



This extract from a Climbers' Club Journal has been made available by kind permission of the Climbers' Club as copyright for the author has expired.

Copyright remains with The Climbers' Club. It is provided in electronic form for your personal use and cannot be used for commercial profit without seeking permission from The Climbers' Club.

Journal: 1905

Author: C. E. Benson

© Copyright 2010

HIAWATHA'S CLIMBING.

Up the Lake that runs through Wastdale
 In his light canoe of Birch Bark
 To the Kingdom of the Cragmen
 Came the valiant Hiawatha,
 Full of beans, and full of bunkum.
 On the table of the wigwam,
 The historic House of Ritson,
 Was the breakfast of the Climbers,
 Ham and eggs, and eggs and bacon,
 Flanked by mighty piles of liver,
 And enormous plates of porridge
 Meant to fill the chinks and crannies,
 Crannies left in the interior,
 The interior, Little Mary,
 "Twixt the liver and the bacon.
 To the Climbers at their breakfast
 Spake the valiant Hiawatha :—
 " May I climb with you, my brothers ?"
 And the Climbers answered, smiling,
 " Certainly you may, old fellow."
 On the hills stood Hiawatha ;
 Gone his mocassins enchanted ;
 On his feet were boots of leather,
 Shod with steel and edged with clinkers :
 Gone his mittens, Minjekahwun,
 For to grind the rocks to powder
 Is no earthly use to climbers.
 Left behind the mighty war club,
 As an ice-axe is more useful.

Round his legs were bands of wampum,
Mountain wampum, Khakiputtee.

At the bottom of a gully
Stood a party of the Cragmen,
Stood a gathering of the Climbers,
Round their waists a rope was fastened,
And, with care and circumspection
Looking at the mighty chockstone,
Stood the leader of the party.
Loud and long laughed Hiawatha :—
“Who are these that climb like children?
Why this rope about your middles,
This unnecessary caution?
I will teach you how to scramble.”
Up the rocks went Hiawatha
Till the holds grew few and fewer,
And the handholds less and lesser,
And the footholds non-existent.
On the scree inside the gully
Came the trembling Hiawatha,
On that portion of his body
Where the leggings join the tunic.
Very wrath was Hiawatha
At the chuckling of the Climbers,
At the laughter of the Cragmen :
Angrily he turned upon them,
Turned and called them Bloomin' ijuts,
(An expression of contumely
In the tongue of the Ojibways),
Used a word that ends with 'nation,'
Talked about their future prospects
In the Kingdom of Ponemah,
In the land of the hereafter.
But the climbers answered smiling :—
“Go and teach your parent's parent,
Teach your grandmother, Nokomis.”

Thus the boastful Hiawatha
Called the tune and paid the piper.
To the Wigwam back he wandered,
Most disconsolately wandered ;
All that afternoon and evening
Were the bruises on his body
Rubbed with Elliman and massaged.
Very wise rose Hiawatha,
A much sorer man and wiser,
All his bumptiousness gone from him,
And a reverence for the mountains
Planted in his breast for ever.
Would you know where Hiawatha
Journeys at the present moment ?
He is striding ever southward,
To the Kingdom of Bethesda,
To the land of Pen-y-gwryd,
Looking for the Secretary
With a view to his election.

CLAUDE E. BENSON.

