

# A TRIP TO THE HIGH SIERRAS

EVERYONE in California may know something of the glory of her mountains if he will. Nowhere else will the average man find so much that is pleasing to him. The mountains are a constant joy. They give a variety of scene and of experience not to be found elsewhere and that is perfectly satisfying to human nature. Their great masses break up into thousands of details that present the countless charms of nature to anyone who will enter into their fastnesses.

The story of the mountains cannot be told by anyone. Outlines and hints may be given, but the story must be read at first hand from the pages of its own book—the mountains themselves.

One great difficulty which hinders the city man from fully enjoying the mountains is his proneness to go to advertised places, where everything is prepared for him after the manner of resorts and with reference to the revenues to be derived by the entertainers. In this way many more people are going to the Yosemite valley than formerly, but possibly fewer are seeing the beauty and the majesty of that matchless region. I met one man who went into the valley in the morning, had dinner at the hotel, took the dusty stage back to El Portal the same day and who still really believed that he had seen Yosemite. He had seen nothing. It is easy even to take all the established trips and to miss the one thing of value—that is the glory and joy of the mountains themselves.

Another difficulty for city folk to avoid is the tendency to take too much at once. The finest mountain regiments, with leggings and Alpine stock, will not secure one from utter weariness. These rather add to it. One trail from Yosemite, leisurely and well done, is far better than a half dozen forced marches over the usual routes. The guide books are usually gotten up by men interested in taking toll of tourists. The result is that these documents put emphasis upon those things that increase the revenues of the very enterprising business men who cater to the tourists. You will wonder often why you are hurried to so many points and such great distances to disappointing scenes. It is only because every trip you make means money to guides and livery keepers and purveyors of entertainment. You can get thoroughly tired out and disgusted among the mountains and yet see very little of them. The great need is to get clear from the entertainers and into touch with the mountains. Then save your strength and use it to go among the ridges and canyons on your own feet and look at them with your own eyes. You will find that others have been before you and it will be a delight to follow their trails from stream to stream and lake to lake and summit to summit.

The Yosemite valley is a splendid starting point for exploring trips into the high Sierras. A month in and about the valley itself can well be spent in growing pleasure so that the last days are richer and happier than the first. The conventional touring arrangements for revenue only are yearly robbing more people of the joy of the Yosemite. But it is possible to remain free from this influence if one have a little courage. The genial guardian of the valley will help you to find a lovely camping ground. The Yosemite store will outfit you with everything desirable for a thoroughly comfortable life. The writer and his family found such a charming place that the family greatly regretted to leave it when it had to return to the city, even though they were honored by a call from a "great big black bear."

We also found that camp Curry was a place one could inhabit and not lose much of the charm of the valley, because this camp is very happily located and has been kept free from the more blighting conventionalities by the sensible giant who is its host. What a veritable haven this camp proved to be to us the evening we returned from our high mountain trip! Its bath tubs and its dinner tables brought us great consolation. There are other camps in

Yosemite, doubtless good, but we speak thus of Curry because we have experience of it.

Shortly after 5 o'clock in the evening we started from Yosemite for the high Sierras. We had never been beyond the rim of the valley, but we boldly sallied out, just before night, with a burro to carry our things, two of us, a man and a bog bigger than the man, to explore those rugged and desolate regions. The burro carried saddlebags filled with provisions sufficient for about a week, and our sleeping bags—fine warm blankets with canvas cover.

We took the trail to the Little Yosemite valley, eight miles up the Merced, past the great Vernal and Nevada falls, lying at an elevation of about 2500 feet above the floor of the Yosemite. Luckily there was a good moon, for it was fully dark when we passed the ledge of the Nevada falls. We continued on for several miles through ground that was entirely new to us, carefully following the trail until we came to the banks of a stream that

uncovering the domes and peeling onion skin layers off them. When the warmth returned and the ice cap melted away and all the glaciers disappeared, this upper layer had been terribly mangled and depleted, but the loftiest peaks are still a mile or more above the pot of domes upon which they rest.

Mount Clark is the first notable crest of this upper stratum seen from our trail. Later we shall find ourselves in a world of just such jagged heights. And a desolate world it is—cold and barren above the trees, full of snow in August, with scanty tundra grasses. Its glacial lakes are limpid, pure and shining in the sun, but lifeless. The air is thin and pure and cold. Down among the domes there are forests and meadows, and the streams are full of life. But the distant summits are a vision of grandeur, a dream of beauty. Their desolation is not appalling. The rocks and snows and glacial lakes are all lovely. The world of this upper crust has its own appeal to human sense that is no less alluring than the

lake may be seen great masses of layer granite ten or twenty feet in thickness that were broken from the solid dome sides and pushed along by the flowing ice.

The retreating glacier left debris in this hollow, especially on the northern side where the ice pressure was not so great. But the south side is clean of all soil, the burnished rock is laved by the waters above which it rises steep and smooth. On the north side and at the upper end of the lake are many acres of land covered with trees. There is a sprinkling of giant spruce trees with a jungle of popple about them.

At the head of the lake is an open meadow, an ideal camping ground. After supper we busted ourselves gathering an ample bed of fir boughs. While so occupied a beautiful doe walked out from the woods a hundred yards from us and began browsing the buds of a mountain shrub. It was too dark for the camera, but Carl left his work long enough to study the animal at close range. She was quite unafraid, but at last sprang away among the trees.

The Little Yosemite is little only in comparison with the great Yosemite. It lies among the domes that the great glacier peeled down and polished perhaps 300 centuries ago. Three miles long and half a mile wide, its meadows and forests spread out in a perfect flat. The river winds between grassy banks. Several creeks come over the rock rim with roaring and foam and pour over the gravel till they join the river. This is a lovely place to camp for a day or a week. The wonder is that more out of the multitudes of tourists and campers in the big valley do not find out this little paradise. I think that we shall spend more time there the next trip that way.

There were two campers in this valley when we were there, and very likely more. These two we encountered as we made a brief exploration after breakfast. They were bent upon a day of fishing, and tomorrow would make over the mountains to the Tuolumne meadows at Soda Springs.

Merced lake is a few miles above the Little Yosemite, but the way between is an almost impassable gorge. Our route lay over the high ridge of Sunrise mountain. Good fortune accompanied us through all our trip. In fact anything that may come is good fortune among these glorious mountains, for whichever way one goes he is sure to think that he has found out the very choicest possible scenes. Our talk with the campers in Little Yosemite confirmed our former information as to trails and added some details as to distances and junctions. Our moonlight journey had brought us to the very foot of the Sunrise mountain trail at the west side of Echo creek, where we made our camp Sunday night.

Sunrise trail leads through delightful forests up a moderate grade for several miles to the crest of a huge southern shoulder a few hundred feet below the summit. The way lies along an ancient moraine for a long distance. Both to the left and to the right of this moraine there is a stream, the one at the right rising almost at the crest of the shoulder. Many striking views of the back side of Half Dome and of Clouds Rest are found on this trail, any one of which seemed to us alone worth the cost of the climb. Southward, across the Little Yosemite, the marvelous twisted knife blade crest of Mount Clark affords a varied series of views of wonderful beauty as the vistas open through the trees. Great snow drifts lie under the northeast cliffs of this thin winning summit.

These heights are the remnants of the ancient rocks that lay thousands of feet thick above the gray granite dome. The lower summits, from 6000 to 10,000 feet, are all domes, some of them most perfect, all beautiful. They stand a l about, hundreds of them, reminding one forcibly of a pot of rather stiff bubbling pudding, suddenly petrified just before the bubbles burst. The strata lie in concentric layers and have been peeled off by the work of the glacier. The sides of the domes are covered with the glacial polish that 30,000 years have not effaced.

This would be a fine place to camp



On the Banks of Tenaya Lake

tumbles roaring down the northern wall of the Little Yosemite. We did not know what this stream might be. But here we camped at about half past 9. I found a little grass for the donkey and after a hasty supper we crawled into the sleeping bags. Carl was soon asleep and became somewhat audible at times. But I did not once fall asleep during the entire night. It had been a long time since I had slept out, and the stars seemed more brilliant and lovely than ever. The voice of the brook became entrancing. Running streams reproduce the human voice more perfectly than any other agent, natural or artificial. The impression of voices is so great in the sounds of the running water that again and again one seems just on point of making out the very words of persons conversing as they approach. So I did not sleep at all. But the night did not seem long, nor was I tired and languid the next day from the lack of sleep. With the coming of light we were up and found by studying the map that we had camped on the west bank of Echo creek.

But the high summits of the Sierras are not domes. They are sharp ridges and spires, the remnants of an earth crust that formed above the cauldron of boiling granite, after it cooled and solidified, to a depth of perhaps 20,000 feet. The shrinking earth shell folded up a great wrinkle along the line of the Sierras, and kept lifting higher and higher. Meanwhile the cold came. The glacier formed and for ages plowed and carried away the rock of this mountain wrinkle, scooping out the valleys and the canyons of the mountains, tearing away the upper strata,

lower levels of forests and meadows.

The trail down the steep eastern slope of Sunrise mountain is a rough zigzag that tries one's patience as well as his strength. Following the donkey down this trail, I realized the mistake the stable man had made who put upon him a pack saddle made for a mule. It was so large that it could not be cinched tightly enough to secure the pack. How many times I readjusted that slipping pack I do not know, but it was a struggle to make the river bed without a complete spill.

We go down directly into the gorge of Cathedral Fork, which we hear roaring over its cliffs and rapids. Soon we are upon the bare rocks of the domes, and here we see the glacial polish in great patches and fields, shining like glass under the sun and slippery under foot. Some one has built a bridge of logs across Cathedral Fork where it crosses the little flat before joining the Merced. This saved us from a wetting, and made us praise the ranger or other unknown person who built the bridge. A little farther on the Merced lake comes into view. It is a charming level of water lying in a moderate sized hollow between the rounded domes that rise on every side of it. This hollow was emptied by the terrific crush of the glacier, which took out everything down to the solid granite layers of the domes and pushed it out between two domes where the lowest outlet lay. Nor did the granite itself escape the fearful plowing of the ice. The sides of the valley are polished to a gleaming surface that has withstood the weather for three hundred centuries, and shines in the sun today like glass. Just above