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The Canadian Mountain Regions as a National Asset.

BY DR. T. A. LANGSTAFF, F.R.G.S.*

ADDRESSING a special meeting of the Canadian Club on "The Alpine Club of Canada and the Value of Canadian Mountain Regions as a National Asset," Dr. T. A. Langstaff, M.A., F.R.G.S., said:

Mr. President and Gentlemen,—I have first to thank you for your kind invitation to me this afternoon—I was only passing through Toronto to-day—but it gave me very great pleasure to accept it. I must begin by saying that I am devoted to mountaineering, and I am not at all accustomed to speaking. I like speaking very much indeed, and on the very few occasions I have spoken in public, there has been the greatest difficulty in getting me to sit down. So, if at five minutes to two you will kindly scrape your feet, or make some other sign, I will understand. I cannot help having been born and brought up in the Old Country, I don't claim to be more than half civilized, but I do claim to be just as much of a Britisher as any Canadian, and I ask to be allowed to speak to you as one of the Brotherhood, not as an outsider who has come here to give a sermon, or anything of that sort.

The President has told you that I have employed my time in mountaineering in different parts of the world,—mountaineering and mountain exploration. I must first advance some sort of an excuse for so strange a proceeding. I am devoted to big game hunting and other things of that sort, but I do not think there is any pastime quite as fine as mountaineering. It is not simply for the sake of saying that you have been there, that I have been such and such a place, that I have been a certain height up mountains. It is for a good many reasons. First of all, it is the most strenuous sort of sport I know. You are only trying to take your own life, or not to take it, as the case may be. I do not think that any

* Dr. T. A. Langstaff, F.R.G.S., London, England, is one of the world's most famous explorers. He has climbed all the highest mountains in the world and has attained the greatest altitudes yet reached by man. He went into the Himalayas with the British Expedition to Thibet under Col. Younghusband and explored the great watershed of Asia. He spent a considerable part of last summer in the Canadian Rockies.

man can travel in the mountains without improving himself. The effect is not only physically, but to character; you not only make yourself stronger and fitter, but mountaineering calls for all sorts of things by exercising the powers of self-control and endurance. You have to put up with a lot of discomfort. You frequently are very terrified, at least I am, and you have to make up your mind not to show that to your companions. You do not do very well from the point of comfort, and you are jolly lucky if you get snow to sleep on instead of rocks; and altogether mountaineering, as a pastime, knocks out of your system a good many of the unpleasant results that always follow in the course of civilization.

Well, of course, if I were speaking to infants, or to Americans, I dare not come here unless I were prepared to offer undiluted, unlimited and exaggerated praise of everything in the country; but you don't want that sort of thing. I have often been asked, since I have been in the Rockies, are the Rocky Mountains finer than the Alps? Well, it is almost impossible to compare different mountain ranges, therefore, I have no hesitation in doing so. As a field for sport—and I speak from a considerable experience—the Alps are unapproachable and unsurpassed as a field for the exercise of the art of mountaineering. There is a very great deal to learn in it. The mountains in the Alps are more difficult, the difficult climbs are more numerous than they are here. They are higher, the weather conditions are harder. In the Alps, conditions are such that you can very easily get about from one peak to another. On most of the principal mountains, there are numerous club huts, built on the glaciers, drive roads in other parts, pony roads in the valleys, together with splendid hotels and chalets, so it is very easy for a man in the Alps to climb three or four difficult peaks in a week. During a month or six weeks in the Alps, a man can put in twelve or sixteen climbs of the most difficult sort. That is impossible in the Rockies. The peaks are easier, but a great deal harder to get at. You have to take a great number of days for them.

As regards the Caucasus, it is outside practical politics, but the sport is very, very good. It is rather finer than in the Alps, but it is harder to get to, and yet it does not offer the same attractions as the Himalayas. Under the Himalayas I am including the whole of the mountain ranges, which embraces a country in which there is more variety than there is from Alaska to Mexico. The conditions in the Himalayas are totally and completely different in the different regions.

You cannot generalize about the Himalayas without very grave risks, but in general, I should say, from an experience of three years spent there, and less than six months travelling in the mountains, it is an ideal field for the mountain explorer; but it is not the ideal field for the mountainer, because distances are so great, the size of the individual peaks is so enormous, the difficulties of transport and all that sort of thing so extreme, that you count it a good season if you go to the Himalayas and climb one big peak. If a man climbs one peak in six months, he has done jolly well. In some cases he will take one season to find out where there is a peak to climb, and then, if he is lucky, he can go back the next season and climb it. That, of course, is all very well for the enthusiastic mountain traveller.

Now, this summer, although I am a life member of the Alpine Club of Canada, the President of the Alpine Club very generously insisted on my sister and myself being their guests, and I spent a very enjoyable time. I was at their summer camp in the Rockies, at Consolation Lake, during the end of July. Before that I had started in on my own account. I had gone down from Banff with a pack train to Mount Assiniboine. I told you that the climbing in the Rockies was not as good as that in the Alps—that is on the whole—but the ascension of Mount Assiniboine by the route I took and under the conditions and weather that I met will always rank as one of the hardest climbs that I have done.

Well, after the Alpine Club Camp, from which we had a good deal of climbing, I went north with Mr. Wheeler and other members of the Club to the Bow Pass and over another snow pass to the head of the Yoho, and then I was at Glacier, and this last September I have been down with Mr. Wheeler on an exploration of the Selkirks. Although it is a first visit, I have seen a good deal, at least I have seen enough to form some opinion as to what our mountains here are like, and my opinion is that there is not any other mountain country in the world that has such a fine playground for humanity as you have in the Rockies. Switzerland, I think, we have called the playground of Europe. Now the Rockies will be, must be, the playground of the world. I do not think there is an exaggeration about that statement. The area covered by mountains of the Western Cordillera is enormous. The individual scale of the mountains, of the building, is very small. That is a very great advantage, because nowhere else in the world have I ever seen from the same point of view in the same locality such a combination of snowpeak and plain

and forest and glacier, lake and stream, altogether at one time in the same place, as I have seen in these mountains. In the Himalayas you walk for a week through the foot-hills; you then take another week getting rid of the forests, another week going up some rough river valley, and another week up a glacier, and another week to get to the foot of the peak. Here, everything is close together, and the scale is small, and the result is a country more beautiful than Switzerland.

There is one passage in which Ruskin, speaking of a view in the Jura Mountains of Switzerland, says that he tried to imagine what that view would be like if all traces of humanity and of historical reminiscences had been removed from it, and he could only imagine a wilderness. Well, of course, he did not see that view in the Jura without any castles or chalets or cows, or anything of that sort, but he tried to imagine it. Now, to me, the absence of all traces of humanity, the absolutely complete absence of all signs of humanity is, I think, one of the charms of the Rockies. In Switzerland, there are many beautiful lakes, but you will generally see a penny steamboat on the water, and you will have a pink chalet in one corner and a yellow cow in the other, and you will have lots of trippers and long glasses of lager beer. I do not think it any loss to the Rockies that you do not get that there.

There is another view-point concerning the Rockies. Of course, it is a much lower one than the high subjects we have been discussing. There is the difficult aspect of the country. A real genius at Ottawa has discovered that you cannot grow wheat on a glacier. Well, that is true in a sense, but there would be very little wheat in Alberta and other places if it were not for the glaciers. They are the natural sponge that prevents the water that falls at one moment from running away altogether. They are an absolute necessity. But apart from that again, although it is difficult to sell town lots and town sites in the Rockies or make use of it in that sort of way, its very geographical conditions mark it out as an open space, as a space whose only return will be to give pleasure to its owners by using it and travelling over it. It is the natural playground. It is not often easy, say in a big city like this, to fence off a park for the use of the people, but it is absolutely easy and in every way desirable in the case like the Rocky Mountains that one should recognize that it is going to be used chiefly for recreation by its owners, who are the Canadian people. At the present time, for any one who has got long enough time at his disposal, a month or so, you can take a pack train and you can go into the Rockies, and in the

Rockies you can get about anywhere, but in the Selkirks you cannot unless you cut trails. The absence of trails in these mountains, of course, makes travel much more expensive, because you have to take a much longer time, but the man who has got time has got no kick over that.

Now, as regards the ordinary tourists—I mean tourists, wretched people who do not climb mountains, but who do like seeing them—they are very well provided for along the C.P.R. At Banff and Field and other places, especially, there are lots of good driving roads. I mean for people who cannot bear to sleep outside of an hotel, to whom the idea of sleeping in a tent fills with thoughts of grizzlies and I do not know what. For these people a great deal is being done, and I think enough is being done, and no reasonable man can have any objection to it. There are lots of good hotels and excellent opportunities to see the mountains for the ordinary tourists. Of course, Lake Louise in the month of August is absolutely impossible for anyone who enjoys Lake Louise. It is crowded to perdition, I may say, by tourists. Of course, they are mostly—a good many of them—uncivilized people from the South!

But I have got one complaint to make, and that is about the Rocky Mountain Park. I have been in that park, north and south, and had a very good time there. That park, as far as I could learn, was eighty miles long and eighty miles broad, but I am told that it has been enlarged down to the international boundary. There appear to be no accurate maps of that part of the country in existence. The only map which appears to be recognized is one gotten out some years ago by Norman Colley. There is no survey of the park. I went down, as I told you, to the south, to Mount Assiniboine. I received great courtesy at the hands of some of the Dominion authorities in the District. But they were unable to furnish me with any authorized map more recent than ten years ago. As I have said, I have a kick coming over the fact that I am not allowed to shoot in the park. I have not any kick against the regulations on my own part, for I fear that no matter how much shooting I did, I would not be successful in bagging any game. Some people, you know, do not think I am a very good shot. But, however that may be, I hold that the full privileges of the park should be accorded to its owners, the Canadian people.

There are three game wardens, two of them excellent fellows who look after the game, but you must remember that they have 6,400 square miles of territory to cover with few

trails in it. It is consequently an impossible task. If you want to shoot, you have only to find out where the game wardens are and go some where else! There is plenty of game for everybody there. All I suggest is, that pony trails, or pack trails, costing some \$50 to \$70 a mile at the outside, should be made up the principal valleys in the park. I tell you what it is like by the Bow Valley. You start off at Laggan, and on the Government trail you have a beautiful field of dead trees you have to cut through, and numerous other obstacles, and finally the trail peters out in a windfall, apparently anywhere they stopped cutting. You traverse about on the hillside, and, if you get through, you come to a mile and a half of muskeg, and after you get through that, you find yourself down at the bottom of the valley, which takes you up to the Bow Pass, one of the finest beauty spots in the Rockies.

Of course, you have all heard of Lake Louise and Lake O'Hara, but on the other side of the Assiniboine there are two lakes, which are not on the maps, and they are more beautiful than Lake Louise and O'Hara, more beautiful, in fact, than any other lakes in the world. But we could not take our pack train. There was no trail through there. But this National park is the finest investment of principal, for there is not a park like this anywhere else in the world. I have been through the Western States. I have seen those other parks, including the Yellowstone, but I do not know them as I know the Canadian National Park. The Yosemite of Yellowstone cannot really compare with the Rocky Mountain Park. It has not got the glaciers and snowpeaks, and all that sort of thing, that you have in the Canadian National Park.

It seems a pity, when you have such a gorgeous playground as that, that much more use is not made of it. I am not saying that Canadians do not appreciate their mountains. The Alpine Club of Canada, now only five years old, proves the contrary. Canadian parties have ascended for the first time some of the most notable peaks in the Rockies. But Americans, and those poor, deluded people from the Old Country, have done a good deal more in the past in the Rockies than anybody else, and I merely venture to address you to-day, because I think that a good many people in eastern Canada do not really know what a glorious possession they have over there. And I tell you again, that I say, knowing that I am not exaggerating in any way, that for general beauty and for the facilities of enjoying an open-air life or holiday, and all that sort of thing, I do not believe there is any other mountain range in the world which offers equal opportunities with your mountains.