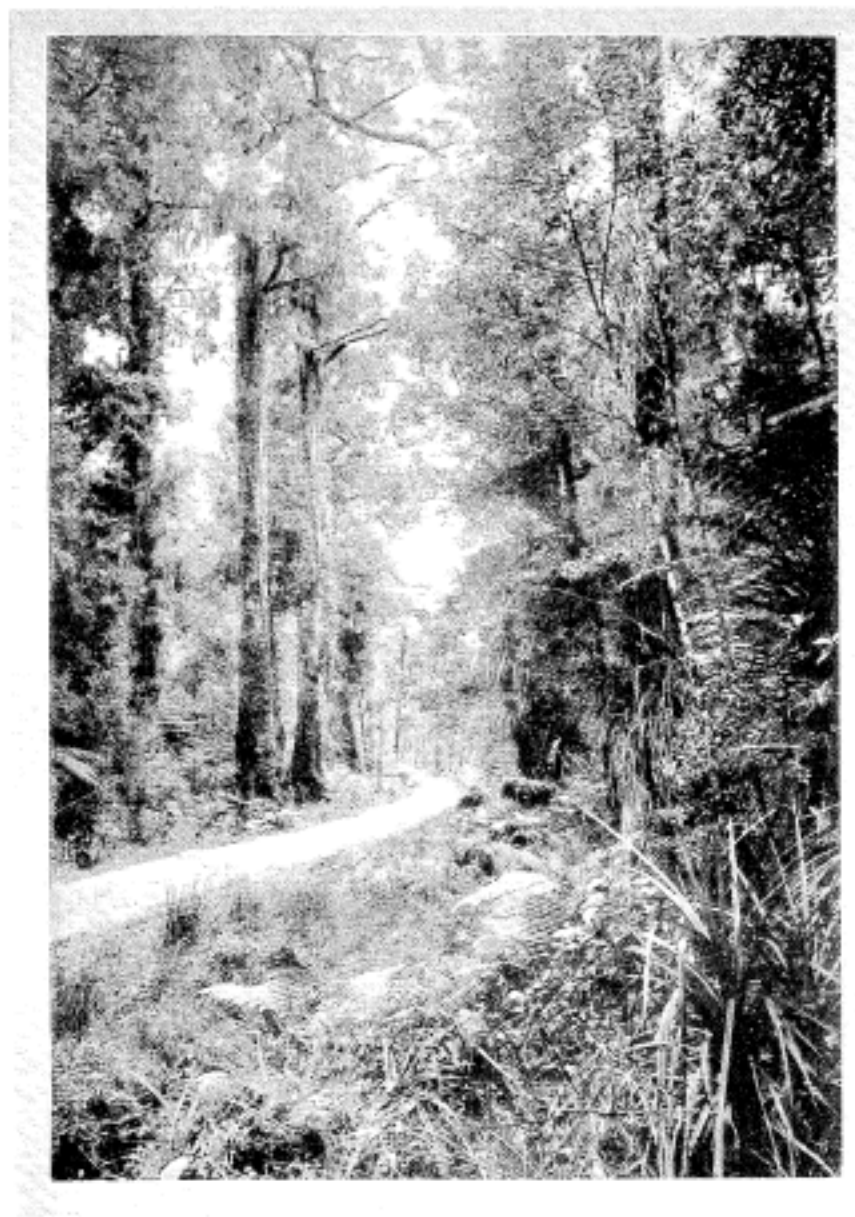
The hut is only a few yards away from the Copland Hot Springs, so we were all able to enjoy the luxury of a hot bath; if a kindly Government some day provides a cold pool next door, into which one may take a refreshing plunge after being par-boiled, and endeavours to remove the sandflies which are all too active for comfort, these springs should prove a most popular resort. The view from them is superb, and the forest by which they are surrounded a veritable fairyland, in which one may wander for hours. I have no doubt that some day a large hotel will occupy the site of the present hut, and prove a very popular tourist resort, for many charming excursions can be made from this spot. For those intent on mountaineer-

222 THE CONQUEST OF MOUNT COOK

ing it will also be a good base, as there are many fine peaks in the vicinity and much unexplored country.

The bad weather kept us imprisoned for two days and nights. On the third day a guide came through from Waiho, and the party for the Franz Josef set off, though the weather was still anything but settled. Graham and I accompanied them for about four miles, to the bridge over Architect Creek, where pack-horses were awaiting them. Here we said good-bye, and tramped back to our hut. The Copland River was so swollen with the recent rain that it was impossible for us to cross it, so we had to spend another night in the hut waiting for the river to fall. We were bankrupt of provisions, as we had not bargained on being held up for three days. However, the road men lent us some flour and we made some most successful dampers, cooking them in a big pot upon the lid of which we piled red-hot ashes. After a long course of stale bread we found our own fresh loaves delicious, and lived on them for three meals quite contentedly. Next morning we got away early and managed after some difficulty to ford the still swollen river. A generous road man at Douglas Rock presented us with a billy of freshly boiled and most excellent potatoes and a tin of meat; with these we made a good meal and then set off for the Copland Pass. We reached its summit at 6 p.m. and arrived at the Hooker hut at 7.45. I was rather done up, owing to the fact that I had been unable to sleep the last few nights, so decided on having a good nap in a comfortable bunk, instead of walking on the seven miles to the Hermitage that night. Unfortunately for my proposed rest, a party turned up at the hut at 10 p.m. and made so much noise it was impossible to sleep. As they got up again at 2 a.m. and took two hours to get away, all the sleep I got was harmless.

We reached the Hermitage in time for breakfast, and I was overjoyed to find that Professor Spencer had arrived during my absence. We found that though Mount Sefton



A BUSH ROAD IN SOUTH WESTLAND.

To face page 222.

had cleared somewhat, it was still too icy to attempt. As the weather was fine Graham and Thomson set off with Mr. S. Turner to climb Mount Tasman, and if possible traverse on to Mount Lendenfeld. I spent the days of their absence in excursions with the Westmacotts and Professor Spencer. Every morning I anxiously scanned the Sefton arête through the telescope and rejoiced to see it slowly clearing. On Saturday the 8th the guides and Mr. Turner returned after successfully ascending Mount Tasman; the traverse they had unfortunately been unable to accomplish. We decided to start next day for the Sefton bivouac, so I spent a busy time writing letters and fixing up my affairs, just in case the arête might live up to its reputation and the party come to grief.

CHAPTER XXI

THE FIRST TRAVERSE OF MOUNT SEFTON

For the journey is done and the summit attained,
And the barriers fall ;
Though a battle's to fight ere the guerdon be gained,
The reward of it all.
I was ever a fighter, so one fight more,
The best and the last !
I would hate that death bandaged my eyes, and forbore
And bade me creep past.
No, let me taste the whole of it, fare like my peers,
The heroes of old,
Bear the brunt, in a minute pay glad life's arrears
Of pain, darkness, and cold.
For sudden the worst turns the best to the brave,
The black minute's at end,
And the element's rage, the fiend voices that rave,
Shall dwindle, shall blend.

BROWNING.

ON Sunday the 9th we left the Hermitage at 11 a.m. for the Sefton bivouac. The Professor, Miss Westmacott, and Mr. Turner accompanied us up to the foot of the Stocking Glacier. The morning was perfect, hot and still, and we were all very excited at the prospect of really making our attempt after so many months of waiting. We set out on the distinct understanding that nothing should turn us back, short of accident: it was to be a do or die attempt. Our aim was to make the first traverse, ascending by Fitzgerald's route up the eastern face, which had never been attempted since he so nearly lost his life upon it in 1895, and descending to Douglas Rock by Mr. Earle's



THE EAST FACE OF MOUNT SEFTON, SHOWING LINE OF ASCENT ON THE FIRST TRAVERSE.

To face page 224

FIRST TRAVERSE OF MOUNT SEFTON 225

route down the western face. After leaving our friends, Graham, Thomson, and I made all speed for the bivouac, which is situated at the foot of the first snow slope on the ridge to the left of the Stocking Glacier. It is an easy climb of three hours from the Hermitage. After a meal and an hour's rest there, the guides set off to kick steps while the snow was soft, and to find a route through the crevasses of the Huddleston Glacier.

I watched till they were out of sight and then tried quite fruitlessly to go to sleep. Soon tiring of inaction I walked over to the great isolated boulder with a narrow cleft in its north face; this cleft widens to a tiny cave which was the scene of Zurbriggen's and Fitzgerald's many uncomfortable bivouacs. I looked carefully but in vain for any trace of them, and speculated as to how far our experiences would compare with theirs on the coming climb.

Suddenly a resounding roar broke in upon my meditations; starting up I saw a tremendous avalanche which had broken away above the Huddleston Glacier. It was rushing down sweeping everything before it. Sick at heart I watched it, knowing my guides were somewhere near the danger zone, and praying all was well with them. Too disturbed and anxious to keep still, I wandered about, scanning the snow slopes on which they should appear. After an interminable hour of waiting, I heard a distant shout, and saw them on the slopes above me. Greatly relieved, I watched them enjoy a splendid glissade, and in twenty minutes they were safely home again. On questioning them I found they had gone through the worst of the broken ice and were practically sure of to-morrow's route. The avalanche that had so disturbed me had passed well to the left of their route, so had not affected them.

After our evening meal was over and everything required in the morning put in a convenient spot, we crawled into

226 THE CONQUEST OF MOUNT COOK

our sleeping-bags and endeavoured to forget the excitement of the coming day in sleep. As far as I can discover none but the most phlegmatic individuals ever do sleep in a bivouac the night before a big climb; the night after is another matter, and sleep comes unsought whether the bed is of rocks or down. Certainly no one lost consciousness for more than half an hour on this occasion, so when the alarm went off with a clatter at 2 a.m. there was no inducement to laziness. The morning was suspiciously warm, so our first thought was for the weather. On examining the aneroid we discovered it had fallen a point. It was still dark, but the stars were shining brightly, so we decided to disregard the warning and make a dash for our peak. By a quarter-past three we were plodding by candle-light up the steep snow slopes leading to the last rocks of the ridge. Time might mean everything to us, so we pushed on without pausing, determined to reach the end of the previous night's steps by daylight. Slowly the dawn began to break, and streaks of fiery crimson lit up a grey and sullen sky. It was beautiful, but the kind of morning no climber intent on a big expedition could view with satisfaction. We scrambled over the slippery debris of an old avalanche, and began threading our way through the crevasses of the Huddleston Glacier. In and out we clambered; great blocks and pinnacles of ice towered all around us, shutting out all view but of themselves.

At last the footsteps ended abruptly beneath a terrible sheer wall of ice, which towered above us for 20 feet. Daylight had come, so we put out our useless candles and considered how we were to get up the wall. We were standing on a good snow bridge in a huge schrund, which, as often happens on a steep slope, had one wall considerably higher than the other. Beneath us the schrund dropped away into darkness. It was not a pleasant place at all in which to risk an accident. If we could climb the wall we would be on the upper snow slopes above the worst of the

FIRST TRAVERSE OF MOUNT SEFTON 227

broken ice, and our way fairly clear. If we couldn't climb the wall we might spend hours in the maze of broken ice by which we were surrounded, looking for an exit, and jeopardizing our chances of a successful ascent. Unquestionably we must attempt the wall. Graham started cutting huge steps in the slippery ice. Balancing himself in them, he hacked away at another above him. Thomson twisted the connecting rope between them round an ice-axe wedged deep in the snow, and waited ready for a slip. I stood on the bridge and shivered. The wall, not content with being sheer, bulged outwards somewhere near the middle. Quietly, steadily, without a slip, all obstacles were overcome, and in half an hour Graham stood safe upon the brink above us. My turn came next. I put my foot in the first step and began to climb upwards. The cold slippery ice-wall offered no support, and the steps were so steep it was an effort to draw oneself up from one to another. At the bulge I paused breathless, and asked for a moment's spell. I rashly looked down into the abyss beneath, and hastily looked away again. Graham said, "Rely on the rope; if you slip I have you"; but one has some pride. I have never been hauled up difficulties like a sack of potatoes, and I did not propose to begin now. The steps were big, enabling me to lean outward with safety; the rope tightened, I made an effort, and landed safely on the farther side of the bulge, and was shortly beside Graham on the snow slope. Thomson followed, and we started off again well pleased with our success. We progressed rapidly, the slopes were steep but in good condition; now and again we had a crevasse to negotiate, but they were not difficult after our recent experience. At half-past six we gained the east ridge and paused for a few moments. Then on again up the last snow slopes leading to Tuckett's Col; these were very steep, and required careful handling. The weather was rapidly getting worse, and by the time we reached the col a bitter north-

228 THE CONQUEST OF MOUNT COOK

westerly gale was blowing, and a great bank of white clouds was rolling up from Westland at an alarming rate. About Mount Cook torpedo-shaped grey clouds were gathering. Altogether it was as unpleasant a morning for a dangerous climb as one could well imagine. We hastily swallowed some tea and biscuits, and at eight o'clock started on the worst part of the climb.

As we traversed the narrow rotten ridge leading from Tuckett's Col to the north-east arête, we were exposed to the full force of the gale; it swept up in fierce gusts from the Copland Valley, blowing out the rope between us as if it were a thread. Fortunately the rope was 100 feet long, and so gave the leader a chance to pick out a good spot before he told the next in order to move. The ridge drops a sheer 6,000 feet into the Copland Valley on one side, and on the other falls away into a deep crevasse. In most places it is not more than two feet wide, and in some not that; so to follow it in a wind against which you could just hold your own, with the help of the rope, was no easy matter. Fortunately there was only about 300 feet of it. We could have stood but little more, for by the time we reached the Sefton rocks and cowered down behind them, we were stiff and numb with cold. They afforded us a few moments' shelter, time to collect our wits and undergo the agony of returning circulation. Then slowly and carefully Graham led up the north-east arête. It was almost inconceivably rotten, lumps of shale like rock piled one above the other ready to fall at a touch. The wind caught pieces like the slates of a house, and whirled them away as if they were bits of paper. We kicked what we could out of the way, and put but the slightest possible weight on anything we touched. Never more than one of us moved at a time, or stood directly in the line of fire if it were possible to avoid doing so. After the first 100 feet the rocks improved slightly and we were able to keep a little on the east side instead of on the crest of

Mount Sefton

Hoher Glacier

Mount Cook

Maitai Burn Range



Murchison Glacier

Tararua Glacier

PANORAMA OF THE SOUTHERN ALPS FROM MOUNT KINSEY



MOUNT COOK FROM MOUNT SEFTON

FIRST TRAVERSE OF MOUNT SEFTON 229

the arête, and to gain some protection from the wind. After another 100 feet we came to a precipitous wall that appeared almost impossible, and which may have been the scene of Mr. Fitzgerald's accident. Not liking the look of it, we left the ridge and skirted round to the east face. Here we progressed well for a time, but eventually landed in a very nasty corner; fortunately we were absolutely protected from the wind. The rocks were solid, but steep, great vertical blocks affording little hand- or foot-hold, being covered with snow and sometimes a dangerous glaze of thin ice. We had to traverse across a precipitous face, and then climb a steep wall to get back to the arête.

It took us two hours to get out of this exceedingly unpleasant spot, and in the doing of it Graham displayed rock-craft that was little short of marvellous. With the very scantiest foot-hold he had to cling with one hand to the rocks, and with the other clear away the snow and ice from every foot- or hand-hold he proposed to make use of. Neither Thomson nor I was well placed enough to help him with the rope, so he had the additional knowledge that if he fell he would drag us all with him. Twice we nearly turned back in favour of the ridge, but the howling of the wind always turned the scale in favour of the present situation. When it came to my turn to climb the wall, I marvelled more than ever how our leader had got up it unassisted and with but one hand. It hung out sheer over the Muller Glacier, so that a falling stone dropped clear touched nothing for 6,000 feet. More than once I had to force myself to move, with every nerve on edge, for fear of a slip that might drag either of the guides from their precarious positions. More by a miracle than anything else we all arrived safely on the arête. We felt rather shaky from the long strain, so found a safe place and had something to eat and drink to put heart into us again.

Thick clouds were rolling over Tuckett's Col, and to

230 THE CONQUEST OF MOUNT COOK

the north only the summits of the mountains were visible. Below us lay the Hermitage, still clearly to be seen. We waved a towel hoping they would see us, and know that so far we were safe. We had about another 50 feet of difficult climbing, and then reached comparatively easy rocks, which brought us to about 150 feet below the summit. Here we traversed round to the West Coast side, meaning to follow Zurbriggen's route up the rocks overhanging the Copland. We found these rocks impossible; they were hung thick with great icicles. So large were they that one breaking away and falling upon the climber would knock him backwards into the valley thousands of feet beneath. They hung in an unbroken fringe exposed to the full force of the gale. Only one course was left open to us: we must traverse the snow slope beneath them and trust to luck, or return to the north-west arête, the last 100 feet of which were probably impossible.

We decided for the snow slope, and there we played an exciting game of hide-and-seek, with our lives for the forfeit. Thomson, being a notably quick step-cutter, was put in the lead. He cut steps to the full length of his rope, we taking shelter meanwhile beneath a projecting rock. Then when the rope was all played out, Graham said to me, "Run for it," and off I went, picking up the slack of the rope as I ran, and glancing apprehensively above me at the great icicles swaying in the gale, ready to dodge if I saw one coming. Reaching Thomson's place of shelter, or exposure as the case might be, I would remain there while he went on, and Graham ran the gauntlet in his turn. We played this game of catch-as-catch-can on a steeply sloping frozen snow slope on which a slip might have had very disastrous consequences. How I raged at the long, snow-stiffened rope that evaded my half-frozen fingers, and was so hard to coil up as I ran, and equally dangerous to leave slack to trip my flying



THE HOOKER RIVER AND MOUNT SEPTON.



THE SECOND SUMMIT OF MOUNT SEPTON.

FIRST TRAVERSE OF MOUNT SEFTON 231

feet. To an onlooker it must have seemed a mad performance. It certainly was not an easy one; so that when after half an hour we were clear of the rocks and their overhanging icicles, we congratulated ourselves on being safely out of an exceedingly nasty place. We climbed a snow slope leading to the saddle between two peaks, and turning to the left followed the steep arête leading to the higher one. In the process we received a severe buffeting with the wind, which threatened to blow us over the other side. There were times when I could not stand upright against the force of it, being the lightest of the party, so crouched forward and crawled. The gale had excavated a hollow on the west side of the summit, and into this we crept, trying to evade the worst of the icy blast.

We just walked on to the actual summit and off again—it was too bitterly exposed for human beings. Mists were driving round us, being blown apart now and again, and disclosing great banks of white cloud racing before the gale over the low passes, and hurling themselves against the defying walls of the high peaks. The cloud-level was at about 8,000 feet, and out of it towered the summit of Mount Cook like a giant rising from a sea of foam. We managed to take four photographs, and then hastily descended. It caused us a great regret not to follow the ridge from the saddle to the lower peak, which is still virgin; but the weather was so bad we dared not spare the time, knowing the long descent ahead of us. As things turned out we were wise; if we had persisted and been an hour later, we would probably never have returned. From the saddle we followed our footsteps back for half an hour, then turned sharply to the left, and descended a steep snow slope to the brink of the large crevasse that cuts across the western face. The mists rose and fell, giving us an opportunity of discovering a route. Thomson led, as he had been up this face of the

232 THE CONQUEST OF MOUNT COOK

peak the previous year. Graham had never been on it before. The crevasse was broad, and we had great difficulty in finding a crossing-place, but at last managed to jump it, and followed the lower lip for some distance. It was a wonderful sight. The crevasse shelved backward, forming an overhanging cave. From its roof hung great icicles of every conceivable size and form. Some joined the floor and formed beautiful pillars, which, catching stray gleams of sunshine through the fog, sparkled like diamonds and flashed with rainbow tints.

We paused in the shelter of the cave to drink tea and eat wine biscuits, at the same time anxiously scanning our surroundings through the shifting fog. The slopes were terribly broken with crevasses, and did not present an alluring prospect for the descent. We wished to reach the western rock arête which overhangs the Copland Valley, and follow the ridge along until we came to a pass leading down into a large snow basin. This snow basin leads to a rock ridge and steep grass slopes, by which it is possible to descend into the valley. Everywhere else are precipitous cliffs down which it is impossible to climb. We could see one very bad break in the ridge. Fearing it might be impossible to negotiate, the guides decided to skirt away to the left and try to join the ridge beyond the break. We set off and spent an exciting hour circumventing crevasses and broken ice. The weather was getting worse, and the gaps in the fog less frequent. We turned to the right and sought a way on to the ridge. We could only see a few yards ahead; in vain we waited for the fog to lift and give us a chance of finding out where we were. It settled down like a blanket, obscuring everything. We toiled on and on till suddenly a peak reared itself up in front of us. It loomed dimly through the fog, and seemed to pierce the heavens, its ridge uninvitingly sharp and narrow. We paused for a consultation. Thomson was hopelessly puzzled, saying there was no

FIRST TRAVERSE OF MOUNT SEFTON 233

peak like this on the ridge. Should we climb it or retrace our steps? They decided we must climb it, as we could not be far enough on the ridge for the pass we were seeking. We climbed up it; the ridge was so narrow we walked with a foot on either side. Fortunately the snow was good and soft. Never have I known anything so eerie as that phantom peak looming above us, and below us nothing but a void of shifting mists. Quite suddenly we came to the summit; its height had been deceiving owing to the fog. We descended to a flat bit of ridge, then up again gradually, the ridge vanishing ahead of us in the fog. With every yard the guides grew more puzzled, less certain where we could be, or what to do. Suddenly another peak loomed up in front of us worse-looking than the first. We stopped and decided to descend to the left and follow round it. The mist turned to snow, falling in big flakes. Desperately we wandered on till we were brought up short on the edge of an uncrossable crevasse. We all looked at one another helplessly and sat down on the snow to think it over. I suggested tea and food, and we all ate a little.

The men's faces were grave, and I could see they were beginning to be greatly disturbed. It was 4.30 p.m., and we had been wandering about not knowing where we were for the last two hours. Unless we could shortly find the pass we must make up our minds to a night out in the snow. We were wet through, and there was not a protecting rock or ice cave anywhere. Under such conditions our chances of surviving the night were small, and even if we survived one night there was no reason to believe the following day would be fine; and if it were not we were worse off than ever. We retraced our steps to the flat bit of ridge near the first peak. It sloped away gradually into the mists on the Copland side. They were sure it was not the pass, but it seemed our best hope; so we descended there, keeping always to the left in the hope

234 THE CONQUEST OF MOUNT COOK

of finding the right pass. The descent was easy. It led us under the rocks of the arête and followed along beside them. Suddenly we heard far away beyond us the roaring of a torrent. We paused to listen, and the guides declared it must be Scott's Creek. If so, we were not so very far out of our way. Broken ice loomed up ahead of us. There was no way of getting round it, so into it we went. It had been a day of adventures and surprises, and this broken ice was the finishing touch. We really performed some strange feats in our passage through it. The snow turned to rain as we began to get lower, and at last through the drizzle we distinguished a big snow-field to the left of us. Thomson let out a shout of joy on recognizing it as the one we were looking for, and, immensely relieved, we hurried towards it. Crossing it we kept along the ridge, almost running in our excitement and relief. Another shout announced the site of last year's high bivouac. We were safe as far as knowing where we were, but it was 6 p.m. on a wet evening, and we had thousands of feet to descend to the valley through very rough country. This was no easy task in daylight, and in the dark we might easily come to grief. On we raced along the ridge, but when we came to the steep grass slopes, soaked and slippery with snow and rain, we had to slow down and descend them with the utmost care. More than once the rope saved one of us from a nasty fall; it took us an hour to descend them. Then Thomson made a traverse into some scrub, through which we had a desperate battle; the bushes closed over our heads, and creepers and roots tripped up our feet. We emerged into a steep stony creek-bed scratched and breathless. We followed the creek-bed down, climbing over wet rocks and slipping into pools and waterfalls; we were soon soaked through, and plastered with mud. The last 100 feet of the creek were very bad, and we congratulated ourselves that we got down them in the last gleams of daylight. Darkness overtook us at the junction of our

FIRST TRAVERSE OF MOUNT SEFTON 235

creek and another that flowed on to the Copland River. It was 8 p.m., and we paused to light our lanterns. We stood beside a raging mountain torrent, swollen with rain and melting snow, flashing white in fierce rapids over great boulders, or green in deep pools.

I think the next two hours were the most extraordinary in our eventful day. We followed that creek by the fitful light of two candle-lanterns, sometimes jumping from one slippery boulder to another, sometimes wading waist-deep in the icy water. When the rapids were too strong, or the water too deep, we struggled along the bank, pushing our way through the dense scrub. We slid down rocks into unknown depths of bushes, falling over decayed trunks and creepers, and crawling through the dense undergrowth. Now and again the swish of a wet bush would put out our lights, and we would grope in the dark for ten minutes before we could re-light them. I found if I did not get my weight on the bent shrubs before the leader removed his, they sprang back in my face and leader and lantern were lost to view. It was a weird and wonderful progress. I was worked up to such a pitch I did not feel tired or know the meaning of fear. I seemed to be standing aside and calmly watching some one else do extraordinary things as a matter of course. Once when we took to what we thought was the bank to avoid a rapid, the lantern went out at the critical moment; when it was re-lighted we found ourselves standing on the tough out-growing branches of a tree overhanging the river, with nothing but space between us and the rapids we were so anxious to avoid. We took it quite calmly, and scrambled back on to the bank. We were all past surprise, and concluded Fate would see us through unharmed. At last we came to the junction of the creek with the Copland River, and groped about in the bush until we found the track. In ten minutes we were at the road men's camp. It was a disreputable looking trio that walked in upon the astounded men. It was

236 THE CONQUEST OF MOUNT COOK

10 p.m., and they were sitting on their bunks smoking a last pipe. Hastily they kicked the fire together and put on more logs. Then, while the fire crackled cheerily, and we waited for the billy to boil, we related our adventures. When we came to our clamber down "roaring creek" in the dark, they were astounded, and one man owned that he had tried to follow it up in the daytime, and had given it up as "too tough a job." We made a good meal of bread, meat, and tea, our first substantial one after nineteen hours' strenuous work and excitement. Then amid a chorus of "Good-nights" we tramped away into the darkness to the Douglas Rock bivouac, a quarter of a mile farther on.

On reaching the rock the guides undid the swags they had been burdened with all day and produced a change of dry clothes for all of us. After unrolling the sleeping-bags and blankets kept at the cave, and lighting a lantern swung from the roof, they set off back to the men's camp to change their soaked garments, leaving me to do likewise at my leisure. Before their return I was once more warm and dry and happily buried in the depths of a sleeping-bag, which represented the height of luxury and comfort after the strenuous exertions of the last few hours.

Next morning we woke to wind and rain, and knowing it was impossible to cross the Copland Pass under such conditions, we thankfully snuggled into our bags and slept far into the day. Awaking at last thoroughly refreshed and not a bit the worse for our previous day's experiences, we set about making a roaring fire. This served the double purpose of cooking our meals and drying our soaked garments.

Thoroughly happy and contented, we sat by the fire and discussed our achievements from all points of view. Considering the difficulties of the climb, even under good conditions, we were more than satisfied with our success. One thing worried us considerably, and that was the



NORTH-WEST RIDGE OF MOUNT SEPTON.

FIRST TRAVERSE OF MOUNT SEFTON 237

fact that we could not let either our friends at the Hermitage or Alex Graham on the West Coast know that we were safe. From the Hermitage they must have seen that we were caught in the storm near the summit, and if we did not return up to time, half the country would be out looking for us, and the pessimists who had all along prophesied disaster to such a rash undertaking would think that their worst fears were justified. However, there was no help for it, we were very sorry to cause any needless anxiety, but till the storm abated it was impossible to cross the pass or send word to the Franz Josef Hotel. In the afternoon it cleared up for a little and the sun came out fitfully, but by evening it was raining once more. Next morning was as wet as ever, but about 1 p.m. it showed some signs of clearing. We therefore decided to try for the pass and turn back if it proved impassable. We made it in four hours, fighting our way over with some difficulty against a bitter wind and falling snow. Once we reached the rock ridge on the Hooker side the weather abated, and we soon clambered down to the hut. After a pause there for a meal, we walked on to the Hermitage about 8 p.m. I collided with the professor near the smoking-room, and he did a war dance at the sight of me safe and sound and the news of our success. We were just in the nick of time to countermand various telegrams as to our probable fate.

The news of the loss of Captain Scott had just reached the Hermitage, and we were all overwhelmed by the terrible disaster, so much so that we had no heart to celebrate our own good fortune, so spent the evening talking quietly and gleaning all the news of the ill-fated expedition that the papers could give us.

CHAPTER XXII

GOOD-BYE TO NEW ZEALAND

If but the kindly years may grant us still
To track the lonely valley to its end,
And view, though from afar, the crag-bound hill
Lift its long greeting—as old friend meets friend
In life's brief rest from labour at the last,
When all that asks the clearer word is spoken,
When heart knows heart, and all the wistful past
Wakes in one glance—then shall this love, unbroken,
Ye mountains, by our striving and your strength,
Find its last pleasure only in the seeing,
And deep beyond all depths of words at length
Pulse with a life more lasting than mere being.

GEORGE W. YOUNG.

For the next few days I was the victim of my own success. Life was "flat, stale, and unprofitable." All the dreams and plans that had filled my days with speculations and excitement were over, the "glory and the dream" had passed into prosaic reality. It was useless now to stand and gaze at Sefton's daunting wall: there were no more thrilling moments to be spent scaling it in imagination—an accurate knowledge of its component parts seemed but poor compensation for the old heart-warming illusions, and I could but agree with Browning that, "A man's reach should exceed his grasp, or what's a heaven for?" Gradually, however, the haunting feeling of loss evaporated. Serene and aloof as ever, the great mountain dominated the valley, unaltered and unalterable, no matter how many defiling feet might touch its white snows.

GOOD-BYE TO NEW ZEALAND 239

As far as guides were concerned, too, I was at the end of my tether; everything had been more or less put aside that we might make our attempt and remove for ever the oft-repeated reproach, that no New Zealand guide had dared to tackle Mount Sefton from the east. Now it was done, and various climbers were clamouring for guides at any price. Consequently I had the unusual and quite unappreciated pleasure of sitting still and watching other people climb.

Two ascents of Mount Cook were made in the next two days. Mr. Gran, of Norway, a member of the Scott Expedition, having come up specially to tackle Mount Cook, was rewarded after a week's waiting for weather, and made a fine ascent in record time by the eastern face. Two days later Mr. and Mrs. Mannering also made an attempt, but were driven back from the Haast bivouac by bad weather. Mr. Mannering has certainly been dogged by the most persistent ill-luck in the matter of Mount Cook, and every one regretted that this last attempt should share the fate of so many others, especially as he was shortly leaving for England, and could not hope to be in the Alps again for many years.

By the beginning of March the Hermitage was empty of climbers once more, and having not very patiently cooled my heels for three weeks I hoped that we might at last be able to go back to the Cook bivouac (Hooker side), where we had left some of our possessions, including a rucksac of mine. I was still cherishing a hope of getting on to the arête once more and re-taking my spoilt photographs.

Meanwhile on March 6th we made the first ascent of a hitherto unnamed rock peak immediately north of the Footstool. We climbed it from the Hermitage, leaving at 4.45 a.m. The day was cold and sunless and encouraged rapid movement. We followed the east arête between the Eugénie and Stuart Glaciers. It is a long

240 THE CONQUEST OF MOUNT COOK

but comparatively easy rock route which leads on to a steep snow slope seamed with a big crevasse. The crevasse once negotiated, we gained the rocks again and reached the summit at 10.15. The aneroid height was 8,472 feet. I took a first-climber's privilege and named the peak Mount Cadogan. My chief object in ascending it had been to take a photo of the back of Mount Sefton showing our route on the descent, but the day was so dull and cloudy that the results were a failure. While we were on the summit it began to snow, and as the wind was bitterly cold we scuttled down again with all haste. We had some splendid glissades on the descent which brought us to the valley in a most cheerful frame of mind. In the morning, walking along the Hooker path while it was still dark, we had been greatly puzzled by a continuous dull boom that rose from the river, so now we decided to investigate the matter. Leaving the path we climbed over the moraine in the direction of the sound, and soon stood on a bank 20 feet above the water. For a minute all was silence and then with a roar up shot a 10-foot shower of stones and water. The Muller River had found an exit from its prison beneath the glacier under a great ice wall some 50 feet in height, and every few moments it played at being a geyser. The whole spot was most picturesque: the recent floods had washed the dirty moraine to clear ice, and the force of the water had in one place undermined it, leaving a bridge, a perfect arch of white ice, spanning the foaming river, which framed a charming view of the distant mountains and was an immense asset to the scenery.

On reaching home we reported our discovery, and for days until the sun melted the arch the spot was a favourite afternoon walk for the inmates of the Hermitage. I spent one morning photographing there, and got the fright of my life when a huge pinnacle overhanging the river broke away and fell with a tremendous



THE FOOTSTOOL FROM THE HOOKER RIVER.



MOUNT DU FAUR AND MOUNT CADOGAN.

To face page 240.

GOOD-BYE TO NEW ZEALAND 241

crash. It raised a wave that spread far past the watermark and up to the very spot on which I had been standing. The photographs were some of the best I have ever taken and were well worth the fright. They should some day prove interesting, as the Muller Glacier is so continually changing where it is undermined by the river.

During the next fortnight there was not a day in which it was possible to climb anything; wind, rain, and snow followed one another with monotonous regularity, and more than once I came to the conclusion it was waste of time and money to wait any longer on the chance of doing something. Then the first fitful gleam of sunshine would revive all my hopes and I would give it just a few more days to clear, and so Easter found me still waiting.

I had been at the Hermitage three months and not yet been up the Tasman Glacier, so when the weather really did clear up for a few days, about the 19th of March, I decided to pay a farewell visit to the Malte Brun hut.

Graham and I left on the 20th for the Ball hut, and on Good Friday walked through to Malte Brun. The day was fine, and we decided to make an attempt on Aiguille Rouge next day. This is a fine rock peak, first ascended by Mr. L. M. Earle in 1910 and not since attempted; it is situated immediately south of Mount Malte Brun.

On waking with the alarum on the morning of the 22nd, I was disgusted to find everything enveloped in dense fog; it was no use starting, so I returned disconsolate to my bunk. About 8.30 a.m. the fog began to lift, so packing a rucksac with all speed we set out, late though it was. We climbed up the slopes of Mount Malte Brun until we reached a low gap in the western arête through which it was possible to traverse on to the Beathem Glacier, above the névé of which Aiguille Rouge rises abruptly. The snow slopes leading from the west arête were very steep and icy, and it took us some time to negotiate them, especially as we had to keep a sharp

242 THE CONQUEST OF MOUNT COOK

look-out for falling stones which kept rattling down from a couloir near by. As we proceeded, the mists rose and fell, giving most lovely glimpses of the Tasman Glacier and the surrounding mountains. We had a long, toilsome march up the glacier to the head névé, where we rested for a time before beginning the ascent. We followed Mr. Earle's route up the north-east buttress; the rocks are good, solid red blocks, with plenty of hand- and foot-hold, and afforded a splendid climb. Near the summit I nearly came to grief. I was tired, and it was taking me all my time to keep up with Graham, being somewhat out of training. I was so used to the rock being good—we had not met a bit of rotten stuff all the way—that I suppose I was careless. While Graham was above me I took what seemed a short cut, and the next moment a great block I was using for a hand-hold came away with me. As it fell it caught me just above the knee, fortunately missing the knee-cap, and knocked me backwards. As I felt it slipping I gave a shout of warning to Graham, and before I fell the full length of the slack between us he had me, and I was able to grab another hand-hold. Feeling considerably shaken, I hung where I was for a bit, and then climbed gingerly up to my guide. We were within a few yards of the summit, so went on almost immediately, Graham eyeing every hand- and foot-hold wrathfully. My knee was stiff and sore, and I was exceedingly glad to arrive at the summit.

There I examined it, and finding it was rather deeply cut, we hauled out the ambulance outfit and patched it up. We had only been on the summit a few moments when to our disgust it began to snow, and everything around us was blotted out. We hastily ate some biscuits and took a drink from the Thermos. Then as I was decidedly stiff Graham suggested that we try a descent by the snow slopes of the north face and so avoid the jarring descent which a return by the buttress would entail. We followed



AGUILLE ROUGE.

To face page 242.

GOOD-BYE TO NEW ZEALAND 243

along a narrow arête for some distance and then began the descent. The first of it was steep and icy, and we began to wonder if we were any better off than on the rocks; it was very cold and the snow fell around us in thick flakes. When we had descended somewhat we found a good snow-filled couloir down which we were able to kick steps; then we traversed across to the middle of the north face, and were able to descend the rest of the way in a series of fine glissades which brought us back to the head névé of the Beathem in no time. The weather became thicker and thicker as we hurried on, just able to discern our footmarks of the morning for two steps ahead. The descent of the glacier is steep; and enveloped in fog as we were, I felt as if I was walking on the clouds. If I took my eyes off the only distinct object, Graham's boots a step ahead of me, I felt I was floating in space and somewhat giddy. Now and again a falling stone passed with a swish from above, or the ice gave an ominous crack from the depths of the fog, all of which added considerably to the uncanny feeling. Without our morning's footsteps to follow, we would have been in a bad way, as there was a good deal of broken ice to avoid. As it was, the marks were very faint, and sometimes we missed them and had to hunt about before we could recover the trail. Once we arrived at the icy slope leading to Malte Brun arête we were right, as our steps had been cut large and were easy to discern. We followed them up with all speed and reached the hut in safety at 5.30 p.m., quite pleased to have snatched a climb from such a doubtful day. The following day it snowed steadily, and there was nothing to do but wrap oneself up in blankets and wait events. The next morning it had cleared, and we set out at 6 a.m. for Elie de Beaumont. It was horribly cold, and I was not long in coming to the decision that winter climbing was of no use to me. About half-way up Elie de Beaumont we met an icy south-west wind which was blowing from the summit with considerable force. We were

244 THE CONQUEST OF MOUNT COOK

engaged in negotiating some very bad broken ice, which entailed considerable time and step-cutting. The cold was so bitter we all but froze. As there was no prospect of it being better on the summit I counselled a retreat ; and after some discussion we began the descent.

As the morning was still young, we decided as we were half-way there we might as well have a try for the Hochstetter Dome. We skirted round the slopes of Elie de Beaumont on to the Lendenfeld Saddle. Here we were caught in a regular blizzard against which there was no standing. Hastily we looked around us, and spying a half snow-filled crevasse we bolted for it. A bridge below the surface-level was solid, and one lip overhung, forming a tiny cave. Jamming our ice-axes into the slope above, we twisted the rope round them and crawled into the cave—it was only a hole, and sheltered our heads and bodies well enough, but our feet stuck out. Beside me I could see through a tiny hole way down into the blue depths of the crevasse. Outside the wind raged like thunder, and the drift snow flew past and fell in showers like a silver curtain, through which we caught glimpses of the blue hills of the coast. We waited about half an hour, and then as the wind moderated a little we crawled out and made a dash for the lower slopes. Once more the dome (ascended by dozens of tourists every season) had beaten me—this was the second time it had treated me to a blizzard, and certainly the last time I shall waste any more energy over it. Lower down we evaded the wind, and spent three wildly exciting hours ski-ing on the steep slopes—too steep for novices, I imagine, as I was rarely right side up at the end of the run and quite incapable of guiding myself. If there was a crevasse within fifty yards those blessed skis made straight for it, and I had to throw myself down to avoid a worse fate. We reached the hut in the evening, wind-burnt and hungry, and next morning descended to the Hermitage, fully convinced that the season for climbing was over.



ICE CLIFFS AND THE HOOKER RIVER



THE HERMITAGE AFTER THE FLOOD

GOOD-BYE TO NEW ZEALAND 245

From the day of our return to the end of March it rained solidly—in fact, just to prove what it could do in that line, it rained twenty-four inches in twenty hours, and we had a second flood. Fortunately the Easter crowd had departed, and there were only about twenty people in the hotel. The Muller River came down in full force, and instead of dividing as on the first occasion came straight for the hotel. In no time we were inundated. The annexe was awash, the drawing-room, hall, front bedrooms, and dining-room were ankle-deep in water, and everybody had to decamp to the back hall bedrooms and smoking-room. During the night the annexe broke away from the main building and settled down into the stream that had undermined it. In the morning by way of variety it snowed; the water receded and the house was inches deep in silt. Several of the bridges between Fairlie and the Hermitage were washed away, and cars could get neither up nor down. I was booked to leave by the first car, but the manager asked me to give way to some people who were in a hurry, to which I cheerfully agreed, as some pleasant people were remaining who would keep me company.

The poor old Hermitage was a wreck, damaged beyond all hope of mending. It was evident, too, that whenever there was unusually heavy rain or melting snow it would be inundated, thanks to the breakaway in the moraine. Another flood would probably carry away the main building or damage it so much that it would not be fit to live in. A mile away down the valley a big new hotel was commenced a year ago and will soon be finished. A fashionable place with tennis courts, golf links, etc., where you will have to dress for dinner and play about in pretty clothes—in fact, a fashionable tourist resort. The old happy, care-free, home-like days spent in the ugly rambling cottage building were over. Many a time the climbers and beauty lovers had suggested that they should form a syndicate and purchase the old place for themselves, and so keep the

246 THE CONQUEST OF MOUNT COOK

old home-like ways and let fashion rule in the valley. Now this hope was doomed, the old place must go. Very sad it made me to look back for the last time at the dear old building under whose roof I had spent some of the happiest days of my life, and know that I would never see it again. As the car rushed away across the plains a mist for a moment blotted out the towering mountains, the blue sky, and the brown faces of my comrade-guides; with a lump in my throat I waved a last farewell. Life is opening out. I may see many lands and make many friends, but as long as it shall last I will carry with me an imperishable memory of that happy home among the mountains, memories of good friends and true, of brave deeds quietly done—days of exultation and triumph, days of sorrow and failure. Love, freedom, and peace, with beauty unutterable brooding on the star-lit heights and the winding valleys; dear home of hopes and dreams, may fate some day bring me back again to wander in well-remembered ways, but now——

I leave the brown lands; crying, "Sorry to go,"

"SORRY TO GO"——

"Good-bye!" and "God-speed!" and . . . "Sorry to go!"

INDEX

- Actone, Mount, 22
 Aiguille Rouge, 23, 143, 241
 Alpine Club, English, 17
 Alpine Club, New Zealand, 19
Alpine Journal, English, 86
Alpine Journal, New Zealand, 19
 Alps, European, 86
 Alps, New Zealand, 18, 19, 123, 207
 Alps, Southern, 18, 19, 21, 25, 26, 27, 29, 86
 Alps, Swiss, 24
 Amateur climber, 23
 Annette, Mount, 87, 94
 Architect Creek, 78, 222
 Arctic regions, 34, 115
 Australia, 25
 Austria, 98
 Aynsley, Miss Murray, 95, 96, 99, 134, 136, 166

 Baker's Saddle, 68, 102, 167
 Ball hut, 21, 61, 85, 112, 120, 121, 132, 136, 142, 177, 190, 205
 Ball Glacier, 179
 Ball Pass, 19, 29, 41, 48, 89, 167
 Bambridge, Mr., 21
 Barron's Saddle, 90, 91, 93
 Batson's Hotel, 80, 81
 Beatham Glacier, 145, 241, 243
 Beaumont, Mount Elie de, 22, 242, 244
 Bêche, Mount de la, 19, 48, 113, 114, 117, 118, 120, 134
 Black Birch Creek, 88, 94
 Blue Lake, 142
 Brown, Sir E. F., 17
 Buckjumper, 84
 Burk's Pass, 23

 Cadogan, Miss Muriel, 87, 136, 139, 140, 141, 145
 Cadogan, Mount, 240
 Canterbury, 105
 Chambers, Mr. Hugh, 134, 136, 137, 138, 140, 142, 144, 148, 150, 152, 155, 157, 158, 177
 Chamois, 98
 Christchurch, 31, 146, 147, 158
 Chudleigh, Mount, 142, 143, 144
 Conway, Mount, 22
 Cook, Mount, 17, 18, 20
 arête, 201, 202, 207
 district, 19, 20, 21, 23
 first ascent of, 22, 23, 24, 27, 29, 30, 34, 35, 39, 41, 52, 53, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 70, 71, 74, 85, 87, 90, 93, 96, 100, 103, 115, 119, 122, 124, 126, 127, 129, 132, 138, 139, 141, 154, 159, 164, 170, 174, 177, 184, 185, 191, 193, 199, 200, 208, 209, 228, 231, 238
 range of, 19, 24, 178, 192
 rocks of, 105, 106
 second peak of, 20, 201, 202
 summit of, 104, 202
 third peak of, 22, 197, 199, 200
 traverse of, 22, 194, 197, 199
 Cook River, 79, 82, 199
 Copland Hot Springs, 77, 84, 221
 Copland hut, 96, 98
 Copland Pass, 22, 62, 63, 72, 73, 78, 85, 100, 133, 220, 222, 236

- Copland Ridge, 219
 Copland River, 74, 75, 76, 222, 235
 Copland track, 221
 Copland Valley, 217, 228, 230, 232
 Coronet, Mount, 22

 Dampier, Mount, 70, 105, 108, 109,
 124, 159, 176, 182, 183, 185, 192
 Darwin Glacier, 137
 Darwin, Mount, 21, 30
 David's Dome, 22, 93
 Dividing Range, 68
 Dixon, Mr. M., 18, 26
 Dobson, Mr., 17
 Dobson Valley, 93
 Douglas, Mount, 22
 Douglas Rock, 75, 84, 217, 220, 222,
 224, 236
 Du Faur, Mount, 151
 Dupain Institute, 87

 Earl, Mr. L. M., 23, 48, 49, 50, 51,
 52, 53, 54, 56, 60, 61, 62, 64,
 66, 70, 71, 73, 85, 177, 224, 241,
 242
 Egmont, Mount, 25
 England, 238
 Eugénie Glacier, 152, 238
 European guides, 208
 Exhibition, Christchurch, 27, 84

 Fairlie, 32, 215, 245
 Fisher, Mr., 137, 138, 204
 Fitzgerald, Mr. Edward, 20, 21, 119,
 122, 126, 217, 224, 225, 229
 Footstool, Mount, 20, 136, 138, 198,
 238
 Fox Glacier, 19, 82, 185, 189
 Franz Josef Glacier, 79, 80, 81, 134,
 135, 222, 237
 Franz Josef Hotel
 Frind, Mr. Otto, 73, 77, 78, 80, 81, 82,
 83, 84, 85
 Fyfe, Mr. T. C., 19, 20, 22, 56, 119

 Glacier Dome, 132, 180, 184, 190, 195,
 204
 Glacier Peak, 22

 Goat path, 135
 Government, New Zealand, 21, 121
 Governor's Bush, 140
 Graham, Alex, 21, 23, 80, 81, 90, 96,
 98, 100, 101, 102, 103, 106, 107,
 110, 112, 117, 118, 119, 128,
 129, 130, 137, 153, 156, 159,
 162, 165, 166, 167, 169, 171, 172,
 173, 176, 185, 191, 192, 194,
 216, 237
 Graham, George, 20, 119
 Graham, Mrs., 80
 Graham, Peter, 22, 23, 27, 29, 30, 31,
 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43,
 45, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 56,
 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 63, 64, 65, 66,
 67, 68, 69, 70, 72, 73, 76, 79, 83,
 85, 88, 90, 91, 92, 94, 95, 96,
 98, 99, 106, 107, 110, 111, 117,
 128, 129, 130, 137, 144, 150, 151,
 155, 158, 160, 161, 163, 164, 166,
 167, 169, 171, 172, 173, 174, 177,
 180, 182, 183, 186, 187, 188,
 189, 192, 193, 194, 196, 197, 200,
 203, 204, 207, 210, 212, 213, 218,
 219, 221, 222, 225, 227, 228, 229,
 230, 232, 241, 242, 243
 Graham's Saddle, 70, 105, 135, 182,
 184
 Gran, Mr. T., 238
 Great plateau, 124, 174, 185, 190,
 204
 Green, Mount, 20, 137, 138
 Green, Rev. Spotswood, 18, 19, 20, 85,
 122, 126, 179
 Green's Saddle, 70, 105, 182, 184
 Griller Creek, 43, 44

 Haast bivouac, 122, 123, 132, 159,
 169, 177, 180, 238
 Haast, Dr. Julius von, 17
 Haast, Mount, 22, 124, 169, 185, 186,
 187
 Haast Ridge, 122, 123, 179, 184, 189
 Haast Saddle, 187, 188
 Hardinger, Mount, 115
 Harper's Saddle, 95, 187, 196, 197
 Head, Captain B., 23, 66

- Hermitage Hotel, 19, 20, 21, 27, 34,
 35, 37, 45, 46, 47, 48, 60, 63, 65,
 71, 72, 78, 86, 89, 90, 96, 109,
 117, 119, 121, 136, 139, 140, 145,
 148, 150, 153, 157, 158, 159, 160,
 161, 162, 168, 175, 190, 191, 194,
 195, 205, 206, 208, 210, 213, 214,
 216, 217, 218, 222, 224, 225, 230,
 237, 238, 240, 244, 245
 Hermitage Valley, 105
 Himalayas, 34, 115, 208
 Hochstetter Dome, 18, 19, 52, 123,
 125, 145, 174, 244
 Hochstetter Icefall, 17, 122, 132, 162,
 179, 195, 224
 Hooker bivouac, 68, 197, 204, 238
 Hooker Bridge, 72
 Hooker Glacier, 17, 34, 66, 85, 93, 95,
 164, 166, 187, 193, 198, 200, 241
 Hooker hut, 95, 99, 109, 150, 159, 164,
 165, 196, 219
 Hooker Icefall, 66, 101, 140, 196, 198
 Hooker moraine, 99, 154
 Hooker River, 34, 43, 60, 61, 65, 97,
 140, 214, 240
 Hooker Valley, 19, 34, 39, 89, 139, 217
 Huddleston Glacier, 48, 225, 226

 Kea Point, 210, 213
 Keas, 42, 146
 King, Mr. S. L., 182
 Kinsey, Mount, 35
 Kronecker, Dr. Franz, 20

 Lendenfeld, Mount, 22, 124, 169,
 185, 186, 189, 223
 Lendenfeld, Dr. von, 18
 Lendenfeld Saddle, 244
 Linda Glacier, 124, 126, 127, 159, 177,
 182, 184, 203, 207
 Lindon, Mrs., 23
 Lindon, Mr., 80, 82
 Lowe, Mr. S., 21, 22
 Lyttelton, Port, 31

 Mabel, Mount, 89
 McDonald, Mr. Claud, 21, 22
 McDonald, Mr., 109
 McDonald, Mr. Duncan, 212

 MacKay, Dr., 22
 MacKenzie Plains, 201
 McLean, Mr. Walter, 137
 Malte Brun hut, 21, 46, 47, 49, 61,
 112, 114, 119, 134, 135, 137,
 142, 148, 150, 241
 Malte Brun Mount, 20, 22, 48, 49, 50,
 51, 52, 53, 54, 60, 64, 93, 113,
 125, 143, 174, 184, 192, 241,
 243
 Malte Brun Range, 170, 193
 Malte Brun Rock, 117
 Mannering, Mr. G. E., 18, 19, 126,
 236
 Mannering, Mrs., 238
 Matterhorn, Mount, 20
 Miine, Guide C., 158, 177, 180, 182,
 183, 185, 186, 187, 189, 196
 Minarets, Mounts, 19, 48, 55, 56, 57,
 59, 117
 Mona Glacier, 154, 165, 193
 Morehouse Range, 41
 Mountaineering, 162, 208
 Murchison Glacier, 52, 92
 Murchison River, 35, 44
 Murphy, Guide J., 22, 43, 45, 62, 63,
 70, 95, 137, 138, 142, 150, 152,
 155, 157
 Muller Glacier, 17, 35, 39, 40, 90, 91,
 92, 93, 154, 218, 229, 241
 Muller Moraine, 97, 212, 213
 Muller River, 210, 220, 245

 Nazomi, Mount, 154, 155, 156, 165,
 192, 198
 Newton, Rev. E., 21, 22, 185
 New South Wales, 21, 125
 New Zealand, 101, 125, 200, 208, 219,
 238
 climbers, 23
 edelweiss, 74
 guides, 23, 239
 North Island, 25
 pioneers, 23
 Rivers, 82
 South Island, 24, 115, 207
 Nimrod, s.s., 22
 Noeline Glacier, 164

- Norway, 339
 Nun's Veil, 22, 23, 43, 44, 178
- Otago, 105
- Perouse, la, Mount, 22, 69, 93, 166, 167, 183
 Perouse, la, Glacier, 171
 Pioneer Pass, 174
 Pukaki, Lake, 34, 35, 50, 90, 210
- Rata-tree, 81
 Rembrandt, 44
 Richmond, Guide Jock, 181, 217, 218
 Ross, Mr. Malcolm, 22, 56, 94
 Rotten Tommy, Mount, 21
 Ruareka, Mount, 166, 167, 168
 Ruareka Saddle, 194
 Rudolf Glacier, 134
- Scott, Captain, 89, 251
 Scott, Miss, 79
 Scott's Creek, 22
 Scott's Farm, 79, 82, 85
 Sealy bivouac, 26
 Sealy, Mount, 21, 22, 23, 35, 41, 42, 50, 93, 94, 145
 Sealy Range, 27, 28, 88, 140, 145, 194, 213
 Sebastopol, Lake, 61
 Sebastopol, Mount, 60, 62, 88, 90, 150, 152, 194, 219
 Sefton arête, 223
 Sefton bivouac, 223, 224
 Sefton, Mount, 20, 21, 23, 34, 35, 39, 41, 61, 65, 68, 93, 120, 147, 159, 191, 193, 195, 198, 211, 216, 217, 218, 219, 222, 228, 231, 238, 239, 240
 Silberhorn, 21, 22, 125, 126, 127, 131, 169, 174, 180, 186
 Sierras, Mounts, 201
 Sillem, Mr., 22, 53
 Spaniard, bush, 94
 Spencer, Professor Baldwin, 47, 49, 55, 56, 58, 60, 72, 73, 85, 222, 223, 224, 237
 Stocking Glacier, 217, 225
 Straughn Glacier, 166
- Stuart Glacier, 150, 153, 238
 Switzerland, 34, 88
 Sydney, 30, 85, 87, 90, 133, 147
- Tasman arête, 107, 130, 169
 Tasman Glacier, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 34, 47, 52, 60, 61, 73, 80, 93, 111, 113, 114, 131, 132, 134, 135, 142, 166, 193, 200, 202, 241, 242
 Tasman, Mount, 21, 105, 119, 120, 122, 123, 124, 126, 168, 169, 170, 171, 173, 174, 175, 180, 183, 184, 189, 201, 223
 Tasman River, 33, 35, 44, 49, 93, 113
 Tasman Saddle, 128
 Tasman Valley, 178, 190
 Teuchetmann, Dr., 21, 22, 80, 82, 137, 167
 Tekapo, Lake, 33
 Tennant, Mr., 21
 Thomson, David, 60, 159, 181, 194, 195, 202, 203, 204, 206, 207, 225, 227, 229, 230, 251, 232, 234
 Timaru, 21, 153, 195
 Tom, port, 65, 66, 69, 71
 Torres Peak, 20
 Tucker's Col, 216, 217, 218, 227, 228, 229
 Turner, Mr., 22, 223, 224
 Voithmann, Er., 22, 57
- Waiho Gorge, 79, 80
 Walkukupa River, 82
 Wakefield, Mount, 55, 95
 Walter, Mount, 20
 Wanaka, Lake, 72
 West Coast, 21, 22, 23, 59, 61, 72, 93, 219, 220, 230, 237
 Westland, 41, 68, 74, 100, 138, 217, 218
 Westmacott, Miss, 195, 223, 224
 Williams's farm, 79, 82
 Williams's Glacier, 91
 Wright, Mr., 150, 153
- Young, Geoffrey Wintrop, 182
- Zurbriggen, M., 20, 21, 22, 119, 122, 126, 217, 225, 230