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CLIMBING MT. BREWER—THE CLIMAX OF THE  
SIERRA CLUBS OUTING FOR 1902.

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Many interesting stories have been told of the second annual outing of the Sierra Club in the King's River Cañon and the alpine region at its head. The great "hike" in from Millwood of the large party with their train of pack-horses, the side-trips to Paradise Cañon, to Bryan Lake, to Lake Charlotte, and to Kearsarge Pass; the trout-fishing in King's River and its tributaries, in Lake Charlotte and Bryanthus Lake; the ascents of Goat Mountain, of Mt. Rixford, of Sentinel Peak, of Avalanche Peak, of Mt. Gould, of University Peak,—all of these were full of incident and delightful interest to the participants.

Then there was the less strenuous side of camp life in the main camp in the cañon, Camp Colby. Its afternoon teas, the songs, stories, and lectures of the evening camp-fires, the frolic of care-free life in the mountains, with the intoxication of the pure mountain atmosphere and the inspiration of the merry glances of bright eyes,—altogether these were experiences that will make this outing a life-long recollection to the Sierran excursionists, and which have been described by Miss Sanderson in a preceding BULLETIN.

But of all the doings, grave or gay, that filled up this merry month in the Sierra, the most notable and hazardous by far was the ascent of Mt. Brewer. Only a week before, Walter Ray, a young man who was spending his summer in the cañon, joined three other young men, who were camped near him, on a climb to Brewer's summit,

and venturing too near a rock cornice cresting a precipice of over five hundred feet sheer descent, not far from the top of the mountain, he started a loose bowlder and went with it down to instant death far below. Neither he nor the three young men who climbed with him were members of the Sierra Club party. Nevertheless, his tragic death grieved the Sierrans, and necessarily added to the feeling of responsibility with which the committee made their preparations for this difficult climb.

In order to avoid including any incompetent climber, who might delay the line and mar the success of the climb, it was decided to take only those who had a mountaineering record for high climbing; together with those others who might qualify by climbing in one day from Camp Colby to the saddle on the way to Goat Mountain, which saddle was at an elevation of about 11,000 feet, a rise of 5,800 feet from the floor of the valley at Camp Colby. While there was some little disappointment on the part of a few without mountaineering records, and who neglected to qualify on the Goat Mountain climb, the committee was justified in its judgment as to requirements for the Brewer trip by the fact that two experienced climbers, with ample records, but a little out of condition the day of the climb, failed to reach Brewer's summit. Another requirement was, that no skirts were to be worn by the ladies during the climb. The precipice of loose broken rocks forming the approach to the summit made this requirement a necessary precaution against the danger to those following of loosening and starting rocks down the slope. Complying with these requirements, forty-nine enrolled for Brewer, including seventeen ladies, whose costumes of bloomers, overalls, or knickerbockers were not only appropriate for the work to be accomplished, but lessened the fatigue of climbing, thus enhancing their chances of reaching the summit.

The trip to Brewer was to be included in a week's absence from Camp Colby, during which the party intended to visit Charlotte and Bryanthus lakes and Kearsarge Pass. Ninety pedestrians, including the party of forty-nine for Brewer, started from Camp Colby on Sunday morning, July 7th, going by the way of Bubb's Creek to the junction meadow. Up the floor of the valley the trail led beside the beautiful King's River, through picturesque openings and dense forests, of which the noble sugar-pines and sturdy yellow pines were the statelyst, the cedar and silver firs giving gracefulness and variety to the landscape. Leaving the main floor of the cañon at the delta of Bubb's Creek, the trail zigzagged up a very steep bluff, and in many places was extremely hazardous for horses, as our packers lost two over the precipice in getting our baggage to our next camp. This trail, however, was repaired by the Government forest rangers, and was in good condition before our return from this trip to Camp Colby, a week later.

Through Charlotte Meadows, beside the leaping, cascading stream, threading beautiful opens and fine timber patches, we finally arrived at the spot selected, and went into camp a little below the mouth of Eastlake Creek, naming the location Camp Miller. Here the others of the party fished, cooked, rested, and enjoyed the beauty of their magnificent surroundings while the mountaineers were on the Brewer expedition.

Monday morning the Brewer contingent, accompanied by several of the remainder of the party, proceeded up Eastlake Creek to the lake, and around it to the upper end, where they made camp in a fine grove of pines. To this spot was given the name of Camp Le Conte. Here we met with a vociferous welcome on the part of a numerous colony of Clark crows, who discussed us from all stand-points and asked all sorts of questions as only vivacious

birds can. Here, too, we were delighted by the sight of numerous water-oussels, who make their habitat about the inlet of the lake, near the leaping, tossing waters of which we fixed our camp, while from their homes in the rocks on the east side of the lake the mountain marmots viewed us from a distance with questioning interest, and shrilly whistled their disapproval of our nearer approach.

Nearly all of the party went that afternoon to visit and view Reflection Lake, one and a half miles further up at the base of Crag Reflection, where it mirrored the grandeur and magnificence of its alpine surroundings, a veritable sapphire in its setting of rock and snow-flecked cliff. Meanwhile two or three of the old-timers rolled up in their blankets, and by an hour or two of sleep that afternoon conserved and stored up increased energy for the next day's struggle.

That evening the camp-fire exercises were brief. The party lined up for inspection, and numbered forty-nine. Shoes were carefully examined, and good-night was spoken at 8:30, in view of the early start of the morrow.

Bugle-call sounded at 4 o'clock in the morning; breakfast was ready at 5, and before 6 o'clock the line was formed and numbered. Instructions were given to keep places in line throughout the climb, to heed carefully, promptly, and without question the directions of the leaders, and off we started. Mr. Le Conte, of the Ouing Committee, was leader and guide of the trip, and Mrs. Le Conte pacemaker. Soon a Government forest ranger joined the party, making a total of fifty.

Slowly we made our way up out of the Eastlake basin, with frequent short halts to enjoy and admire the magnificence of the views as they unfolded before us. We were now passing over solid granite, its rough surface, seamed and broken and dotted with huge boulders, and in spots showing glacial polishings. Here and there were small

grassy meadows and rivulets, bordered with willow and edged with heather, while, wherever a foothold was possible, the *Pinus albicaulis* struggled for existence. Soon, beyond the limit of timber growth, we found only the scattering alpine flowers to relieve and beautify the harshness of granite and snow-field. We passed several small glacial lakes, deepest blue in their snowy basins, behind the terminal moraines of now almost extinct glaciers.

From the beauties at our feet our attention was called to distant snow-capped ranges of the High Sierra, their lofty peaks glowing in the glorious lighting of that magnificent Sierra morning. Our hearts were filled with the ecstasy which only mountaineers can feel, and which is only to be enjoyed in high places, and earned by the arduous efforts necessary to attain such surroundings.

All of the party were in the best of spirits. Well conditioned by wise precaution and careful preparation, they were keen to appreciate and enjoy the glorious opportunities of the climb. None was yet fatigued, so well ordered was the pace set and so well timed the frequent short rests. As our aneroid barometer indicated the altitudes of 10,000 feet, 11,000 feet, 12,000 feet, it was so announced. We were progressing up the northeast spur of the mountain.

Finally to bare granite and small snow-patches succeeded loosely piled rock ledges and several large snow-fields. The sun was now so high that these snow-fields were softened, so that footholds were very insecure, and constant breaking through the crust of the surface was extremely fatiguing. On the last large field below the extreme dangers of the approach to the summit, the altitude and the exertions of crossing these snow-fields had so accelerated the heart action of two of the party that it was deemed wise for them to go no further, and another one of the party remained with them. While we all regretted that they did not register with us at the peak, it is the

policy of the club to discourage too severe exertions that might result in any permanent disability. The final 1,000 feet of altitude to the summit was made very slowly and carefully. The leaders guided the way, removing where possible loose and threatening rocks and picking footholds and handholds for those following. Especially did the leaders closely watch and warn the party past the loose-rock cornice over which young Ray went to his death. While appearing perfectly safe to the inexperienced, it was necessary to keep away from the edge where the loosely piled rocks only awaited a slight encouragement to leap 500 feet in the clear to the rocks below or into the great Bergschrund that yawned near the top of the glacial snow-field on the north side of Brewer.

A little further on, the crest of the spur along which we traveled narrowed to about fifteen feet in width, covered with a small snow-field, which extended in a snow cornice on the north side over another precipice of about six hundred feet. Here again the climbers were carefully led, lest they loosen this cornice and go with it to icy death below, where, if not killed in the fall, they must have been engulfed in the Bergschrund.

Then followed a steep climb in loose rocks to the summit, 13,886 feet above the level of the sea, where, thanks to their ready acquiescence in all the directions of the leader and the good discipline maintained by the party, all arrived safely and in buoyant good spirits before 11:30 o'clock.

Many of the sturdier climbers could have made the ascent in two hours' less time, but cheerfully slowed down to the pace set, and by their sprightly conversation and genial badinage encouraged the slower ones, the beginners, beguiling them out of fatigue and adding greatly to the total of pleasure of the trip. For it was not desired or intended to break the record in the time made to the

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summit, but rather to excel all previous Sierran climbs in the number of the party safely and enjoyably led to a High Sierran summit. Soon we composed ourselves to enjoy the marvelous panorama surrounding us; field-glass and cameras were brought into play, but no photograph could give the coloring and atmosphere of the matchless views from Brewer's summit. Slightly apart from the main ranges we were treated to a sight of peak after peak, rugged and snow-capped, time-defying pinnacles in a region of grandeur. Far to the southeast we looked upon the "top of the United States," the summit of Mt. Whitney, 14,522 feet altitude, the loftiest peak in the republic.

It was difficult to single out the highest points among the spires and pinnacles, seemingly the well-butressed pillars supporting the blue arch of heaven. Its azure depths were softened and toned by the snowy frescoes of the ever-varying and changing fleecy clouds that circled and played about us, culminating in a storm far to the northward on Goat Mountain.

Sobered by the austere grandeur of the scene, we quietly withdrew in detached groups and slowly made our way from the awe-inspiring spot. Then more swiftly, over rocky spur, and coasting across and down the snow-fields, we hastened to Eastlake Basin and down East Creek Cañon toward Camp Miller, where the remainder of the Kearsarge Pass party welcomed us to a hospitable and satisfying trout dinner at 6 o'clock. There would be as many and as various stories of the summer as the number of the Sierrans who enjoyed this summer's outing, but certainly the Breweries would agree on this, that the most delightful and memorable day of the entire trip for them was that spent in conquering and surmounting Brewer.