

CHAPTER VI

THE PARADOX OF THE COLUMBIA AND KOOTENAY RIVERS

We are now pretty well primed, in a general way, with facts in relation to the Columbia River, and about all that remains to be known is the exact nature of the country it penetrates, and of the numerous rapids I must overcome on my voyage down its waters. These things we will learn from time to time, as I reach them. This is the only way to find out the truth, as some of the hearsay evidence is not convincing.

But before leaving Canal Flat, as the Kootenay River is nearby, and we have not yet had time to visit it, it will be well to take a walk, through the timber, the three-fourths of a mile to the head of the abandoned canal. Here we find a full-grown river, almost a half-mile wide, filled with many islands, having a swift current, and sufficient depth of water to float a good-sized steamboat.

Examining the map the Chairman of the Commission of Conservation had sent me, it is learned that the Kootenay and Columbia bear an anomalous relation not paralleled by any other two rivers of the world. While the Columbia rises as we have seen, the Kootenay rises 61 miles farther north, in latitude $51^{\circ} 02'$, 9 miles east of the Columbia at the settlement of Castledale. It has its origin in a small lake in the Brisco Range, a spur of the Rocky

Mountains. On leaving the lake it runs in a southeasterly direction, exactly opposite to, and parallel with the Columbia, until east of the lower end of Columbia Lake where it turns to the southwest and skirting the edge of Canal Flat strikes the base of the Selkirk Mountains. It is then deflected to the southeast, crossing the International Boundary into the state of Montana, U. S. A., where it turns to the southwest, cutting off the northwest corner of Montana and entering the northeast corner of Idaho. Here it turns to the northwest, re-crossing the International Boundary, into Canada, and reaches a great lake called Kootenay Lake. About half way down the lake it breaks out on the west side, and descending in a southwesterly direction debouches into the Columbia River 31 miles north of the International Boundary, and a mile south of the village of Castlegar on the west side of the Columbia.

In the meantime, we know that the Columbia has traveled northward, and then southward, around the Big Bend and in its journey has become the greater stream—although at Canal Flat it was but an infant and the Kootenay a great river. The reason for this is plain. After entering the United States the Kootenay is in a territory of small rainfall, with no great streams feeding it, or glacial sources to draw from until back on Canadian soil; while the Columbia flows through a region of ever increasing rainfall, with many large tributaries pouring a flood of glacial waters into it, especially in the warm season when the glaciers are active.

CHAPTER VII

FROM CANAL FLAT TO ATHALMER

I am now ready to start on my journey on the waters of the Columbia to the sea.

Brede was still with me, and on the morning of June 13, together, we carried my outfit and provisions from the old box-car depot to the little shipyard at the canal. Launching the COLUMBIA for the first time, and finding her seaworthy, we loaded her systematically, with a slight excess of weight in the stern, and getting in I found she drew five inches of water, with the bow cutting the surface about an inch—thus giving a foot of "freeboard." Exclusive of my own weight the load weighed about 500 pounds.

Brede pushed the COLUMBIA off from the shore and, bidding me good luck, started me on my downward journey. I saw Brede again, about two weeks later near Donald, working as a trackman on an extra gang of the Canadian Pacific Railway.

As the Columbia winds towards every point of the compass in seeking a way through the mountains, to avoid confusion of direction in following my travels, I will call the shore on the right, facing down stream, the right hand shore, and the one on the left the left hand one.

Leaving Brede standing on the shore, and gliding under bridge 5-39, moving down with the gentle current I found that the stream did not increase

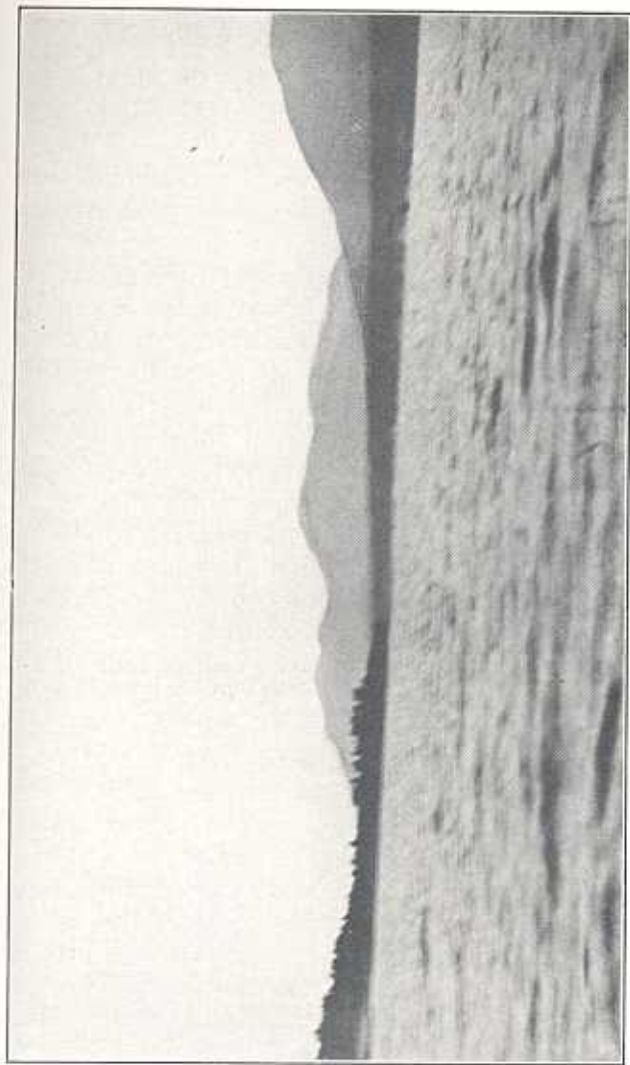
much in width, as it was confined by the canal excavation, but increased considerably in depth due to constant accession from springs. In about three-quarters of a mile Columbia Lake was reached and a broad vista, heretofore partly hidden by the timber unfolded itself to my view. Ahead, on both sides of the valley as far as the eye could reach, was a grand succession of rugged mountain peaks, their sides clothed in evergreen timber and their summits capped with snow and ice. On the right were the Rocky Mountains, on the left the Selkirks. The Rocky Mountains are the higher but the difference is not distinguishable to the eye, and none of the peaks, in either range, are enough higher than the others to materially dominate them—all are equally grand and impressive. This section of the country is well called the "Switzerland of America"; and the view from the head of Columbia Lake was alone worth coming all the way from Los Angeles to see; but I regretted that I would not have the opportunity to visit some of the wonders enclosed within the embrace of the mountains, hidden from view until you reach them.

On entering the lake I found a strong head wind was blowing from the north, and whitecapped waves running high. The lake is 13 miles long and 2.6 miles wide in the widest place, extending across the valley from mountain slope to mountain slope. On the Selkirk side it is bordered with flat benches 300 to 400 feet high, bearing occasional clumps of pine and fir trees. Back of the benches the heavily timbered surface slopes gently to the steep sides of the mountains. On the Rocky Mountain side the tim-

bered mountain slopes reach the shore of the lake. This much I noticed before attempting to navigate the lake. The canal enters it close to the left hand shore, and the right hand one seeming the most favorable for navigation in the strong wind that prevailed I pulled towards that shore. It was difficult to make progress, but after a steady fight of over an hour the lake was crossed and I landed in the shelter of some willows in the water's edge below the pine timber. Here I decided to stay to await calmer weather and if necessary camp for the night. It was noon when I arrived at the place but by two o'clock in the afternoon the wind instead of subsiding veered to the south, and as it was in my favor, although still blowing strong and the waves tossing northward, I re-started on my way and by 4:30 P. M. reached the foot of the lake at the head of the channel connecting with Windermere Lake.

Next to the Arrow Lakes, Columbia Lake is the largest body of water the Columbia River passes through, but it presents little of scenic interest. It maintains almost a constant level, but that is not due to accessions from melting glaciers. Small intermittent creeks contribute to it, partly, but its main supply is from springs along its shores, and subterranean, the latter, possibly, from water from the Kootenay River percolating through the sand and gravel of Canal Flat. The first glacial stream to flow into the Columbia is Dutch Creek, from the Selkirks, and that does not feed directly into Columbia Lake but into the head of the channel that leads to Windermere Lake. One habitation is all that was noticeable, a ranch house on the right, set 200

COLUMBIA LAKE, LOOKING SOUTH



feet or more above the water in a little clearing in the timber that borders that side. On the left the Kootenay Central Railway skirts the base of the benches already mentioned.

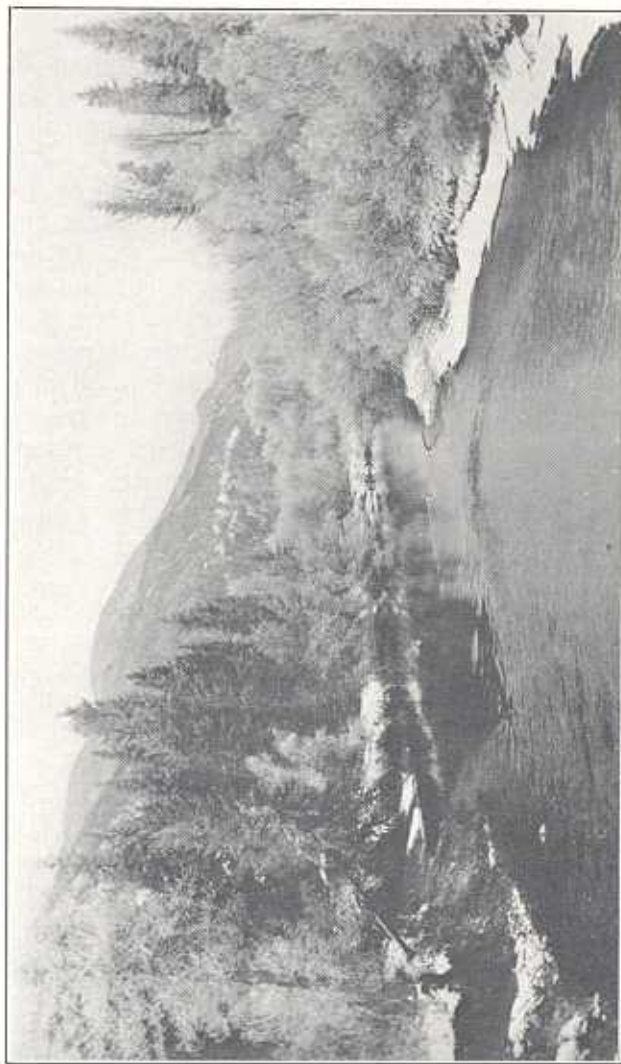
Columbia Lake and Windermere Lake are connected by a very winding channel through the low bottom land that has formed between them. This channel leaves the upper lake on the right at the base of the Rockies, and is about 100 feet wide at its head. Here I found considerable current, and entering it shortly passed the little steamer *Armstrong* beached on the right hand shore and careened over with the slope of the beach. This boat at one time operated on the River above Golden and was last used for freighting at the time of the construction of the Kootenay Central Railway, although she had never passed through the canal. About a mile and a half below the head of the channel it is spanned by a wagon bridge, and when I reached it I went ashore, as I knew that the Fairmont Ranch was nearby. The road turns to the northeast from the bridge, and I started to walk up to find the ranch house but had not gone far when two Indians on horseback overtook me, told me how far I would have to go and that there was a store there. I passed cultivated fields on the gently sloping hillside and in about half a mile reached a cluster of buildings which constituted the headquarters of the ranch. I had had some correspondence with Mr. J. W. Crawford, a civil engineer, who was manager of the ranch, and when I arrived he was at home. With him were two British army officers, Major F. C. Turner, and Captain Fredericks, to whom I was

introduced. Mr. Crawford urged me to sleep at the ranch house that night and as I had not, as yet, prepared my tent for erection I complied, and slept in a bed that night, the first time for some weeks, and the last time for many months.

I left the house early in the morning, before anyone else was up, went back to my boat, and cutting tent poles and stakes set up the tent for the first time. For uprights I used forked sticks; for a ridge a slender pole about 12 feet long, at the larger end of which I tacked a ferrule made of tin, and then, in that end, wedged a large sharpened spike—this pole to be used as a pike-pole when lining down the rapids. From a stick of cedar were made small stakes for fastening down the tent. These poles and stakes were carried with me until I reached Astoria.

About three-quarters of a mile above the Fairmont ranch house, and on the mountain side is a hot mineral spring, locally famous for its medicinal properties. Its temperature is 115° Fahrenheit. As I had had no bath after leaving Cranbrook the opportunity for a good one here was attractive, and I decided to remain over a day and visit the spring. A wagon road led uphill to the spring which I found in an excavated basin as large as a good-sized bathtub and enclosed in a small building. The water was hot but bearable, and slightly impregnated with mineral. I first drank some of it and then had a cleansing and refreshing bath.

From the location of the spring, high on the mountain side, a good view of the low bottom land to Windermere Lake is obtained. It stretches clear



—Photo, by Fisher

COLUMBIA RIVER AT FAIRMONT

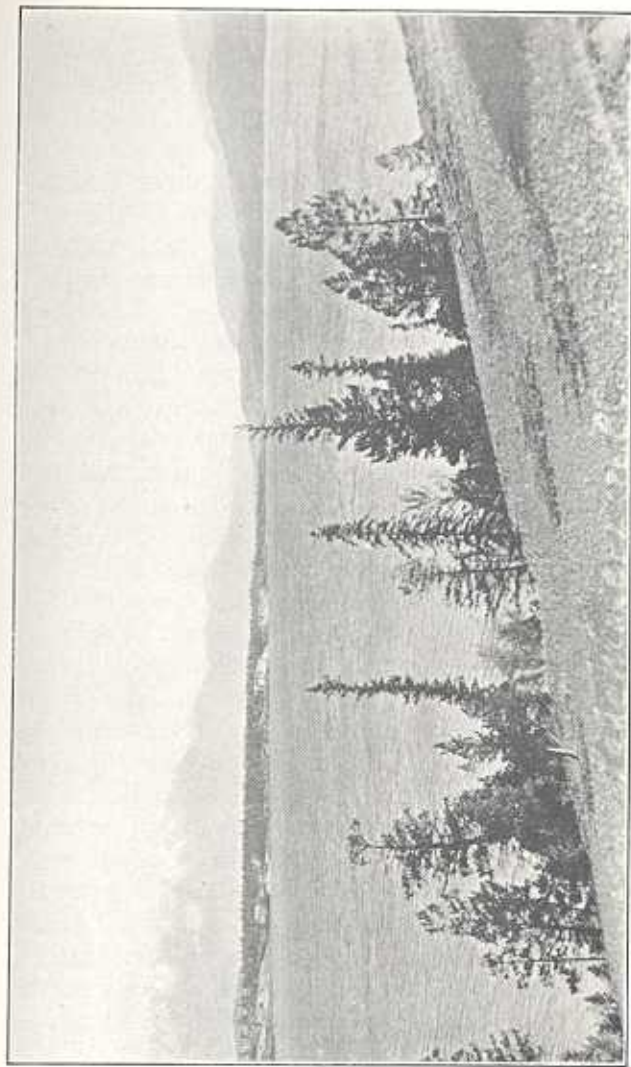
across the valley, from one mountain slope to the other, and the River channel, like a thread of silver, meanders through it, with innumerable, what appeared to be small lakes paralleling it on both sides. One lake, larger than the rest, was strung like a white bead on the silver thread. Willows, cottonwoods, and alders grew everywhere between the apparent lakes, which are really lagoons, except the one the River passes through.

That night, cutting spruce bough for a mattress, I passed the first night of the trip in the tent, and in the morning of June 15 left the camp at the bridge, and gliding under it resumed the journey down stream. The current was moderate but the channel proved tortuous, the banks low, and bordered with willows, cottonwoods, and an occasional pine tree. A short distance below the first bridge was a second one, disused, and setting so close to the surface of the water that it was only by first putting my weight in the bow and then in the stern that the boat would go under it. A little farther along a fallen cottonwood tree obstructed the channel completely and a way had to be forced through it. Going to the top, where the branches were thin, chopping some of them off, and then getting out on the main stem and submerging it with my weight I was able to drag the boat over it. While thus engaged a duck came and lit on a snag in the water not thirty feet away—I quietly reached for my shotgun and shot it. About two and a half miles from my late camp Mud Lake was reached—the bead strung on the silver thread as seen from the Fairmont hot spring. It is about a half-mile long and the same in width, and very shal-

low. After leaving Mud Lake the channel turned towards the Selkirks and seven miles from Columbia Lake I reached Windermere Lake and immediately encountered a strong head wind, but not as violent as the one contended with on the upper lake. Slow progress was possible, and continuing along the left shore, Windermere, a tourist resort on the right shore, was passed. The wind blew steadily all afternoon, and it was stiff rowing, but by 6 o'clock P. M. I reached the foot of Taynton's Bay, which is formed, on the left, by the point that juts southward near the lower end of the lake. Here I went into camp at the golf links, and close to the spot where David Thompson erected his first Kootanae House, and where the memorial in his honor is to be established.

Windermere Lake is 11 miles long and 1.5 miles wide in the widest place. It has more scenic beauty than Columbia Lake, its shores being more attractive. The high, flat benches appear on both sides, and it is fed by numerous streams both from the Rockies and the Selkirks. The Kootenay Central Railway follows along the western shore.

Before leaving home I had exchanged some United States money for Canadian currency, the bank at Los Angeles allowing me a premium of $10\frac{3}{4}$ per cent. As everything in British Columbia had cost about one-third more than south of the border I was short of local money and it was necessary for me to get more. Just north of Taynton's Bay, and about a half-mile from my camp ground, is the little town of Invermere, located on the high bench just above and west of the lower end of



—Photo. by Fisher

THE ROCKY MOUNTAINS AND LAKE WINDERMERE

Windermere Lake. There is a bank there and I planned to remain over one day to get the money needed, and some necessary provisions.

The next morning after my arrival I walked to Invermere, crossing the Kootenay Central Railway on a bridge over a deep cut, and obtained the provisions and money needed. Ten per cent was the rate of exchange by this time. At Invermere I made many inquiries about conditions along the Columbia River but found out little that was satisfactory until one man advised me to see Basil G. Hamilton, a pioneer of the district, as the most fertile source of information. Mr. Hamilton lived at the northern edge of the town, and walking out to his residence, a large frame bungalow, enclosed in roomy grounds, I met Mrs. Hamilton, who told me that her husband was not at home but would be in the evening, and she invited me to tea to meet him. I accepted the invitation and then met Mr. Hamilton, whom I found well posted, and who cordially enlightened me all he could, and furnished me the following books to read: *David Thompson's Narrative*, edited by J. B. Tyrrel; *The Columbia River*, by Professor Wm. D. Lyman; and a little booklet issued by the Union Pacific Railroad Company, entitled *The Columbia River*. These I went through hurriedly, making such notes as seemed useful, especially about the Thompson activities, and the various rapids on the Columbia River. Later Mr. Hamilton sent me a little booklet published by himself entitled, *Naming of Columbia River*; and much other detailed information of value.

Mr. Hamilton advised me to see Walter J.

Nixon, a former riverman, who had frequently run the rapids of the Big Bend but was now engaged as a packer and guide. Calling at Mr. Nixon's I found him at home; and he described the rapids as far as the mouth of Canoe River, stating that he considered those below Kinbasket Lake—called Twenty-three Mile Rapids—as being the worst. In showing me some of the photographs in his collection he, incidentally, remarked that the previous September he had guided a magazine writer, Lewis R. Freeman, to the Lake of the Hanging Glaciers and Ice Caves 35 miles west of Invermere at the head of Horse Thief Creek; and that Freeman had, afterwards, navigated down the Columbia River; and had written him that he had arrived safely at Portland, Oregon. In my progress down the Columbia I continually came across Freeman's trail, and met many who knew him. He had a cameraman with him; and after leaving Horse Thief Creek he went first to Canal Flat, and then by rail to Beaver-mouth, below Kitchen Rapids. From there, with two experienced rivermen and his photographer, he went through the Big Bend rapids to Revelstoke. From Revelstoke he descended the River in a small rowboat, and eventually reached Cascade Locks alone—having dropped his cameraman on the way. At Cascade Locks, 165 miles above the mouth of the Columbia, he boarded a steamboat for Portland, Oregon.

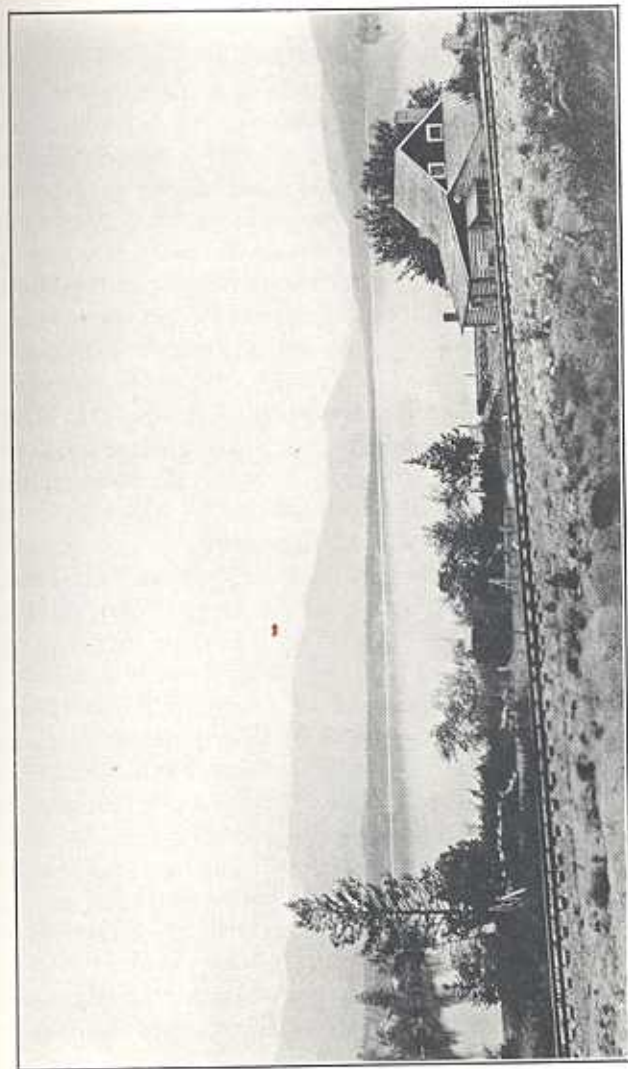
Freeman's story of his trip was published serially in the *Sunset Magazine* from July to November, 1921; and later in book form under the title *Down the Columbia*. His book gives all his movements,

and they can be traced if carefully followed. His story is interestingly written, and is well worth perusal as an entertaining tale and as a comparison of his experiences and my own in the descent of the River.

Although Freeman lives in Pasadena, California, and I in the adjoining town of Alhambra, I had never seen or heard of him, nor can I recall having ever read any of his stories prior to the publication of his Columbia trip. It was a mere coincidence that two men living so close to each other, and unacquainted, should both conceive the idea of braving the Columbia River.

As I would traverse a mineralized country below Invermere, and expected to do some prospecting, it was necessary to get a Free Miner's License. The Government Sub-Agent's office is located at Wilmer, four miles north of Invermere. It was raining June 17, but I walked to Wilmer and there obtained the license; and also asked for and received a hunting permit which allowed me to kill game for my own consumption either in or out of season. As prospectors are much of the time out in the wilds, and are liable to run short of food this especial privilege is granted to them.

The weather continued stormy, and as I wanted to get a picture of Windermere Lake before leaving, I waited for it to clear up—which it did on the afternoon of June 18. That afternoon Mr. Hamilton visited my camp, and together we went over to *Pynelogs*, a commodious and artistically constructed log dwelling, in highly cultivated grounds, at the end of Taynton's Bay and just above my camping



TAFTON'S BAY, LAKE WINDEMERE, SHOWING KOOTENAY CENTRAL RAILWAY

place. There I was introduced to the owner, Mr. R. Randolph Bruce, a wealthy mining man and a retired civil engineer, who showed me his fine collection of Navajo rugs, and beautiful flower garden. Miss E. N. Kettle was also introduced who served us with tea in the sun-parlor, from where we could look southward upon the magnificent panorama of the mountain peaks of the Rockies and Selkirks with the glittering expanse of Windermere Lake between. *Pynclog's* is at the bay shore and is provided with its own wharf and boating facilities.

Having obtained everything I needed at Invermere, and as the 19th proved clear, I departed from Taynton's Bay at 9 o'clock A. M., and rowing southward to the end of the point, turned it, and down the lake to the town of Athalmer, at the extreme lower end of Windermere Lake. Here Mr. Hamilton met me, and after taking several photographs of me and the COLUMBIA, both for his own and my use, bade me good-bye and sped me on my way.

What is known as the Windermere District consists of the settlements of Windermere, Invermere, Athalmer, and Wilmer. Of these Windermere is the oldest, being established by the early prospectors in search of gold, and was for a long time the only business center. Of late years it has been superseded by the later settlements and is now a tourist resort, having a permanent population of about thirty persons.

Invermere is the latest townsite, having been established in 1912, and is the largest and most progressive, and at the time I visited it there was considerable activity in the way of building and im-

provements. It is located west of the Kootenay Central Railway, and well back from the Lake. It has a good hotel, several stores and other places of business, the Dominion Government experimental farm, the office of the Irrigated Lands Company, and the only bank in the District.

Wilmer is on the west side of the Columbia River about three miles below Windermere Lake, is a small place of no particular consequence except that the Government Sub-Agent's office is located there, but it manages to support a shabby hotel and store. No doubt the place was active in earlier times when the mining boom was at its height.

Athalmer is the second oldest business center, and is located both on Windermere Lake and the Columbia River, being on the west side of the latter. It has a hotel, post office and three good stores, and evidently does considerable trading with outlying districts. It is built on low, flat ground, much of it under water when I was there, and the place has the appearance of decay. The railway station that serves the whole District is at the west boundary of Athalmer, and is called Lake Windermere, a designation that causes much confusion to the stranger. The total permanent population of these settlements is 195.

The Windermere District has an average rainfall of about 13 inches. Supplemented by irrigation from mountain streams farming is carried on, but to a limited extent owing to a limited market. Hay, alfalfa, clover, vegetables, small fruits, and hardy apples are the successful products of the soil; while stock raising and dairying are also a feature. The

summers are not excessively warm; and considering the latitude and elevation—2,566 feet at the surface of the lake—as compared with the country east of the continental divide—and which is the case all over the West—the winters are not extremely cold. The average winter depth of snow is about 18 inches. The air is pure, bracing, and healthy. The mountain views are grand and inspiring, beyond description, and many places of extreme interest, within the mountain fastnesses, can easily be reached by lovers of nature. Both Sinclair Hot Springs, a famous resort about 11 miles north of Athalmer, and Fairmont Hot Springs, already mentioned, are convenient for those who want to test their curative properties.