

Robson—A Conquered King

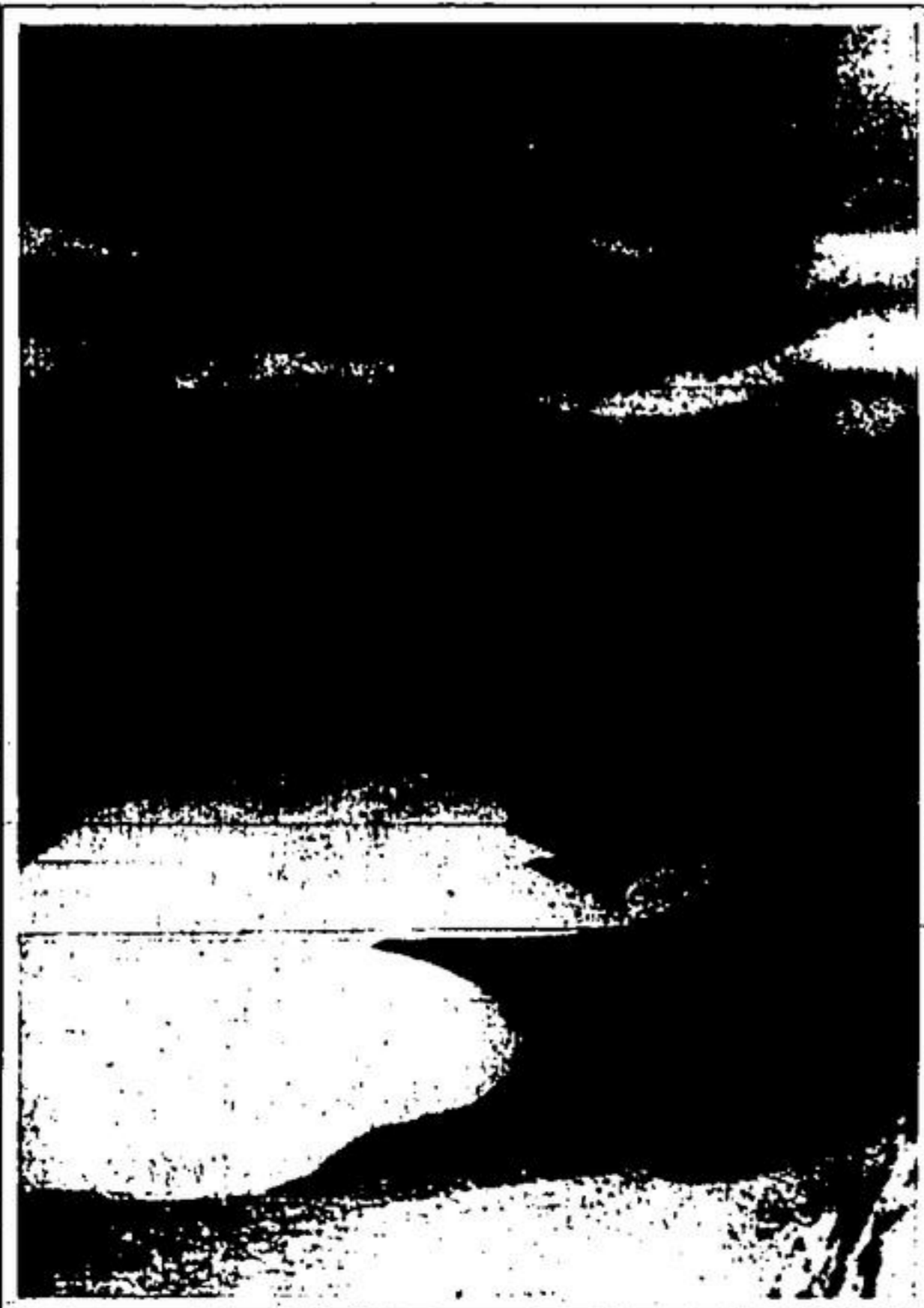
BY THE REV. G. R. B. KINNEY

WE PUT in three seasons trying to conquer the grim, scarred old peak, Mount Robson, and it took every packhorse, and every blanket, and every ounce of grub, and every bit of muscle and nerve we could rake out of our inner consciousness—not to mention shuttles—to look abroad from his naked horns on the wrinkled valley of the Fraser.

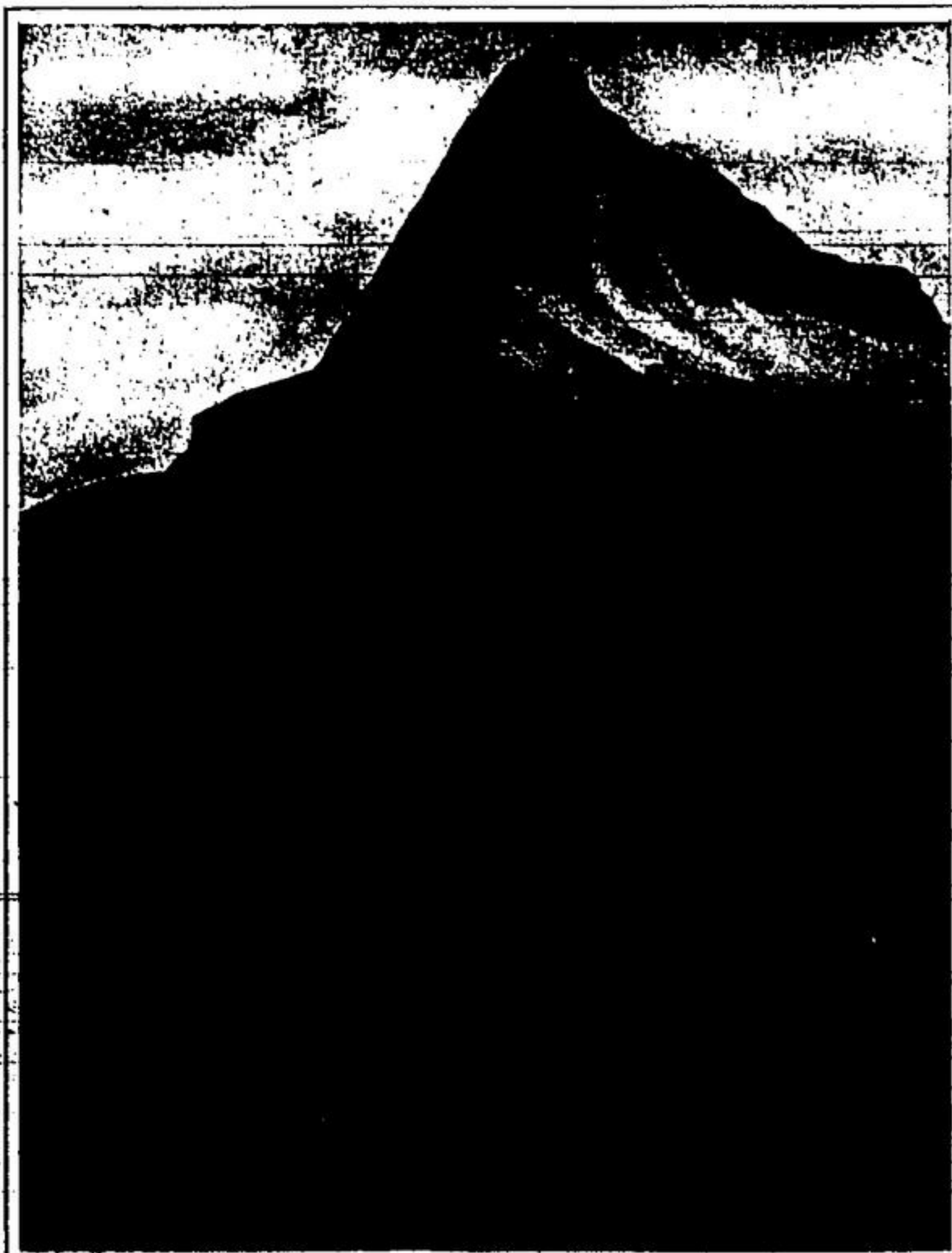
Yes, we had that look—had it on Friday, August thirteenth, 1909—had the ascent of the highest peak in all the Canadian Rockies for Canada and the Alpine Club—and between you and me and the piebald bell-mule, it took most of our faculties to do it. It was in August of 1907 that I first saw the old bench-mark of 1875 on a big Douglas fir at the summit of Yellowhead Pass, where the waters of the continent divide and turn towards two oceans.

The summit of Yellowhead Pass is not a popular resort by any means. Only a very rude trail marks the progress of civilization there, yet. We knew all about that rude trail. It had been worse than rude to us for two hundred miles—ever since we left Laggan with the gay intention of climbing Mount Robson. We had hauled our ten horses, individually and collectively, out of the Pipestone muskeps; we had hewn our way and scratched our faces in the fallen timber of the Saskatchewan and the Brazeau, and tumbled off and into things innumerable times; we had seen the big Columbia Glacier, were intimately acquainted with Mounts Wilson, Coleman and Athabasca; had fed our hearts in the high pastures of the Big Horn and the Goat and the Caribou. Yes, we knew that trail to the point of calling it by its first name, and when we finally camped on the bank of the Miette, and after building a raft, gingerly trusted ourselves and our outfit to the mercies of its tumbling waters, we almost sighed with relief.

For a score or more of miles we followed the Miette. The party was an Alpine Club party, however, used to such incidents, and we had a definite purpose in view, which no amount of frolic could discourage: to climb Mount Robson. No white men had ever been known to reach the king of the Canadian Rockies, and Dr. Coleman, of Toronto University, had organized us from the members of the Alpine Club, with this intention. Finally we passed the last barrier, crossed the last ford, and swung into the valley of the Grand Forks. Eight or ten miles away the great limestone wedge of the king, 13,700 feet up in the air, buttressed across the whole valley, with a fall bigger than Niagara roaring unnoted at his feet, and the whole north side of him one gigantic, sheer, unbroken rock-faced slide from pinnacle to base, rose before our overawed gaze. The grand, isolated peak, cloaked with untold ages of snow, towering far above all the other peaks of its range; its high-tung crown almost touching heaven, its perpendicular walls and overhanging glaciers brooding over the deep valleys with awful calm, is one of the grandest sights imaginable to man. We did not make the summit that year, for Mount Robson cloaks himself in storms, and is not sympathetic towards venturesome human ants, but we did a great deal of investigation around his lower slopes. I, from my roving disposition, became the ex-



HERE IS THE DIVIDE OF THE CONTINENT. THE WATERS OF BEGG LAKE FLOW TOWARDS THE PACIFIC; THE STREAMS FEED BY LAKE ANDERSON IN THE DISTANCE REACH THE ARCTIC SEA.



MOUNT ROBSON ON THE NORTH IS ONE THREE HUNDRED OF NAKED ROCK FROM HERE TO SUMMIT, TOWARDS 13,700 FEET IN THE AIR ABOVE FALLS HIGHER THAN NIAGARA. THE CROSS MARKS THE SITE OF CAMP (HIGHEST-UP, FROM WHICH MR. KINNEY MADE HIS CLIMB TO THE PEAK)

THE ACTON FREE PRESS, DECEMBER, 1910.



AROUND THE HOUSES OF MOUNT ROBSON BRACE AND MOUNTY YOUNG OF ICE & MILK WINE AND SEVERAL MILLS LOU

The Rainbow Mountains, in all their gorgeous colors, flanked us on either hand, and brooded over us while we tumbled with the current, or toiled across timbered bottoms and sunny meadows where the wild pea-vine grows as high as the horses' piths. Up here is the hair of all the rivers of the continent. We were constantly fording them—wetness was the habitual condition of our collective trouser-legs, and a good share of most of our possessions. Personally, I could have got along very comfortably with a few less rivers, and I fancy the rest of the party felt the same way, after the three hundred and sixty-first ford.

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TUMBLING GLACIERS CONSTANTLY DISCHARGE ICE-BLOCKS WITH THUNDEROUS CRASHING INTO BEGG LAKE

plorer of the party, and was constantly wandering off on solitary jaunts. My first discovery was the beautiful lake that bears my name, and nestles at the foot of Robson on his western side. It rivals Lake Louise for beauty—and in fact, the whole region, dear-as-Banff, Paradise Valley, Lake Louise, Yoho and Glacier are to the heart of the mountain-lover, without doubt surpasses the beauties of all the known Canadian Alps.

So fearful is the height of Mount Robson above this valley, and so sheer is its whole face, that the avalanches slide from its very highest peak to within a few yards of the lake, where they lie the year around, at an altitude of not more than two thousand five hundred feet.

On every side of the great "Valley of a Thousand Falls", a huge wall of perpendicular cliffs, thousands of feet high, hem the valley in closely. Here and there, on sheltered ledges, patches of spruces relieve with their dark greens, the greys of the rocks, while everywhere the numerous streams from the great glaciers all around plunge over the high precipices in countless falls of spray. A mighty tongue of ice lolls over a cliff at the head of the valley and curves so low as to reach the valley floor, while here and there in the bottom of the valley are huge springs from which flow full-fledged streams. A high-up glacier on the west side has such a large field of snow at its source and flows down so steep an incline that huge chunks of ice are constantly breaking off its precipitous front and crashing into the valley below. The most fearful avalanche I ever saw came from this glacier, and it took ten minutes by my watch for the foremost chunks of ice to reach the valley bottom.

At the head of the valley and to the north, rises Mount Turner, a splendid peak of some twelve thousand feet altitude, while to the right, at an altitude of between two and three thousand feet above the valley, the Grand Forks, swift flowing from Berg Lake, leaps from the cliff and forms a superb falls as high as Niagara, then plunges in a number of beautiful cataracts down a very narrow gorge, till it sweeps across the floor of the valley. And from the Goat Trail, that winds in and out among these overhanging cliffs, truly the "Valley of a Thousand Falls" is a marvel of Alpine scenery.

Failing to climb Mount Robson in 1907, owing to climatic conditions our party returned the next summer, and made several heroic attempts up the east side of Mount Robson.



THE SNOWY HEAD OF MOUNT ROBSON RISES 13,700 FEET IN THE AIR, AND IS CLOSELY ATTACHED TO MOUNT ROBSON AS TO BEING ALMOST A PART OF THE MAIN PEAK



GEORGE HYNDS, ESQ. Reeve of Acton, 1910.

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