

Tenting Amongst the Lyell Mountains.

By W. TOWNSON.



LYELL is a picturesque little digging township with its houses perched on the hill-side, where the Buller Road forms an elbow at the crossing of Lyell Creek. It is distant about thirty-five miles from Westport, and as you approach from that direction you cross a very fine iron bridge, supported on stone piers, spanning the Buller River where it narrows between two opposing bluffs. From the bridge it is but a short distance to "Murderer's Bluff," from which eminence you look down upon the slumbering hamlet across the creek.

It is not a place in which to hurry yourself, repose is the dominant note, and the only excitements, the arrival and departure of the mail coach, and the influx of litigants and their legal advisers on Court day.

Mr. Boswell and I were bent on exploring the neighbouring mountains, having nearly a month at our disposal for the purpose, and with every prospect of spending a pleasant holiday. The country around was a "terra incognita" in a botanical sense, I had, therefore, an excellent chance of making a good collection of plants, as there was promise of the discovery of new species, and of new facts regarding plant distribution.

In order to work the ground to the best advantage, it was found necessary to camp out, and we were provided with tent and flies—kindly lent by the County Engineer—and

camp-gear and stores, packed into the smallest possible compass, so as to make convenient loads for the pack-horses. Mr. Rasmussen attended to the transport of our outfit, and did his work well, and at his hotel we were hospitably entertained. We decided to pitch our first camp under the crown of Boundary Peak, and with this object we set out early the next morning, Rasmussen with the pack-horse in the lead, and my companion and I walking behind, loaded with cameras, rifle, butterfly-net and plant-presses, as any one of these necessary parts of our outfit might be called into requisition during the day's march.

Our route lay along the Buller road for some miles, and then we turned up the spur, following the prospecting track lately made over the Brunner Range. It is good travelling for pedestrians, but certainly not for a loaded horse, as the ground in some of the shady gullies is wet and yielding, and our guide anxiously watched his horse as it struggled and plunged through the soft mire. How quickly a horse scents danger. It was interesting to watch our pack-horse sniffing at a bad place, and looking out for the best means of negotiating it. Slowly we wended our way up the sinuous mountain track, stopping at intervals to admire the ever beautiful beech bush with its wealth of glossy foliage and undergrowth of creepers and ferns.

Our destination was reached just as the evening shadows were creeping over the mountain's side, for