

CLIMBING AMID SUMMER SNOWS

Woman Pioneer of the Sierra Club Describes an Early Yosemite Tramp.

IN PICTURESQUE ATTIRE

Astonishment of Staid Tourists in the Valley at Sight of Short-skirted Pack Carriers.

By MARION RANDALL PARSONS,
Treasurer of the Sierra Club.

Yosemite, June 5.—In June Yosemite Valley is at the very height of its beauty. The deciduous trees are in new leaf, maples and dogwood in tenderest, brightest green, oaks tipped with pastel shades of pink and red in prophecy of their autumn glory, azaleas in full bloom, and the meadows a rippling mass of exquisite grass brightened with flowers. In June, too, the rivers are at their highest and the falls in wildest beauty while the fast melting snow still lies deep in the upper forests and on the higher mountain slopes.

After a week or more in the valley, following the better-known trails, getting muscles in condition again after city-bound days, we were anxious to see what spring was like in the snowy upper country. Accordingly, as pack animals were not to be obtained for love or money, we prepared to make pack animals of ourselves, and knapsack over to Mount Clark (11,500 feet) on the southwestern boundary of the park, the most prominent peak of the Merced group.

There were four of us in the party, two men and two women, and we planned to be out two nights with a comfortable margin of provisions for a third night, if necessary. Bacon,hardtack, and that blessing to mountaineers, soup, made up the bulk of our commissary, re-enforced, however, by raisins, chocolate, dried fruit, beans, spaghetti, and cheese. Our personal outfits, of course, were reduced to bare essentials. A sleeping bag, weighing about eight pounds, a sweater, a change of hose, toothbrush, hairbrush, towel, a box of matches, and a tiny roll of adhesive tape would about complete the list. Tin buckets, a small frying pan, and a tin cup and spoon alike comprised the camp equipment.

When women who "knapsack" pride ourselves on being able to do our share, so while we do not pretend to carry such heavy packs as the men, we carry our own outfits and a part, at least, of the general commissary supplies. Short-skirted, harem-scarfed, with hobnailed boots to the knee and "shocking" bad hats, we ate as easy in our own clothes and as regardless of wind or weather as the men themselves.

It was rather hard for us to nerve ourselves to meet the stares and queries of the tourists we met along the valley trail over which our trip must begin. All the way up to Little Yosemite we were beset with questions—"Where were we going?" "What was that very hard work?" "Wouldn't we get lost?" "Were't we afraid of getting exhausted?" We had an inclination to stink shamelessly by these propositions.

In Little Yosemite we made a camp in the smoothly flowing Merced, and after 15 minutes set out on a ramble up toward the base of Half Dome. Up the clouds that trail we climbed, and then pelted through the forest to the brink of Tenaya Canyon, a gully almost as deep as Yosemite Valley itself, inaccessible to all but the hardest mountaineers. The great chain, more than 2,000 feet deep by its four feet. Half Dome towered majestically against the sky, and still further we could see the shadowed cliffs of El Captain and the Cathedral Rocks.

A Buck in Velvet.
My companion on this ramble elected to climb Clouds Rest before returning to camp. So I made my way back to Little Yosemite alone. Near the foot of the trail, in a glorious little mountain meadow, I surprised a beautiful buck, the largest I have ever seen in the Sierra. His horns were in velvet, and he stood so near me that I could see the quick, nervous movement of his nostrils as he watched me. For two or three minutes we stood there regarding one another. Then, with a nonchalant wag

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of his funny little tail, he turned and made off through the woods, unhurriedly and indifferently as if I, too, had been a woodland creature. Perhaps I looked it. After his departure I examined the meadow more closely. It was a little gem of its kind, sloping from a ledge of granite that was covered with gnarled and crooked junipers. At the first glimpse I thought it an unbroken sheet of the tiniest blossoms of yellow mimulus, but, on kneeling down, eleven species of flowers revealed themselves, all the daintiest and most delicate of their kind—yellow violets, white forget-me-nots, gilia, white saxifrage, and the smallest pink pea I have ever seen.

A knapsacker's camp is a simple affair—a bed of pine needles, a few stones rolled together to make a fireplace, a pile of firewood gathered together, and there is home. By 5 o'clock next morning we were astrid. As our energetic leader busied himself with the breakfast fire, a doe came out of the woods and stood motionless for a long minute watching him before she quietly stole away.

Where one's possessions are so few, washing dishes and packing is a matter of scant ceremony. In less than an hour we were ready for the trail, or for the march, rather, as we expected to leave trails behind us and strike across country to the base of Mount Clark.

We held it to be but a tribute to our skill as mountaineers, however, when we found an old sheep trail following the very route we had planned to take. For many miles we followed it through the rolling forest east of Mount Starr King, through Starr King Meadow, and out near the crest of a granite ridge near Clark Fork. Here we left it behind and struck across the open country, over ridge after ridge, across a stream after stream, until we came to the northerly fork of Gray Creek, where we made a camp. We had reached the altitude of about 8,500 feet, and snowdrifts lay deep all about us. But firewood was abundant and our little nook among the tall firs promised every comfort that a knapsacker need expect.

In default of extra bedding we took hot rocks to bed with us. The night passed comfortably and we were up at dawn ready for the assault on Mount Clark, confident also of success. As we climbed the snow lay even deeper about us. The forest of fir and mountain pine gave way to the hardier white-bark pine, the tree of timber-line. Up to the top of the ridge it crept, at the top a mere shrub, bent and twisted beneath the winter's weight of snow.

As we climbed, our horizon to the south and west widened. We were looking across the valley of the Illilouette toward the snowy divide separating us from the South Fork of the Merced where lies Wawona and the splendid Mariposa Grove of sequoias. Yosemite Valley was but a blue rift in the forest with only its great domes, Half Dome, Sentinel Dome, and Starr King, rising into any prominence. Far different was our view to eastward from the crest. Our ridge ended on the east in an abrupt precipice. Through a broken "chimney" or windowlike aper-

ture in the rocks, we looked down 600 feet into a great snow field filling all the eastern basin, and beyond this lay the cleft of the Merced Canyon, and, still beyond, the magnificent snowy peaks of the summit crest, Lyell, McClure, Ritter, Dana, a host of others, all above 15,000 feet, all shining and gleaming in the brilliant sunshine with a radiance that hardly seemed to belong to this world.

Compensated Disappointment.
Well for us that this glorious vision was compensation for all the many miles we had climbed, for we got no farther that day—and Clark still remains unconquered. For we had anticipated the season for mountain climbing by a fortnight or more, and the slope that should have offered an easy rock climb to the summit was now a precipitous wall of treacherous snow. We had no rope, no ice ax, not even a knife with which we might have cut steps, and the icy edge where rock and snow met proved an invincible barrier to the summit.

Up and down the ridge we prowled, over every ledge, into every chimney, only to admit ourselves defeated in the end. For an hour or more we remained upon the ridge, feasting our eyes on the marvellous panoramas—a hundred miles of snowy range, a magnificent alpine region, the greater part of which is now almost inaccessible, soon to be opened to travel by the construction of the John Muir trail.

After luncheon in camp a fifteen-mile walk back still lay ahead of us. Our defeat lay lightly upon us, for many mountain summits have been ours in the past, and we had had, after all, the inspiration and the uplift of the glorious upper regions of snow even if the exhilaration of the summit had been lacking. Down among the great below of yellow pines, under the spreading arms of sugar pines and out upon open crests covered with manzanita and chinquapin we hastened past Nevada and Vernal and down through the Happy Isles where thrushes sang their evening songs, and into our Yosemite Valley camp.

NONENGLISH SPEAKING ALIENS HANDICAPPED

Education Expert Points Out Necessity of Teaching Immigrants Our Language.

The necessity of teaching the adult immigrant how to speak English as soon as possible after his arrival is emphasized by Dr. H. H. Wheaton of the United States Bureau of Education. In a report just made public, "With the adult immigrant desire for instruction and ability to acquire language are largely lost," says Dr. Wheaton, "yet inability to speak English is the most serious barrier to intercourse between Americans and foreigners. Furthermore, employers are coming to see the necessity of teaching their foreign-born employees the English language and something of the rules of safety. Experience shows that a large proportion of industrial accidents are due to the fact that foreigners have not understood the orders of the foremen. A canvass of many employers of foreign-born workmen indicates that a knowledge of English is urgently needed. This is particularly true of railroads, steel plants, and foundries."

In sight of the principal cities of the United States, according to Dr. Wheaton, the number of foreign-born adults unable to speak English totals over 400,000. New York alone has 422,000. The types of schools adapted to the education of the immigrant are evening, industrial, and camp schools. "The number of classes provided by different cities," declares Dr. Wheaton, "is far from adequate." Appropriate agencies are insufficient to provide the requisite teaching. Failure to appreciate the need of increase in accommodations is shown by the fact that nineteen cities in the State of New York, with a population of 10,000 to 20,000, and with the foreign-born population varying from 1,000 to 5,000, have no public night classes where immigrants can learn the English language. Dr. Wheaton finds that private and religious agencies have largely supplemented the inadequate provisions made by the State to teach adult immigrants English and American laws and customs.

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Statesmen, scholars and other notable men erect monuments to their memory, which may also be done in respect to building contractors, but a contractor erects monuments for himself in buildings that perpetuate his ability as a master builder. Of all the monuments erected to notable men in Washington, could one have a greater than the District Building on Pennsylvania Avenue, the College of History, or the Stoneleigh apartment building on Connecticut avenue? Yet these are the monuments erected by James L. Parsons, general contractor, whose activities for nearly half a century in Washington have been connected with the grandest and greatest projects of Washington's material and substantial prosperity.

There has been nothing spectacular about Mr. Parsons' life or his business career. Throughout the sixty-eight years of his extremely active life, the course of his career has run consistently with energy judiciously directed and the results achieved were the natural outcome of well laid plans honestly made and legitimately executed.

Came from "the Backwoods."
Like the majority of self-made men, Mr. Parsons is rather proud of the fact that he came from the "tall timber," as the parlance of the street would put it. The "tall timbers" surrounding Mr. Parsons' home were at Thompson's Cross Roads, five miles from Lewistown, Va. Mr. Parsons was born at that place March 19, 1847, and he lived there with his parents, doing honest toil on the farm until the civil war began. Imbued with patriotic fervor for the Southern cause and filled with enthusiasm, Mr. Parsons enlisted in the Confederate army in 1862. As he was born in 1847 you will readily ascertain by a mental calculation that he was only fifteen years old when he became a soldier. Seeking the hero of the time, Mr. Parsons enlisted with Stonewall Jackson and he followed the fortunes of that famous Confederate general from the beginning of the civil war until his final death. Few men in that war participated in a larger number of important engagements. Mr. Parsons was in the battle of Cedar Run, Bull Run, Antietam, Fredericksburg, Chancellorsville, and Cold Harbor. He was in the siege of Richmond and finally, with the rest of his command, surrendered at Appomattox.

"I went in the Confederate army a private and came out a private," said Mr. Parsons proudly to a Herald representative, thus sustaining the pride of a great general who once said that the greatest credit in all wars belonged to the privates—the men who obeyed rather than the men who commanded.

Takes Honore Greeley's Advice.
Soon after the close of the civil war, like many other young men of the day, Mr. Parsons took Honore Greeley's advice and went West. He got as far as Leavenworth, Kans., and there he stopped, partly because he didn't have the money to go farther and partly because he was given an opportunity in that Western town to learn the trade of a carpenter in the Quartermaster's Department of the Federal government at Fort Leavenworth, and for two years was engaged in the construction of large government buildings at that point. At that time he worked under Col. Hazen, subsequently a chief signal officer for the government.

Years of Work Bring Success.
It was in 1872 that Mr. Parsons attached himself to this town and became a general contractor, which means that he has been more or less prominent in the progress and advancement of the city for forty-three years. In this nearly half a century of energy and enterprise Mr. Parsons has been connected with many notable contracting achievements. The most notable buildings he has erected are the District Building, Pennsylvania avenue and Fourteenth street; the College of History at the American University, the Stoneleigh apartment building on Connecticut avenue, and Washington's newest and most palatial department store on Thirteenth street, between F and G streets. The latter building is owned by S. Kann & Sons and its construction represents an outlay of \$500,000. Mr. Parsons took the contract

on a percentage basis and the owner shook his hand when a final statement was made in token of their entire satisfaction with the work and with the manner in which Mr. Parsons had kept the accounts.

Treasury Department Trusts Him.
One of many tasks assigned to Mr. Parsons which reflects great credit on him was the construction of a large number of additional vaults at the United States Treasury. For this work, costing \$150,000, Mr. Parsons was chosen by the government without the question of competition entering into the matter at all, and it is the more to his credit that this important undertaking was also executed on a percentage basis. This means that the government trusted Mr. Parsons to make an accurate and honest accounting of the cost of the work and the materials and of his time and services, all of which he did to the entire satisfaction of Treasury officials.

A remarkable construction feat was embraced in the building of a roof over the immense Pension Building in little more than a week previous to Cleveland's first inauguration in order that the inaugural ball might be held there. The building was not constructed to its full height, but it had advanced sufficiently toward completion to make the ballroom available for the ball, if it only had a roof on Mr. Parsons was engaged to put a temporary roof on the big building. He employed 300 men night and day for eight days and astonished the city by the manner in which he did his job in that short length of time, and the ball was a grand affair.

Among other special tasks of importance for which Mr. Parsons was selected by government and District officials was that involved in the inspection of Ellis Island, the appraisal of 257 buildings which were condemned to make way for the House Office Building, the appraisal of property values and buildings at Fort Leavenworth and at Atlanta, all of which the College of History might more properly be considered as a monument if any building that he had constructed were to be so designated. Nevertheless, in the eyes of the average person the District Building will stand most prominent, although it is difficult not to include Stoneleigh apartments as most deserving of that honor since there are few more magnificent structures of the kind in this country. However, the District Building, because of its being devoted to the public service, is undoubtedly the most important. It cost \$2,000,000, and is everywhere recognized as a model municipal building.

In the speeches made that day Mr. Parsons was eulogized as the contractor and his work complimented, as it has been complimented many times since not only in respect to the District Building, but many other important structures.

Personally Supervises Work.
One reason for Mr. Parsons' success is that he personally supervises every contract he undertakes. A representative of The Herald recently found himself in the company of several prominent architects, and when Mr. Parsons' ability as a contractor was referred to one of the architects said: "I always feel easy when Mr. Parsons obtains a contract for the construction of any building I have designed, because I feel confident that it will be done right and not only right, but honestly. If a dollar's worth of material is delivered to Mr. Parsons which he considers below the standard he will reject it absolutely, and more than that, he will go out of the way to do more than his contract really calls for if it seems necessary to bring the standard of construction up to his high idea."

For many years Mr. Parsons has done practically all of the Capital Traction Company's construction work, having done over \$2,000,000 in construction work for this company alone.

Among many magnificent residences erected by him in Washington is the palatial home of Mrs. Babcock, at Thirty-fourth street and Massachusetts avenue. Another of his notable achievements was the construction of the Administration Building at Fort Meyer. To consider Mr. Parsons' work from the standpoint of cost alone, it may be said that the buildings he has constructed in the District of Columbia represent in value millions and millions of dollars, and yet his honesty in construction of all these valuable buildings has never been questioned for a moment by any one, and his work has always given an unusually high percentage of general satisfaction.

Mr. Parsons is married and has four daughters and three sons. He has a fine home at 182 Massachusetts avenue, northeast, and his business office is in the Munsey Building on Pennsylvania avenue. Mr. Parsons is president of the Builders' League, president of the Manufacturers' Exchange, a member of the Engineers' Society and a director in the National Capital Bank of Washington. He is a prominent Mason and is held in high esteem, both in private and public life.