

CHAPTER XVI

FROM THE FERRY TO REVELSTOKE

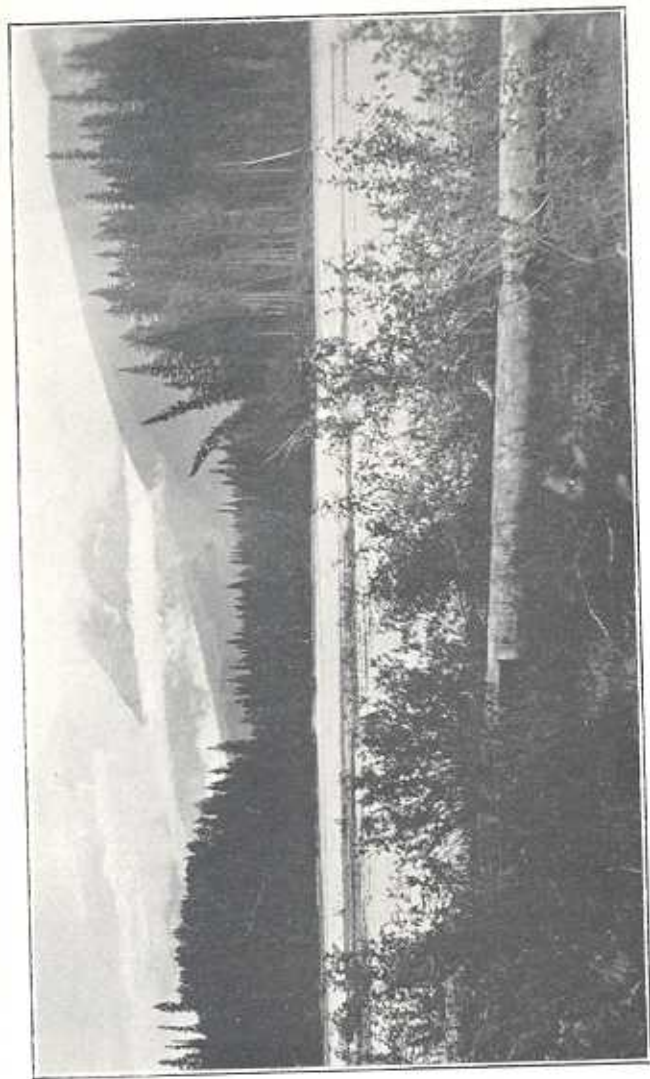
August 19 was a fair day, I was ready to make a new start and expected to reach Raymond Allen's, forty-five miles below the Ferry, before nightfall. Mr. Emond helped me load my boat and then went to the end of the Ferry cable to take my photograph as I rowed by. The last I saw of him was as he stood at the end of the cable, watching my progress, and he soon faded from view.

The Columbia River widens considerably below the Kinbasket Rapids, is 500 or 600 feet wide at the Ferry, and at Wood River, four miles below, is fully a quarter-mile from shore to shore, but contains three islands dividing it into four channels. It is here that three rivers join—Columbia River from the south, Wood River from the east, and Canoe River from the north. They are all placid streams at the junction, which is in a low, wide valley, although each is turbulent farther upstream. Seventy-five miles, in an air line, northwest of the mouth of Wood River, the Canadian Rockies reach their apex at Mount Robson, 13,068 feet high. The drainage on the north side of Mount Robson is into the Arctic Ocean by way of Peace and Mackenzie Rivers. On the southern slope of Mount Robson three rivers have their birth and flow in different directions: the Athabaska, flowing to the east, the Fraser to the west, and Canoe River south,

mingling with the Columbia. Canoe River is about 200 feet wide at its mouth and here is the site of the famous Boat Encampment of David Thompson and the early voyagers. On the same side and a short distance below is Camp Creek. Off the mouth of Camp Creek the Columbia is divided into two channels by an island, the right hand channel is agitated with whitewater, but the left hand channel is tranquil. Immediately below the island the River begins to contract, and in spite of the accession from the two considerable rivers it soon becomes no wider than it was through the Kinbasket Rapids.

It did not take me long after leaving the Ferry to reach the mouth of Wood River, and landing on the nearest island I took a picture of the entrance. This island is at the very head of the Big Bend, and turning shortly to the left I soon reached and avoided the rough water below Camp Creek; and a little farther came to Emond's last cabin, on the left hand shore, and stopped long enough to get some flour that I was told was there. The Gold Range was now on my right and the Selkirks on the left. The Rocky Mountains gradually disappear from view, and are seen no more.

I had no way of determining distances, but it was not long, in the swift current, before I reached an inconsiderable rapid known as Potlatch. This I was able to run by cutting through the beginning of the rough water on the right hand side. In a few miles more I passed the mouth of Bigmouth Creek on the Selkirk side, and below that reached Gordon Creek, on the Gold Range side, where there is a more pretentious rapid, and which I decided needed



MOUTH OF WOOD RIVER

investigation before running. I landed on the right, where there is a considerable bank and climbed to its top where I could look down the whole length of the agitated water. At Gordon Rapids the breakers start near each shore, approach each other as they descend, forming a sort of > and at their lower end are divided into two channels by a small gravel bar. Between the two lines of breakers is a sheet of swift, smooth water, without obstructions. It looked safe, if the smooth sheet were followed, and I lost no time submitting myself to it, keeping in the middle and turning to the right just before reaching the gravel bar.

The next rapid was at Soda Creek, a stream from Gold Range. This was run the same as Potlatch, by cutting through the rough water at the head, on the right.

A radical change in the appearance of the country was now apparent, and from the description Emond had given me I knew it could not be much farther to where Raymond Allen lived. There were frequent gravel beds crossing the River—some high above the water—and evidences of abandoned placer diggings; occasionally a deserted cabin. It was not long before I recognized Allen's location, on the Selkirk side, and landed just below the creek on which he mines. His diggings are on top of a bench fully 400 feet above the River, and below them the steep hillside is covered with smooth, water-washed boulders. There was no perceptible trail across the boulders but I climbed over them to the top of the bench, where there is a trail, and following it, a quarter-mile, came to Allen's cabin.

The door was open but there was no one to greet me except an old black water-spaniel who wagged her tail in welcome.

I had brought my shotgun with me and shot it off twice, as a signal, but got no response. After waiting until almost dark and no one coming, and not being able to find a lamp or candle in the cabin, I returned to my boat, got a candle and something to cook for supper. I had made a light and just started to kindle a fire in the stove, when Mr. Allen appeared in the doorway—a tall, large, rawboned man, with strong features, and kindly blue eyes beaming beneath a shock of thick, gray hair scorning the protection of a hat, and apparently about seventy years of age. He greeted me cordially and read the note Mr. Emond had sent recommending me to his hospitality, and to his assistance in running the dangerous Death Rapids which were but a few miles down the River from where Allen makes his home. Emond himself was accustomed to utilizing Allen's help in the lining of Death Rapids. Allen prepared supper and as there was but one bunk I slept on the floor in the back room.

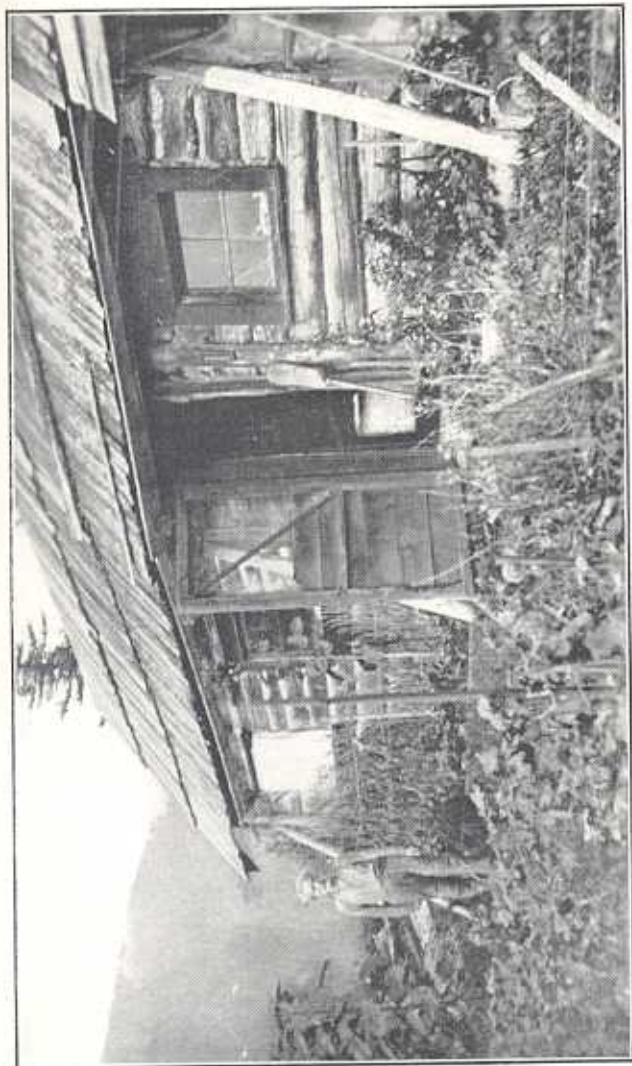
I expected to be on my way in the morning but the weather was again against me. Rain set in and I was housed up for four days.

Raymond Allen lives on a small creek in the Selkirks a mile above a large creek called Goldstream. He has been in the vicinity for twenty-five years—all the time engaged in placer mining. In this section there are several ancient river channels, some of them close to the present surface of the Columbia River, others high above it. These channels

begin at the summit of the Selkirks and extend westerly crossing the Columbia into Gold Range. Gold was discovered in the gravels of the channels in 1865 and a stampede was made to the district. Placer mining was extensively carried on for several years, but proved disappointing, and is now abandoned except for a few prospectors who eke out a precarious livelihood by crude methods. Mr. Allen still has confidence in the district and claims he knows where there are several rich pay-streaks, but that he has not the capital to work them right. As near as I can learn the gold is there but lies under a false bedrock, making mining difficult and costly. No large companies are now operating in the Big Bend gold district.

The site Mr. Allen has chosen for his home is on a bench 350 feet high, overlooking the Columbia on the south. His cabin is of logs, a two-room affair with a long woodshed at one end. A great deal of wood is required to last him through the long winters. The mine is a quarter-mile away to the north; and immediately below the cabin is a terraced vegetable and fruit garden, and he has another on a small flat just above the house. He raises a variety of garden stuff sufficient for his own use, including sugar beets and wheat. From the former he makes sugar, and from the latter grinds flour. For meat he occasionally finds game. His wants are simple, but he lives well on what he has, and he is practically independent of the store-keeper—a little in the way of clothing is all he requires of them. He is a man of education and in-

RAYMOND ALLEN AND HIS CABIN



telligence, and of natural kindness and hospitality. I will always bear for him profound respect.

On the afternoon of August 22 the rain ceased and the sky cleared. Mr. Allen suggested that we go across the River in my boat and inspect the old Smith Creek diggings, where there are a couple of cabins, extensive abandoned excavations, old flumes, pipe lines, and tools.

Going down to the boat, we were just ready to launch her when the dog Queen appeared and immediately jumped aboard, and we took her with us. The main channel of the River here has a very swift current, but along both shores are strong eddies in which the water runs upstream. To get across it was necessary to go up the eddy on our side, cut quickly through the swift water, which carried us down stream as soon as we reached it, and getting into the opposite eddy row quickly to the shore. There was only one suitable place for a landing on the Smith Creek side and the crossing had to be planned to reach it.

After spending an hour, or so, examining the abandoned property, Mr. Allen and I started back to our own shore, in the same manner in which we had come over, but in reverse order. We had forgotten the dog, who had been somewhere in the brush when we left the Smith Creek side. We had almost reached our own landing-place when Allen, who was facing the way we had come, exclaimed, "Why, there is Queen; we must go back after her." But Queen did not wait. We had only gone back a short distance when she dashed into the water, and dog-like, swam straight in our direction and

directly into the swift current. She was carried rapidly down stream and we soon saw that although we might overhaul her in time it would be impossible to get the boat back against the current. We ceased our efforts and Allen stood up in the boat and watched until he could see the dog's black head no longer. He kept repeating over and over, "Poor Queen, poor Queen, she is gone, she is gone." I tried to cheer him by saying that as Queen was a water-spaniel she would probably reach shore safely, but he would not be comforted, and said, "No, she is too old, poor Queen." After she passed from view we hurriedly made a landing, and leaving me to take care of the boat Allen raced up the hillside towards his cabin, evidently intending to go down the shore, through the woods, in an effort to find the dog.

I followed in about ten minutes, but had no sooner reached the cabin, and entered it, when Queen came walking sedately in, and thinking she had just arrived, and would be hungry after her strenuous swim, I gave her something to eat. Believing that Allen was somewhere along the River's bank in search of the dog, and had missed her, to call him back I fired off my gun, called at the top of my voice, rattled tin pans together with a hideous racket, but no Allen appearing, I began to get worried about him. After waiting about an hour it occurred to me to make a search, first going to the placer mine, it having dawned upon me that he was taking advantage of the good weather to do some work. Here I found him busily engaged, as though nothing had happened. I asked him to explain, and his state-

ment was, that after climbing the hillside he was hurrying along the trail, and just before reaching the cabin, Queen came bounding up the hill, through the brush, none the worse for her experience; and like myself, thinking she might be hungry he gave her something to eat, and then went to the mine where he had a little work to do. When I thought of Allen's causeless anxiety about his dog, my own useless worry about him, and the great racket I had made, the whole performance partook of the ludicrous rather than the tragic, as the only result of Queen's adventure was that it netted her an extra meal. Nevertheless, after that Queen was a heroine to me. She was a brave old dog, and a faithful friend and companion to Allen.

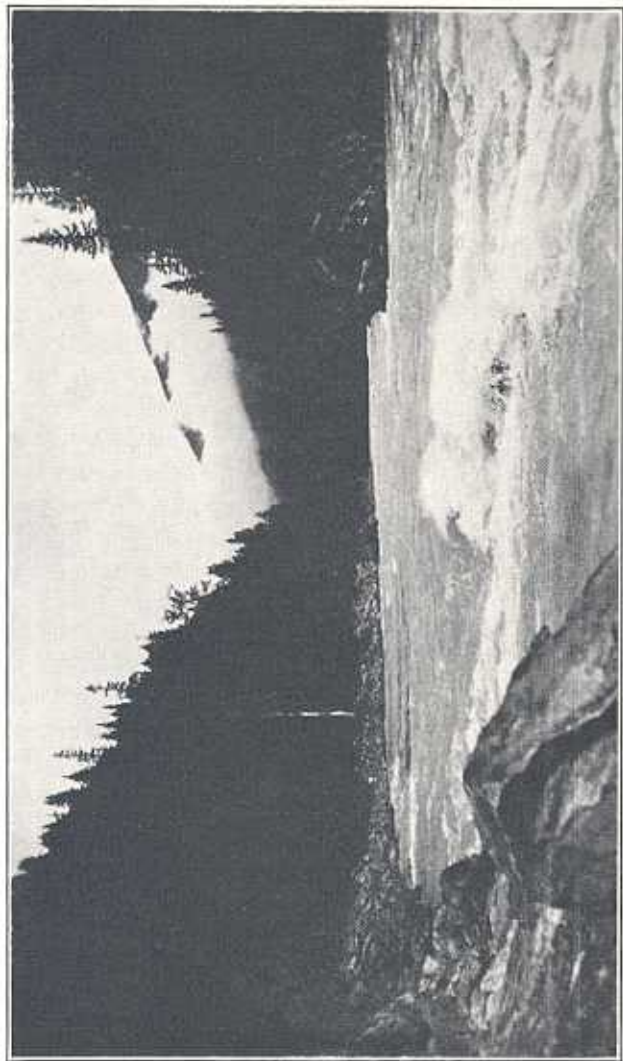
The next day the weather was again unfavorable and it was not until the morning of August 25 that it cleared and my further progress became possible.

Death Rapids, of evil repute, were 13 miles below, and Mr. Allen had agreed to help me line them and Priest Rapids which are almost a continuation of them. Tying Queen in the cabin with a light line so she could break loose without much effort, Mr. Allen and I boarded the COLUMBIA, now for the first time carrying more than one passenger on her downward journey. The first rapid we reached was Twelve Mile. It was easy and did not detain us. Just below are Death Rapids and as we approached their head, Allen, who was rowing, snapped the mended oar square off at the tin sleeve. Becoming somewhat excited, and because the leather strap was holding the rowlock, he gave a great jerk and not only tore the rowlock loose but broke the safety

cord that held it to the gunwale, and it flew out of sight within the boat. There was no time in which to search for the rowlock; the reserve oar was lying at Allen's side, and grabbing that he rushed to the boat's bow, and between us—I with the steering paddle—we easily reached the right hand shore and began lining.

Death Rapids have no counterpart on the Columbia—Ross Cox calls them "The Narrows," and after the deaths of the members of his party they became known as "Dalles des Morts." At their head a jutting rock from the left hand shore contracts the channel to a width of not over a hundred feet, the narrowest place on the whole River below Athalmer except Redgrave Cañon, which is about 140 miles upstream. In the channel the breakers are fully fifteen feet high—the highest on the Columbia. No one but fools attempt to run Death Rapids. The lining has to be done on the right hand side, and the peculiarly bad features along that shore are that in three places the water rushes down short, steep inclines with boiling surges below that will easily swamp a boat or canoe, especially if loaded. Allen and I carefully lined down this shore, he on the towline, I with the pike-pole. Twice we had to unload and carry the luggage—dropping down the empty boat. We had no trouble, but it was slow, cautious, and active work.

Priest Rapids begin not over one hundred yards below Death Rapids. They are short but too rough to run, and cannot be lined on the right hand side because that shore, for a quarter-mile, is smooth, inclined rock, with no possible place to obtain a

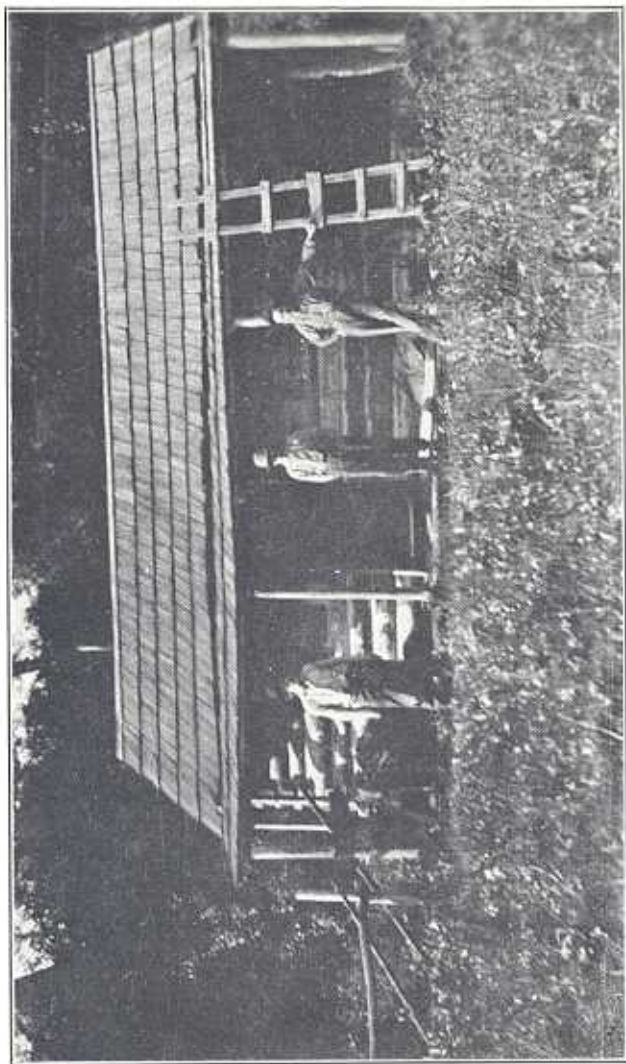


LOOKING UP DEATH RAPIDS, WAVES FIFTEEN FEET HIGH

foothold. The only thing to do is to run quickly across, in the swift current, between the two rapids, land on the left hand side, and then line.

We had found the missing rowlock in the bottom of the boat, under the floor boards, and using the new oar we easily made the crossing, and started lining. In a short distance we came to a low point ending in a large, partly submerged rock, around which the water rushed, forming, on the lower side, a small but veritable maelstrom. It was worse than anything we had lined through in Death Rapids, and I told Allen that I would not trust my boat in it, but we would have to portage. It was but fifty feet across the point, and first carrying the load over, we made rollers from small logs on the beach, and by lifting and dragging we got the COLUMBIA to where we could launch her in safe water below the maelstrom. Here we re-loaded, got aboard, and in a half-hour were at Downie Creek, where there is a Fire Warden's cabin, which we intended to inhabit for the night. The cabin is on the north side of Downie Creek, about one hundred yards from the River, and when we reached it we found it already occupied by Mr. H. A. Morris, the Fire Warden, and his assistant Fred Terry, who made us welcome for the night.

The next morning I was ready to continue my journey alone, as Mr. Allen intended to walk back, on the trail, the sixteen miles to his cabin. Parting from the three men, whom I left standing on the shore, I started for Revelstoke, 45 miles down stream, expecting to reach it before nightfall. The swift current carried me rapidly downward, and



FIRE WARDEN'S CABIN AT DOWNIE CREEK

in about ten miles I reached Eighteen Mile Rapids. They were easy and I ran them without stopping. Seventeen miles of good river followed, and then came two unnamed rapids, somewhat rough but runnable, causing no delay. Within four miles of Revelstoke I came to the Petite Dalles, sometimes called "The Cañon." The place is approached by a long crescent curve to the right where a swift current dashes along the base of a steep, sloping cliff on the left-hand side, having clinging to it a trestle-supported roadway. The curve ends in a large eddy just above a sharp turn to the left. A short rock cliff is on the right below the eddy, and on the left is a low rocky point. The place demanded investigation before running, and I landed at the head of the eddy, got high on the shore, and looked down the rapids. They were rough, with good-sized breakers, but I decided were runnable. It took strong rowing to get out of the embrace of the eddy, but the task was finally accomplished, and sliding, backwards, down the safest water I was tossed about somewhat, without incident. The next, and last, rapids are Steamboat. They were negligible, and I was now through all the rapids of the Big Bend, twenty-nine in number, had had no accident, and had taken aboard no water since the time the COLUMBIA turned completely around in the Kinbasket rapid below Yellow Creek.

Two miles below Steamboat Rapids I entered the eddy, above Revelstoke, where a jutting point on the Gold Range side causes the Columbia River to turn back on itself with an angle of 180 degrees to the left, without intervening land between. It is

at this point that the Canadian Pacific Railway makes its second crossing of the Columbia from the high bench on the Selkirk side, and just below is the highway bridge. After Steamboat Rapids are passed the River is not so closely confined as above, and it expands until at Revelstoke it is a thousand feet or more wide. I made the turn at the head of the eddy, passed under the two bridges, and at 4:30 o'clock in the afternoon of August 26, reached Revelstoke and pitched my tent on a low, grassy bench at the lower end of the town, and near Warner's sawmill.

The stormy night on Kinbasket Lake, and lining down Kinbasket Rapids were hard on the bottom of the COLUMBIA—the edges of the outer boards were cut to the quick, and a leak had started that made frequent bailing necessary. I concluded to take off the original boards and put on two new outside ones on the bottom; and also to give the boat a fresh coat of paint, as its appearance was somewhat marred. For this purpose the necessary lumber was obtainable at Warner's mill, and mixed paint in an uptown store.

When the boat was built at Canal Flat the side boards, at the bottom, had been made to project a half-inch, instead of being flush with the sides, so as to take the brunt of the rubbing against the rocks along shore in the rapids. This projection was almost entirely cut away, and as I expected to line many more rapids before reaching Astoria, and did not want to replace the bottom boards again I devised a substitute for the original construction. This consisted of a strip for the bottom edge one inch



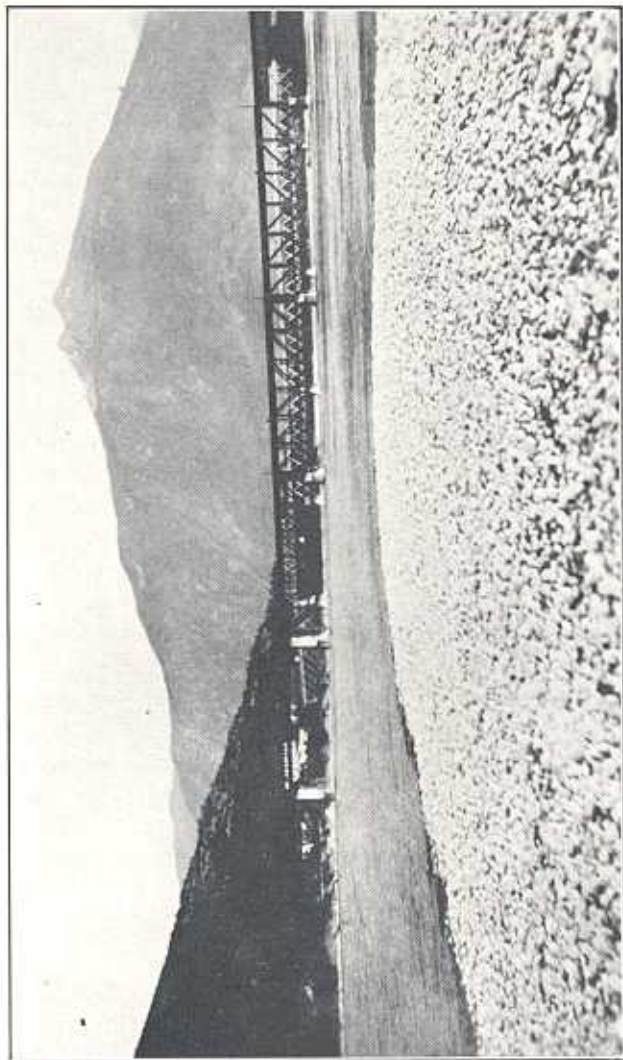
—Photo. by Merigean

A MOONLIGHT SCENE ON THE RIVER

wide and a half-inch thick, with two edges rounded, like moulding. Making the bottom boards come flush with the sides the rounded strips were nailed to the bottom, lapping over the sides a half-inch. The bottom itself was subject to little injury, and should either of the strips become seriously damaged, all that had to be done would be to remove it and replace it with another.

I determined to purchase a sheet iron stove at Revelstoke, but visiting all the hardware stores found there was none small enough for my purpose. Making a drawing of what I wanted I found a good tinsmith, who made me a stove of the size required of heavy, galvanized iron, weighing about twenty-five pounds. He also made me two joints of five-inch stove-pipe. I used the stove constantly thereafter, and got a great deal of comfort out of it, as it not only served for cooking purposes but for heating the tent when the weather, later, got cold and wet. Both the stove and boat were ready for use in a couple of days, but stormy weather again set in, and delayed my departure.

Revelstoke is admirably located on a large, level bench rising about 70 feet above the level of the Columbia River, on the east side; and about a mile north of the Illecilliwaet River, the stream by which the Canadian Pacific Railway again reaches the Columbia Valley after crossing the Selkirk Range. It is the largest town on the Canadian Pacific between Vancouver, on the Pacific Coast, and Calgary, on the prairie, east of the Rocky Mountains. It has a population of 4,350, and is modern in every particular except that it is not large enough yet to



C. P. R AND TRAFFIC BRIDGES AT RIVELSTONE, MT. BIGGIE IN THE BACKGROUND

support a street railway system. When that time comes ample hydro-electric power is available from nearby sources. The town owns its own water, light and power systems, the source being the Illecilliwaet River. Revelstoke is a division point on the Canadian Pacific, and is also connected with Arrowhead, on Upper Arrow Lake, to the south by the Arrowhead and Kootenay Railway. It is the commercial center of a large agricultural and mining district, and the location of the numerous Provincial Government offices. Its elevation above the sea is 1,430 feet, 1,000 feet lower than Beavermouth on the Columbia at the foot of the Selkirks on the east. All the way around the Big Bend the country is wild, with no cultivation except Raymond Allen's little garden, but just above Revelstoke farming begins in earnest and continues, almost unbroken, along the Columbia River to its mouth. As there is ample rainfall, irrigation is not necessary, and forage, vegetables, small fruits, apples, pears, cherries, and plums are dependable crops. Livestock raising, and dairying also are relied on by the farmer. Lumbering is an extensive industry principally south of Revelstoke, and along Upper Arrow Lake. The timber to the north, on the Big Bend is untouched by the lumbermen. Minerals and precious metals are found in every direction. There is placer gold, and a commercial quality of mica on the Big Bend. In other places, both in the Selkirks and Gold Range, gold, silver, copper, lead, zinc, arsenic, and asbestos are found. The climate in the vicinity of Revelstoke is mild and equable, being influenced by the warm currents that come up the Columbia River. The

temperature ranges from a maximum of 89 degrees in July to a minimum of 12 degrees below zero in January. In addition to being a commercial center Revelstoke is a tourist resort. There are many scenic attractions near the town, and but 37.5 miles away are the Alpine attractions at Glacier. Triple-peaked Mt. Begbie stands guardian over the town on the south.

I became acquainted with many of the citizens of Revelstoke, among whom was Mr. Walter Bewes, the Mayor. Mr. Bewes loaned me a copy of a report written by Mr. J. P. Forde, a Canadian engineer who made an examination of the Columbia River, below the Arrow Lakes, for the purpose of determining the feasibility of improving the various rapids for steamboat navigation. The report included a list of all the rapids from Castlegar to the River's mouth, giving their names, character, and distances from the International Boundary. Mr. Forde took photographs of many of the rapids, and of these he sent me several that I am using as illustrations. After my return home I obtained a copy of the report of the United States engineer, Lieutenant T. W. Symonds, which contains a list of rapids almost identical with Forde's. I found Forde's list very useful on my trip, and kept it at my side for frequent reference.