

take next morning's trail to the end of Lake Louise, and go up that white stairway of the gods, Victoria Glacier, to the Alpine hut on Abbott Pass. For if you've never climbed above the timberline before, above the snowline, up into the thin clear air where all the little streams freeze tight at night, and your coffee's made with melted snow, and you get six three-point blankets to keep warm—undoubtedly your destiny calls for the experience.

After you've had your dinner that night and the guides sit down in the lamplight, turn up your coat collar, take your blankets and go out to the one level thing that isn't snow—the bit of grey rockslide as cold as cold hell.

On one side of you the smooth immensity of the white Pass curves like a gigantic back, down, down into the dim gulf from which you climbed. On the other side the world drops off, a thousand feet. Lean over and look down to Lake Oesa, true apple-green jade, lying at the bottom of a grey cup, with a frill of startling ochre-coloured rock around it and a fan of white glacier. An iceberg floats in it. . . . There are three other lakes on different levels between this unearthly thing and Lake O'Hara, where the trees begin.

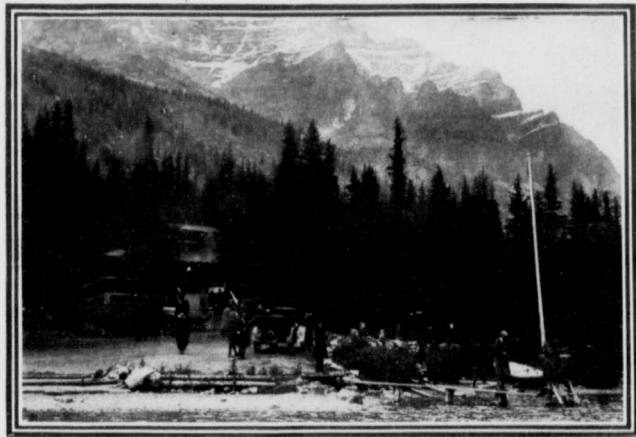
Yet even here in the Pass, you're not at the top of the world; you're in a trench between the giants of the range that still tower above you—Mt. Lefroy on one side and Mt. Victoria on the other, tawny-yellow, blunt-headed, enormous still.

The sun has gone. Strange lacquer red and golden fires fly in the sky. There's a storm over the Selkirks, and a steel-blue line cuts down from nowhere into nowhere. . . .

Cold. . . . Draw the red blankets around you as you sit on the rockslide. You're no bigger than the smallest of all the rocks, and what do you matter? There's a mountain over there whose cyclopean top looks like a walled city, dark, lifeless, left from another age, with the snow creeping up to cover it as one day it will cover the world. . . .

A star comes out, pure green in the faint pink. And at last the moon, turning those miles of peaks to ebony and silver, turning the tiny light in the house to orange in every window.

Come in. You can't describe it. Your soul needs a roof over it.



Moraine Lake Bungalow Camp—"On the bench of hills above the lake"