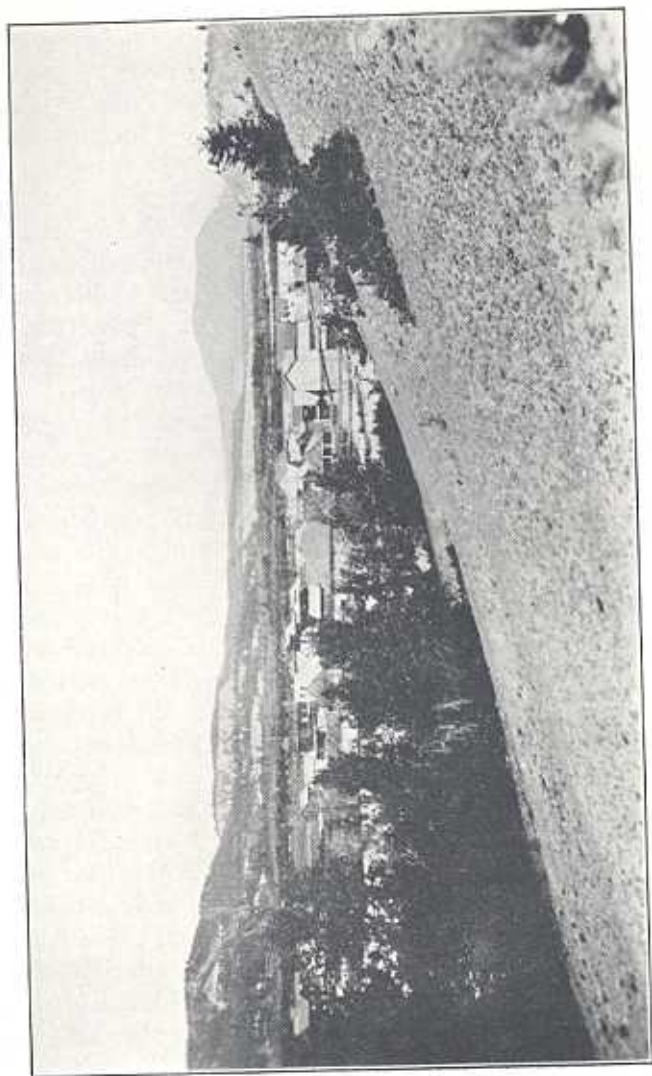


CHAPTER VIII

FROM ATHALMER TO MOBERLY

Athalmer, as has been stated, is at the outlet of Windermere Lake, and it is here that the Columbia becomes a real river. At this point it is against the hillside of the Rockies, has a width of about 200 feet, and a current of about three miles an hour.

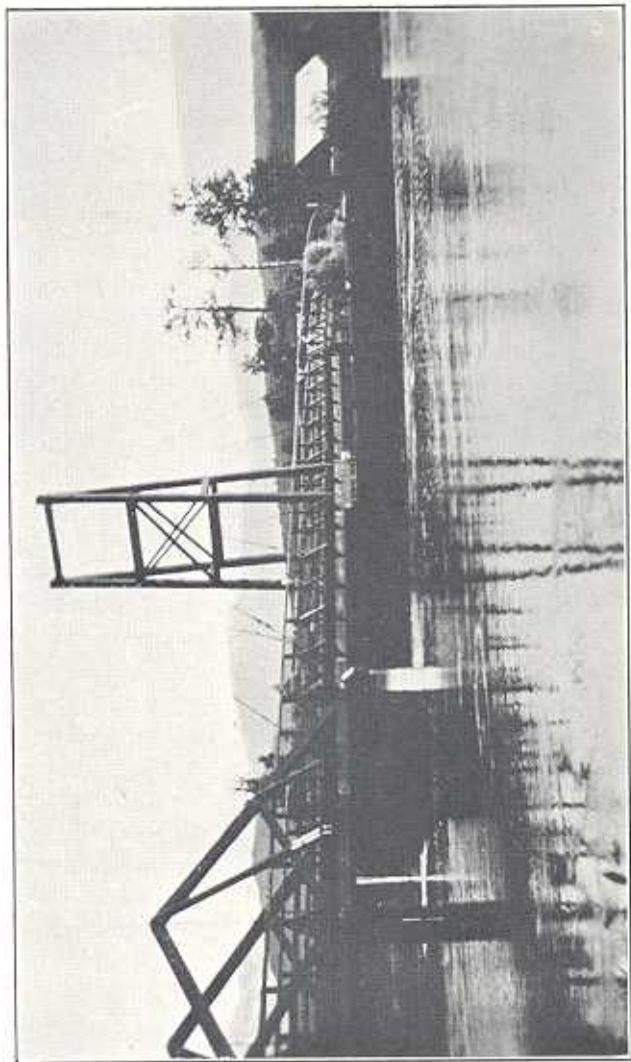
Bidding good-bye to Mr. Hamilton, and many of the townsfolk who had assembled, I pushed the COLUMBIA off into the current, rowed down stream, and under the highway bridge just below the townsite. I found the River to be placid; much of the current was slack, and in no place exceeded three miles an hour, and then only below the bends which backed up the water above. It pursued an extremely winding course back and forth across the flat of the valley from one to four miles wide. Everywhere, on both sides, it was paralleled by lagoons; resembling more than any other river I ever saw—except that it was smaller and had less current—the lower Mississippi in Missouri and Arkansas. Its shores are lined with willows, alders, cottonwoods, and an occasional pine except where it impinges against the mountain sides, and there the pines and firs grow. In one place it ran southward instead of northward, and to get an idea of its crookedness all that needs to be known is, that while it is but 73.7 miles by the railway from Athalmer to Golden, by the River it is 90 miles. As the weather



ATHOLMER, LOOKING NORTH

had become warm, and the glaciers were melting, or "working," it was at a high stage, the banks being nowhere over two feet above its surface, and many of them flooded. The water was daily getting muddier, due to the flow from the glaciers, which always discharge muddy water when active. I had left Athalmer at noon and in a little over a mile reached Toby Creek, near which Thompson had established his permanent Kootanae House, and about a mile and a half farther down passed the mouth of Horse Thief Creek, heading in the Selkirks at the Lake of the Hanging Glaciers. That afternoon I made about 15 miles and camped in the willows on the left bank of the River.

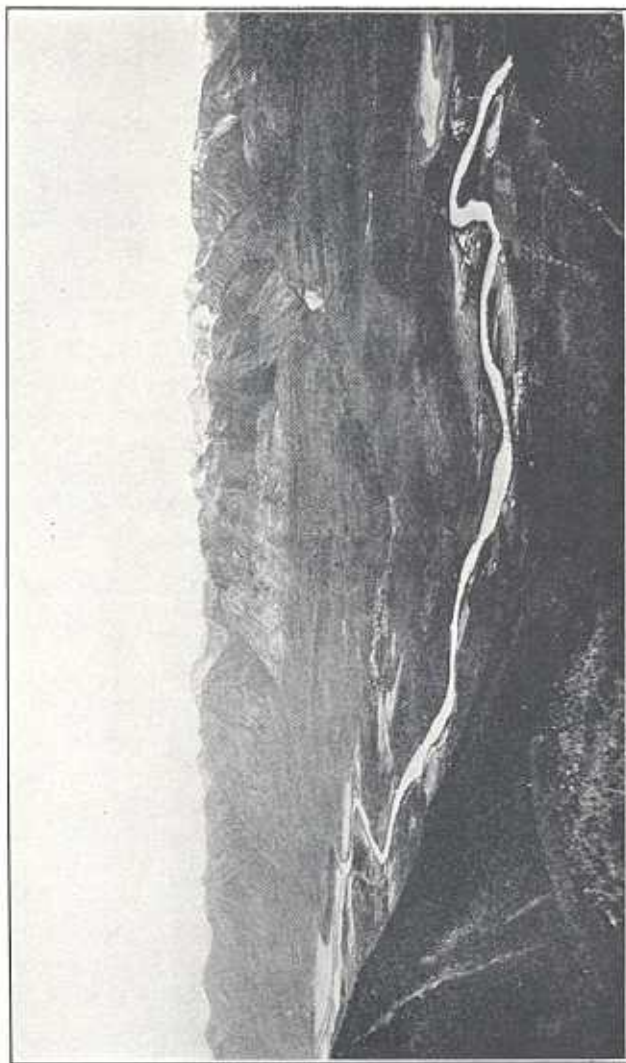
The next day there was little difference in the appearance of the River and the bottom land but the high benches noticed above had disappeared—they had terminated five miles below Athalmer on the Selkirk side and twenty-five miles below the same place on the Rocky Mountain side—and were succeeded by evergreen timbered mountain slopes reaching to the bottom lands. Late in the afternoon I passed the mouth of Spillimacheen River, a large stream flowing into the Columbia from the north-west. Just above its mouth a highway bridge crosses the Columbia; and on the Kootenay Central Railway, which had crossed to the right hand side of the River just below Athalmer, and not far above the mouth of the Spillimacheen is a settlement called *Galena*, which happens to be the name of the town in Illinois in which I was born. I camped that night on the right side of the River about two miles below the Spillimacheen.



BRIDGE ACROSS THE COLUMBIA AT SPILLAMACHEN

The next day the River and valley appeared about the same, except that evidences of logging and sawmill activities soon became manifest. At Parsons I came to a log boom, blocking the River, and I had to get out on the logs, submerge them and then drag the COLUMBIA across, soon reaching another boom, completely blocking the River, and the logs too large to be crossed over. The bottom land was flooded here and I cut a way through the willows into a lagoon which carried me into the channel below the boom. Later, I reached the first sawmill, a small one at Nicholson, on the right hand side of the River. Just below Nicholson was a great log boom, fully two miles long, filled with thousands of logs—enough to make many million feet of lumber. I was able to get by this boom, on the left, and soon the current slackened and the water spread over the bottom for fully a quarter-mile, giving me plenty of passageway by hugging the Selkirk shore.

These log booms extend diagonally from one side of the River, forming a pocket terminating in a pond. They are formed of clusters of from three to five piles driven perpendicularly into the river bottom and bound together at the top with wire ropes. The pile clusters are generally placed about fifty feet apart. Resting on the water, on the inside of the clusters, are floating logs extending, in a single string, the full length of the boom and connected, end to end, by strong iron fastenings. Within the boom, between the floating logs and the shore, the saw logs are confined. The current carries them into the pond below from whence they are drawn up an



THE COLUMBIA RIVER AND SELKIRS BELOW LAKE WINDERMERE

incline and fed to the saws within the mill. Should the logs become jammed at any time in the boom they are untangled by the use of peavies and pike poles.

The boom last reached was the one used by the sawmill of the Columbia River Lumber Company at Golden. I soon came to it, a large mill having a capacity of 350,000 feet, B. M., of lumber per day. Although the River above had been 400 feet wide much of the way, and at the lower end of the boom had expanded to a quarter-mile, at the sawmill it is contracted to about 200 feet, and is spanned by a board walk, resting on the water, and extending diagonally from shore to shore. I was at Golden but did not know it, as there was no evidence of a town—nothing but the sawmill. I had arrived at about 4:30 o'clock in the afternoon of June 21, and had been a little over three days in coming from Athalmer. To get below the board walk it would be necessary to unload, drag the boat across the walk and then re-load. As this would take some time and it was well along in the afternoon I deferred the matter until morning, and went into camp, in the open, on a small flat, at the foot of the hill, directly across from the mill.

Still not realizing that I was at Golden, in the morning I hurriedly threw into the boat what had been unloaded and rowed down to the walk, carried across and proceeded down stream keeping a sharp lookout for the town. The river widened considerably and its current increased rapidly after passing the obstructing board walk, running at least five miles an hour. In a short time I passed the mouth



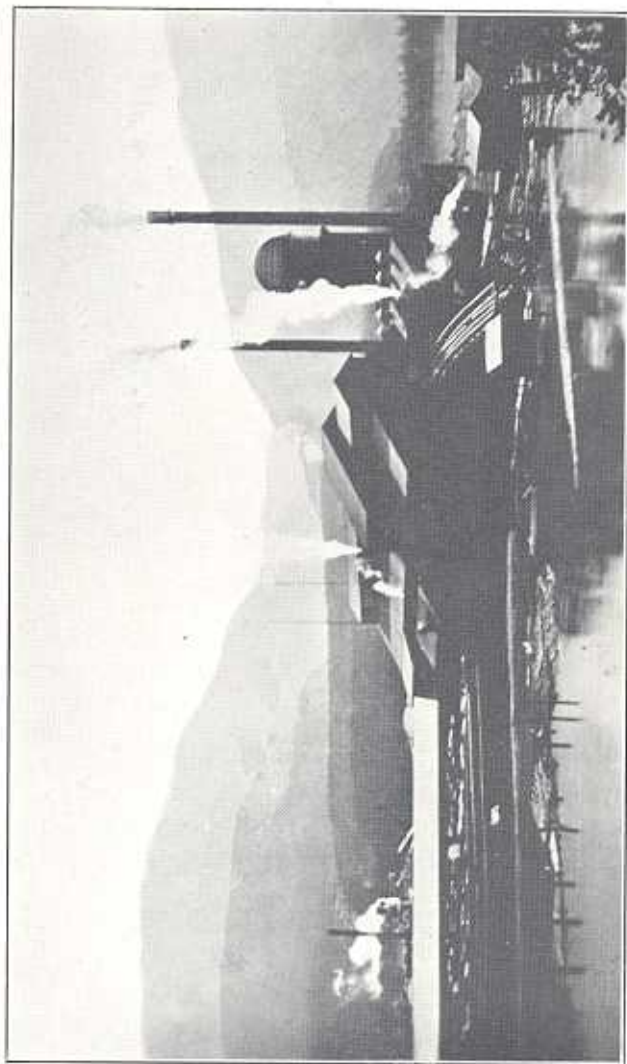
Lag Boom Above Golden

of the Kicking Horse River, on the right, but there were no signs of a town. In about an hour I reached a railway station on the right hand side and landed to find out where I was. The station proved to be Moberly on the Canadian Pacific Railway, and consisted of a sidetrack, a makeshift depot, and two dwellings, one for the section foremen and the other for his Chinese trackmen. The section foreman's wife, Mrs. R. M. Colwell, informed me that Golden was six miles, by the railway, south of Moberly; and it then struck me, forcibly, that I had passed the night at the outskirts of the town.

As I expected mail at Golden, and also wanted to purchase a length of rope, to use in lining down the rapids ahead, a sheet iron stove, and a gold pan with which to prospect for placer gold, the logical thing for me to do in the situation was to go into camp at Moberly. By this time the River had become quite muddy, and as there was a little stream of clear water about 300 feet south of the section house I found at the creek's mouth, just under the hillside, a small patch of level ground barely large enough for the tent, and there established my camp.

The succeeding morning I walked the six miles to Golden by way of the railway track, and found the town located on an extensive flat below the mouth of Kicking Horse Cañon. The Kicking Horse River flows through the town and was a raging torrent when I saw it. The sawmill near which I had encamped is seven-eighths of a mile from the business section of the town, and to the west of it.

Golden is the largest town on the Columbia River east of the Selkirk Range, but has a population

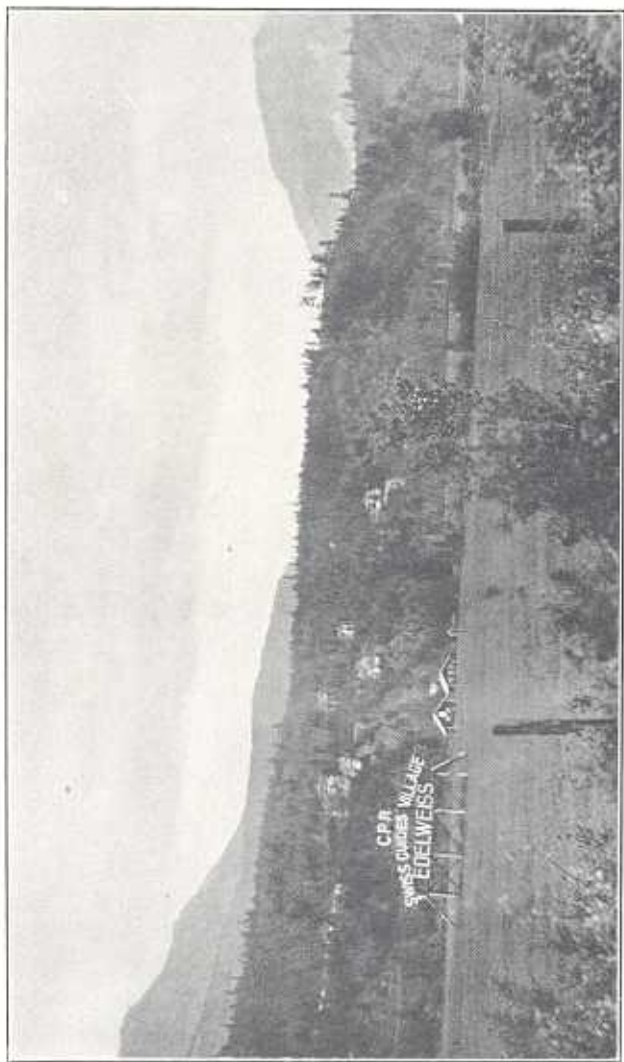


SAWMILL AT GOLDEN, KICKING HORSE CAÑON IN THE DISTANCE

of only 1,500. It is mainly a lumber town and tourist resort, but is the agricultural center of 800,000 acres of land; with the possibilities of becoming a manufacturing center, as there are nearby streams capable of developing many thousand horse-power of hydro-electric energy. It received its name "Golden City" because it was supposed to be in the midst of a rich gold district. In 1864 placer gold was discovered in the creek beds, and there was a stampede to the new-found mining territory. The mines did not prove sufficiently remunerative, the field was soon abandoned, and now one cannot buy even a gold pan at Golden.

I counted five hotels at Golden. There are three large general stores, two banks, a weekly newspaper, and the usual accompaniment of shops, offices, and other places of business common to small towns. There are a number of Government offices located at the north end of the town—the Provincial Government Agent, Provincial Police for the Northern Kootenays, Mining and Water Recorder, Provincial and Dominion Land Agency, and Dominion Customs and Post Office, the latter being in the business district near the railway depot.

At the Board of Public Works I met Mr. G. C. Tassie, District Engineer, who furnished me with much useful information, and several good maps embracing the Columbia River Valley in British Columbia. I also met Mr. W. Wenman, who wrote me the informative and encouraging letter which has already been quoted; and his son Billy, who developed and printed the photographs I had thus far taken.



SWISS GUIDES' VILLAGE NEAR GOLDEN

Golden is the northern terminus of the Kootenay Central Railway (a part of the Canadian Pacific system) which there connects with the main line of the Canadian Pacific Railway, which has come from the east, over the Continental Divide and down the Kicking Horse River, known to the Indians as the "Wapta." At the head of the Kicking Horse are the celebrated spiral railway tunnels.

As the summit is approached from the west the railway line, as originally constructed, had a section of three miles with a maximum gradient of 4.5 per cent, a grade so steep that four 154-ton consolidation locomotives were required to haul a train-load of 710 tons up grade. The only way to reduce the heavy grade was by obtaining additional distance, and this the topography of the country would not permit in the ordinary way. It had to be obtained by some method and that method was by tunneling directly into the mountain sides with curves that formed complete loops, the track at one extremity crossing over the other at the other extremity. Two of these loop tunnels were driven, forming an irregular figure eight. Tunnel No. 1, on the south side of the Kicking Horse, is 2,206 feet long, with a spiral curve having a radius of 537 feet. It is practically under Mount Stephen, the dominating peak of the Rockies in that vicinity. Tunnel No. 2 has the same rate of curvature as the other and is 2,890 feet long. The new alignment obtained by the use of these tunnels gives an increased length of line of 8.2 miles, and a gain in elevation of 93 feet. In the tunnels the steepest gradient is 1.6 per cent, and the maximum on the balance of

the line to the summit is now 2.2 per cent. Two 154-ton consolidation locomotives now haul, upgrade, a trainload of 980 tons weight.

The section of the Rocky Mountains where the Canadian Pacific Railway climbs to the summit is called "Rocky Mountain Park," and is noted for its great ice fields, beautiful lakes and other scenic attractions. The principal tourist resorts are Banff and Field.

I failed to get a camp stove and gold pan at Golden, but purchased 100 feet of good half-inch manila rope for a towline for lining purposes in the rapids. I also failed to receive any letters, and for the latter reason decided to remain over at Moberly until the arrival of the next train on the Kootenay Central, which meant a wait of several days, as the train went over the line but twice each week.

On the night of June 25 there was a severe rain-storm, and the Columbia River rose rapidly. About daylight, as I was encased in the sleeping bag, I was awakened by finding my feet in water which had entered at the low end of the tent and was climbing fast toward the higher ground at my head. Getting up at once I pulled down the tent and erected it anew on the high ground near the section house, and about 50 feet above the River. In another hour the place where my head had been lying was covered with six inches of water. The River was out of its banks, and was fully a half-mile wide. Fresh snow had fallen on the Selkirks during the night, and possibly on the Rockies whose summits were hidden from view from my camp.