

inclined to turn back for I did not think we would get near of the fire that day. However, the trail made an unexpected turn, and we were at last out of the region of the fire fiend.

The trail seemed now to become more precipitous and overgrown with underbrush. It was some years since I had mountaineered at all, and I was beginning to get horribly tired when they assured me that after we had covered the next half mile the worst of our journey would be over.

That was one of the longest half miles I have ever travelled, but it had an ending, and, sure enough, Alec's statement was correct. We had reached, as it were, the backbone of the mountain, and the trail now followed the dividing ridge, gently ascending.

A great change seemed to have come on our surroundings; we were breathing a purer, fresher air. The trees seemed higher, and were of two kinds only, fir and cedar, while the undergrowth was thinner, with here and there patches of bunch grass taking the place of the dense tangle, which made the forest on the lower ground almost impenetrable.

Tired as we were, the delicious mountain breeze invigorated us, and we pushed on toward our camping ground with renewed strength.

A number of (to us) unknown birds flew from tree top to tree top; blue jays gabbled hysterically at the unwonted invasion of their fastnesses; now and then an enormous hawk or eagle would fly over the trail, casting a dark shadow on us in its passage.

We flushed several blue grouse, which fell easily to the rifle. They would fly a short distance, then settle in a tree awaiting patiently for me to come up with the rifle and transform them into welcome additions to our larder.

The trees now began to be more scattered, until at length we emerged upon open ground. We were now at almost the highest point of the ridge, when Alec commanded a halt. Our camping ground was about a quarter of a mile directly below us, and, as the mountain side was too steep for the cayuse to descend, we had to unload the beast and carry down the pack ourselves. I walked to the edge of the ridge, and, looking over, saw a beautiful black-tall doe with a fawn beside her, staring straight at me. Directly I moved she bounded away into the forest, the little one following her. My friends seemed distressed because I did not shoot her, but I explained to them that I would as soon have shot a prospector as that graceful mother.

The descent to the camping ground was unpleasantly precipitous, but we managed to slide down without much damage save to our clothes. Alec had

an ideal place whereupon to pitch our tent. It was a little level grassy plateau, fringed with blueberry bushes, which were laden with delicious fruit. Hard by a spring of the coldest water I ever tasted gurgled out of the rock bed, its walls, as it descended the mountain side, forming a small creek.

We were not long in rigging up our tent and soon the kettle was hissing over a glorious camp fire, the smell of the resinous pine logs, as they burnt, suggesting the incense-laden air of some European cathedral.

We played whilst (not according to Cavendish) for a while, then turned in early.

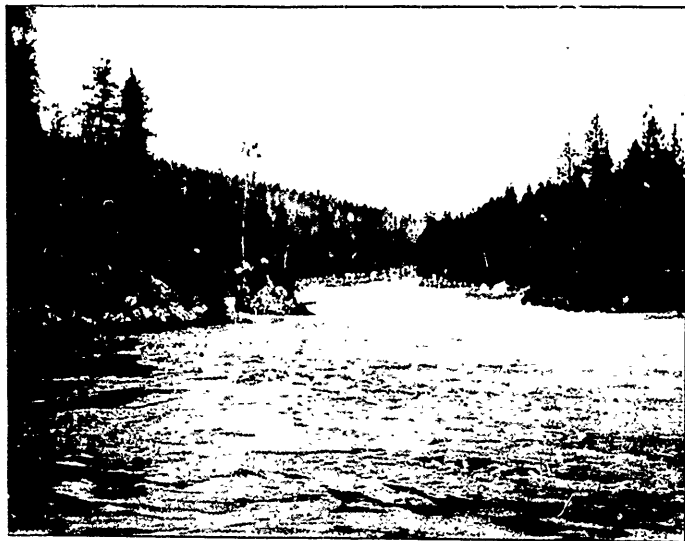
In the middle of the night Buz awoke us with angry growling. Archie (one of our crew) swore that he felt a heavy body rub against the side of the tent.

We found that a large piece of bacon, which we had hung up on a tree bough, had been removed. Grandpapa said that the thief was neither a bear nor a timber wolf, so we took his word for it.

Our first day was devoted to work.

I cannot say that the claim impressed me very much. The ledge was but a small one, and I didn't see any specimens of quartz like to those which Alec had given me. However, Grandpapa assured us that the ledge would widen as we got down deeper, so we still remained hopeful. My time was pretty well taken up with fetching water and cooking during that day and the next, though I managed to shoot a few grouse in between whiles.

The ledge widened out after the first day's work. On the second day it dis-



Kootenay River.

Our fourth man -- an old prospector named George, but erroneously called grandpapa by us said it was a bear. I snatched up my rifle and ran out. Something crashed through the bushes, but I could not see what it was, and my bare feet prevented any attempt at pursuit. We had barely got to sleep again when we were aroused in a similar manner. Buz was on the alert this time, ran out and managed to stop our visitor, which turned out to be a large porcupine.

I had great difficulty in driving the dog off him; as it was he managed to get a few spines from the animal wedged in his face.

We passed the rest of the night without interruption, but in the morning

appeared entirely. Grandpapa explained that if we persevered we would strike it again wider and richer than ever. It turned out eventually that he was right, but I was sick of the game after two days, and would willingly have sold my interest for a caribou.

On the third day I made up my mind to take a holiday, so started off early in the morning with my rifle, attended by the faithful Buz. I scrambled up the steep mountain side to the ridge, for Alec had told me of a small lake on the other side of the mountain where caribou had been seen by him and other prospectors. For about two hours I wandered through the forest seeing nothing but an occasional grouse. The sun began to beat down