

THE YOUTH'S COMPANION

New England Edition.



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and hastening feet—Silvie, surely, and no one else! And Silvie was waving her hand and calling rapturously: "Oh, I didn't get into the conservatory, Aunt Lois, I didn't even get in! And I never was so glad of anything in my life!"

"You didn't half try!" cried her aunt, torn between relief and wounded pride.

"I did, Aunt Lois! I tried my best, but there's lots of girls got better voices than I have, and they didn't have room for all."

Aunt Lois struggled with her pride.

"I do' know what Abbie Spencer'll say."

"I don't care what she says. I'm glad and thankful to get back here and sing in the church choir again."

"Well, do get out and shut the kitchen screen. I do believe it hasn't been shut sence you went off."

So Silvie took up her home life again. The welcome from Uncle Cyrus was unmixed with an atom of alloy. Silvie felt that had she been a great singer, coming home with fame and fortune, she could not have felt the pleasure that came to her when her uncle showed her how necessary her presence was for the happiness of the little household.

So Silvie still sits out on the back piazza; sits and sings and works and looks out across the intervalle to the hills beyond.

CAROLINE HARWOOD GARLAND.

AMONG THE HIGHEST HIMALAYAS.

Mountaineering at twenty-three thousand Feet above the Sea.

By William Martin Conway.

I suppose that no boy is quite happy till he has climbed all the trees in the garden of his home. Why he wants to climb them he cannot tell, and it is just as hard to explain why men want to climb mountains; but for some reason or another mountain-climbing is very attractive. The Emperor Trajan climbed Etna to see the sunrise, and Petrarch climbed Mont Ventoux to see what being on the top of a hill felt like.

It is only in recent years that people have made a regular sport of climbing; and whenever a man begins he generally goes on. We learned to climb amongst snow and ice in the Alps, and now we want to climb all the big mountains everywhere. Mount St. Elias and Ruwenzori and Mount Cook and Everest—they will all be climbed some day, and every climber wants to be first on the top.

In 1892 I spent six months amongst the great mountains of Asia, on the north edge of Kashmir. There are more very big mountains together in that part of the world than anywhere else, though the highest of them is not so high as Everest. I took a Swiss guide with me to do the hard work of cutting steps in the ice, and the Indian government lent me some Gurkha soldiers to help carry our things.

The Gurkhas are the jolliest people in Asia; they are all short and fat, and they laugh all the time. They come from the hills of Nepal, and for some reason they are always great friends with Scotchmen.

At first they did not see the fun of climbing; but one day, when we were very high up, an avalanche of snow fell near us, and killed and carried down some wild goats with big horns, called ibex. The Gurkhas wanted to get the goats to eat; so one of them started sliding down after them. It looked so easy to slide; but he soon found himself going through the air like a tumbling stone, and he could not stop.

When he had gone about a quarter of a mile he was luckily thrown into a heap of soft snow, where he stuck. We found him there laughing, and he said it was because all the ends of his fingers were scraped off, and the red tips looked so funny. After that the Gurkhas thought climbing was worth while.

The same day, when we were going along a flat ice level, at the foot of a steep slope, a great avalanche came down it toward us, and we had to run for our lives from it. It brought down a cloud of snow-dust about half a mile wide, and made a strong wind. We passed the body of the avalanche safely, but the wind blew us flat on to our faces, and the snow-dust wetted us to the skin. This made the Gurkhas laugh again, so that they had to sit down and roll about.

Mont Blanc in the Alps is over fifteen thousand feet high, and takes only two days to climb; but in the Himalayas it takes perhaps a month to climb a big mountain, and no one has yet climbed to more than twenty-three thousand feet. Everest is twenty-nine thousand feet high, and it will be a long time before men climb so high as that.

The longest pass over snow in Switzerland can be crossed in a day, but we took a fortnight to cross the Hispar Pass, which is the longest glacier pass in the world.

We went up one long glacier, forty miles long, to the snow-field, and we then found another which took us down the other side. There was nothing living or growing near it, and no one had been there before. There were tremendous snow mountains on both sides, and great needles of rock standing up out of them.

We hired a number of natives to go with us and carry our tents and food, and wood for cooking. They were so frightened, as we got far into the snow, that we had to watch them day and night, lest they should run away. Snow fell often, and we had to find our way through clouds; but when

the sun shone it was so terribly hot that we were scorched. When we reached the top of the pass, we were of course curious to see what was on the other side. We looked over, and there was a large, flat lake of snow, with great mountains all around it, and others rising through it, like islands. There did not seem to be any way out of this lake, but we had to go down to it.

When we began to go down, a heavy snow-storm came on, and for a long time we could see nothing. At last we descended as far as the flat snow, and came to the corner of a kind of cape, or headland, of rock.

Just then the storm lifted. We looked round the corner and saw a glacier sloping down the way we wanted to go, and knew from this that we could get out. The night and the storm came on together again, so we pitched our tents and slept on the snow-field. It took us a week to descend that glacier to a village called Askole, where we could buy sheep and flour.

From Askole we started up another valley, and in five days reached the foot of another great glacier, called the Baltoro glacier.

We had to cross a river in this valley, by means of a rope bridge. Rope bridges are very unpleasant things to cross. The ropes are made of twisted birch-twigs; there is one rope to walk along, and one rope to hold with each hand. Here and there the ropes are tied together by cross-bars of wood, over which one has to step.

The bridge sometimes is as high as a church steeple above the swiftly-running river. Such bridges are a hundred yards long or more, and they are very steep at the ends.

All the lower twenty miles of the Baltoro glacier is covered from side to side with great quantities of rocks and stones, so that one would not believe he was on ice at all, if he did not see it where it is broken across into great chasms, or crevasses.

This ice-river is about two miles wide. It must be ascended straight up, because the hills on both sides are too steep to traverse. The surface is not flat, but broken into mounds, each about a hundred feet high. Up one side of these and down the other we walked, over the loose stones and rocks, which are always slipping about.

Between the mounds there are on the ice lakes of water which must be carefully avoided, for they are very deep and freezing cold. We found that five miles a day was as far as we could march up this terrible road.

When we had gone some distance up the glacier we came in sight of the great mountains, over twenty-six thousand feet high. One evening the clouds parted and showed us the white tower of Masherbrum, with the sunset flashing from its icy crest and its base all pale in the shadows below. Next day other giants appeared, most of them nameless.

No one had ever seen these grand peaks from so near before. The largest of all, which has no name, but is called K₂ on the map, is believed to be the second highest mountain in the world. No one had ever reached its foot or seen it save from afar off.

Our impatience to see it led us to climb a peak twenty thousand feet high, whence we supposed it would be visible; but another mountain, just big enough to cover it, still hid it from us, and we had to come down. A few days later we came close to the foot of it in clouds and storm.

We pitched our tents at a height greater than that of the top of Mont Blanc, and there we waited till a fine day should come. But the weather seemed to get worse and worse; our camp was buried deep in snow, which fell steadily. We could not light a fire. Everything was cold and miserable.

After five days the clouds broke, and there the great peak was,—a huge mass of rock with snow patched all over it,—the mightiest rock tower in the world, for Everest is a great snowy mound, and not a tower.

We went farther up the Baltoro glacier, till we found another great mountain that filled the head of the valley. This we determined to climb. None of the natives could come here with us except two of the Gurkhas. My friend, Lieutenant Bruce, the Swiss guide and I made up the party. We climbed for a week from where we left the porters. We had to cut our way first up a kind of frozen cascade, an ice-fall—where the ice-river is bit by bit tumbled over a precipice, or rather down a steep slope of rock. It might be called an ice-rapid.

Above this we came to gentler snow-slopes which were cut across by huge crevasses, hundreds of feet deep. We had to find snow-bridges over them, and these often broke; but we were roped together, so one pulled the other out.

Thus we reached the foot of an icy ridge, quite sharp at the edge and with steep slopes on both sides, down which if a man fell he must be dashed to pieces. We had to cut steps all the way up this ridge. It is hard work cutting steps in ice anywhere, but at a height of from twenty thousand to twenty-three thousand feet it is terribly

laborious, for the thin air makes a man gasp for breath, almost like a fish out of water.

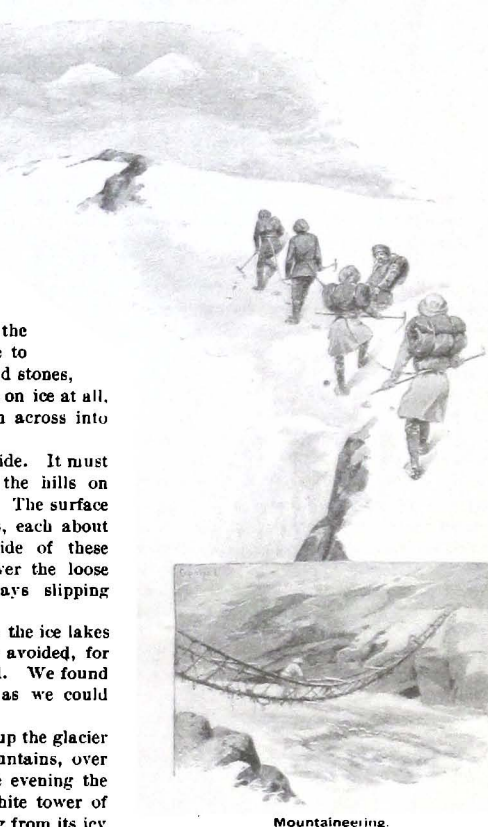
At the same time the heart beats too fast and yet too feebly to keep the blood in full circulation, so that one loses the sense of feeling in one's legs. The cold is great by night, and by day the heat on the snow and ice is terrible.

His pains, however, are rewarded by the most wonderful sights. Bigger mountains stood up all around us, white, solemn-looking and lonely. There was no trace anywhere of man or animals, and nothing green. All was snow, ice, precipices of rock, or rocky needles piercing the sky.

There was no wind, and not a sound to be heard. Nothing moved that we could see. Everything was still and silent. In the gaps between the great peaks we could look away to incredible distances, where there were multitudes of mountains, one behind another, till they faded out of sight into blue. We were about twenty-three thousand feet above the sea.

It took us ten days to come down to the highest village from our peak, which we called Pioneer Peak.

We had to cross more high passes before we reached the Indus, and then we rode five hundred miles to Srinagar, the capital of Kashmir, where



Mountaineering.

the road begins. The ponies that carried us and our baggage were poor little beasts, and the track was often like a staircase. Sometimes it was a mere wooden gallery carried at great heights across the face of precipices.

I do not think any of us were glad to leave the great mountains and the tents, and to reach roads and houses again. We were very happy in the hills. But of course we were glad to meet our friends again. Besides, we were on our way home, and coming home is always the happiest thing of all.

INDIAN CANOE-BUILDING.

The Way in which the old Siwash make their beautiful Boats.

While the inland waters of the northwest Pacific coast swarm with Indian canoes, a white man rarely sees an Indian building one of these graceful craft. For this fact there may be several reasons.

First, as the canoes are made of cedar, and carefully protected from the weather when not in use, they are long-lived; hence it is not necessary for the same individual often to provide himself with a new one. Then the Indian much dislikes to let a white man see his canoe in the process of construction; this may be both from native shyness and a desire to keep secret the traditional modes of doing the work.

It was, however, once my good fortune to come suddenly upon a very aged Indian while he was working upon a half-finished "canim"—the Siwash word for canoe. Among these people the canoe-builders are old men; probably because they become, from long experience, more skillful than the young men, and also because they are physically unfitted to engage in the more arduous labors of hunting and fishing.

On returning from a short hunting tour on a sultry day in June, I came from a dense thicket into a small opening, and took the little, withered old Indian artisan completely by surprise. His shipyard contained, perhaps, two or three square

rods of pretty level ground overgrown with moss. He was sitting astride of a cedar log, which was supported by two skids ten or twelve feet apart. The log, or canoe that was to be, was about fifteen feet long, and two and a half feet in diameter.

The partially fashioned craft was bottom up, and the builder was chipping off the sides with a buckhorn adze. This primitive tool consisted of a curved piece of buckhorn, lashed by rawhide thongs to a wooden handle eighteen inches long. The cutting edge of the adze was smooth and well-polished from use. It sank readily at each blow into the soft, corky wood. At intervals, in order to dislodge a tough chip or knot, the little carpenter used a buckhorn chisel and stone mallet.

The older Indians have a great reverence for the primitive implements of their fathers, and they work for days together with them, when the same amount of labor could be done in a few hours with modern edge tools, purchasable at the settlements for a small sum. In contemplating this curious scene, I was brought face to face with the stone and bone age of prehistoric times.

At first the old Indian did not seem disposed to be sociable, but I did not take offence, for I knew that few of the older men and women of his tribe are able to speak English. But no sooner did I fill his shrivelled hands with sandwiches from my capacious haversack, and address him in Chinook, than every wrinkle on his leathery face was a smile, and he readily answered all my questions.

From his quite lucid account, it seems that when the red man wants to make a canoe he fells a cedar-tree, or finds a prostrate trunk of the requisite dimensions. He then cuts out a section of the desired length, peels off the bark and hollows out the log, leaving a smooth surface upon the sides and bottom from end to end.

The log is next turned over, and the outside fashioned into the exquisite model so much admired by all those who have seen these beautiful specimens of Indian naval architecture.

The log is hollowed by burning and chopping. After the fire has been started on the top of the log, it is so carefully watched and skilfully directed that when the burning is finished, the big piece of timber is neatly hollowed with marvellous symmetry of form from bow to stern; and the whole concavity is left so evenly charred that when the surface is worked down to the sound timber by means of the buckhorn adze, little further alteration is necessary.

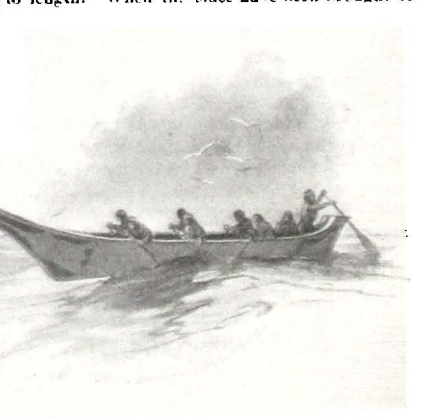
When the log is turned over, with the hollow side down, a slow fire is again brought into requisition for shaping the exterior, and again the surface is neatly worked down till the sound timber appears. Of course the buckhorn implements cut pretty easily through the charred wood.

Since the settlement of the country by whites, the Indians have felled trees for their canoes with axes; but previous to that time all this was done by burning and by stone implements, the fire being so directed as not to injure the portion from which the canoe was made. Hence, I may say that I have seen many beautiful canoes, some capable of carrying a dozen persons, made from a standing tree, without being touched by a tool of steel or any other metal.

The inside and outside having been finished, the next thing to be done is the "stretching," without which the crude dugout would be wholly unseaworthy. To do this, the canoe is set level on a firm skid foundation and filled with water. A fire is then kindled and stones, heated red-hot, are thrown into the canoe till the water boils.

By taking out and reheating the stones the water is kept boiling till the walls of the canoe, which are not more than an inch thick, become as pliable as sole leather, and capable of being stretched a foot or more beyond their normal width.

Nicely fitting sticks are now put in transversely along the gunwale, increasing in length from the ends to the middle. By means of these stretchers, a cedar log two feet and a half in diameter will make a canoe of three or four feet beam; the width of the canoes varying, of course, according to length. When the sides have been brought to



the required curvature, the water is emptied out and the elegant shell suffered to dry thoroughly but without cracking.

By way of finishing touches, the canoe is smeared inside and out with fish-oil, and then painted in bright colors. The little craft is now finished, and as the old native tops it off with wild gestures, it is a "delate Siwash canim, hyas clushe, hyas skookum"—"a real Indian canoe, all right and strong."

It may not be generally known among the