

TO THE SUMMIT OF MOUNT RAINIER.

THEODORE WINTHROP'S stories have not exaggerated the beauty and charms of Puget Sound. As you look out from either Seattle or Tacoma, Nature herself gives you a thrill and inspiration of soul, such as genius on canvas or page cannot arouse. A little bay stretches out before you, light and pale green by the shore, but shading off toward the broad Sound to deepest amethyst; smooth as the mill pond ice, except where the leaping salmon break the surface of some bay with a hundred little fountains, or an Indian family in their black, red-edged canoe, more graceful than a gondola, glide along the shore. Above the restful waters rise up high bluffs two or three hundred feet, all forest covered, the great firs showing their giant sizes where they have fallen along the beach, outreaching the ocean steamers as they pass, three hundred feet in length. And still beyond to the westward, over the high wooded shores, rise the Olympic Mountains, their rounded summits dark green under their load of spruce and hemlock; and still above stand out against the western sky the higher peaks of Constance and Olympus, their dark rocks making a jagged outline, tinged with a ridge of white. To the east the Cascade Range raises its higher wall six to eight thousand feet, with great craggy peaks wild and rough, single precipices thousands of feet in sheer descent, black rock ribs and white lines of snow-filled ravines leading up to their snow-capped tops. Yet far up above these, so that their loftiest summits seem but pigmy foothills, towers Mount Rainier, an ideal mountain. Its broad, firm base, itself above the snow line, is planted on the wide mountain range, its steep sides rising up with their eternal snows to regions where the high clouds play; and over all, in the pure ether, bright in the sunlight, looking down from undisturbed quiet on the world, is the summit—not a thin spire, but broad and rounded, fit to be the pillar of the heavens.

Last summer, about the first of August, three of us determined to attempt to gain the summit of this Cascade monarch. As we pursued the route which will doubtless be the one used by climbers in the future, our experience may be of some value. The party consisted of a lawyer, a surveyor and myself, the latter two of us well accustomed to the woods, and all young and hardy. Although we had a far easier task than those who may have attempted the ascent years ago, yet it was fully as exciting to us because we labored under the delusion, common to most Puget Sounders, that the mountain never had really been ascended. We knew nothing of the trails or about the locality; and we went in a very plobeian manner, without guides or packers, and carrying our tent, blankets, food, etc., for ourselves.

We started from Tacoma in the morning on the Cascade Branch of the Northern Pacific. We were whirled across the Puyallup Valley, through little prairies covered with smooth out fields and vine-covered hop yards; through the black stumps of half-made clearings; through tangled woods where maple and alder show themselves as much as hemlock or fir, and the golden rod and purple

astors brighten up the open spaces. After a forty-mile journey we reached Wilkeson, a little coal mining town of about one hundred people. There the one little store furnished us the necessary supplies of flour and bacon, and the good Irish woman who kept the little miners' boarding house spread us our last dinner in civilization. Though it was rather humble fare of boiled beef and beans, many times during the succeeding days of camp life my soul lusted after the flesh-pot and good sweet bread of that little Wilkeson hotel. To our delight we found a good pack trail leading to the mountain, cut by President Villard's orders in 1883. With our sixty-pound packs this occupied us three days, while it could be made quite easily in a day and a half with ponies. Passing through forests of hemlocks like the Adirondacks; then among great three hundred-foot firs; crossing the horse over ravines on bridges of a single log seven feet through; fording the Carbon River, nearly milk color from its glacial origin; up and down hills, gradually ascending till emerging from the almost unbroken tunnel of trees, we entered three beautiful little prairies with soft green grass and flowers. There first we obtained a good view of the mountains about us, their rough, reddish rocks towering up and shutting out half the sky. Great patches of white snow told us we were already far above the level of the Sound, and caused us to hurry on with enthusiastic excitement. Then the trail led us along by zigzags up the mountains, the barometer showing four, five, six thousand feet of altitude. As we skirted along the crest of this ridge, over gulches filled with snow, we made our first August snowballs. Taking a forced rest, we turned to our left, and just a few feet below we saw the most beautiful little lake that ever rested weary eyes. We were tired no longer, but hurried down to it. Crater Lake, as it is called, lies right in the tops of the mountains, and is snow fed only. There is an open meadow, with plenty of grass and flowers, at the outlet, forming a magnificent camping ground. At the further end, half a mile away, rocks rise abruptly from the water to jagged points a thousand feet above. Snow-drifts in every deep ravine and northern slope keep pouring into the lake their pure supplies, and half a dozen beautiful cascades break the solitude with their endless monotone. There are fish in the lake, and although it is of melted snow it is not so cold but that a shallow bay gave us quite a pleasant swim. Having pitched our tent we passed a most comfortable night, four blankets keeping us warm till we awoke refreshed from undisturbed slumber at daybreak.

From Crater Lake the trail descends a little for about four miles along the side of the Puyallup River gorge. From one point on this part of the road there is one of the most beautiful views in America. The point of view is a great rock a few steps from one side of the trail. Two thousand feet below the Puyallup River comes out from beneath the glacier and goes dashing down the gorge in a line of white foam, with a roar that comes up plainly to the ear. To the right the mountains rise up—first forest covered, then barren rock. To the left a little