

could be found across the Selkirks became important. If no pass could be found, a détour must be made away to the North by the Big Bend. Passes were known to exist through the other three ranges that rise between the plains and the Pacific. The Rockies proper, the backbone of this continent, are cloven north of the boundary line by half a dozen rivers, along the valley of any one of which a railway could be carried with ease to a summit where another stream is generally found beginning its course down the western slope. Then, the two ranges nearest the Pacific have also open gates wide enough for a railway. But between the Gold Mountains and the Rockies rose the Selkirks, apparently without a break. When asked about a pass here, the Indians shook their heads; so did the engineers, Mr. Walter Moberly excepted. He knew something about the Selkirks; but though he pointed out the way, to another fell the honor of solving the problem.

Moberly had discovered a first-rate pass in 1865 through the Gold Mountains, greatly to the satisfaction of himself and all British Columbia. Gold had been found by enterprising prospectors at the Big Bend, and the provincial government, anxious to have a trail cut from the navigable waters in the heart of the colony to the new Eldorado, sent Moberly, then assistant surveyor-general, to explore. One day, not far from Shuswap Lake, among tangled mountains choked with dense underbrush and fallen timber, valleys radiating to every point of the compass, but leading nowhere, he saw an eagle flying to the east up one of the valleys. Accepting the omen, he followed and discovered the pass which he called after the eagle, though it might more fitly be called by his own name. Previous to this the Gold range had been supposed to be "an unbroken and impassable wall of mountains," but, thanks to Moberly, a wagon-road could now be made from the settled part of the province to the Columbia, to be followed—he was convinced—by a railway that would in due time extend to the fertile plains of the North-west. If a pass could only be found across the Selkirks, he felt that his work would be completed. He sent one and then another of his staff to explore, but their reports were discouraging. His Indians knew nothing, except that they could not take their canoes that way. When they wished to get to the other side of the range, they descended the Columbia, and then crossed over to its head-waters by the Kootenay River. To them time was no object. Indians will go a hundred miles in a canoe, or ride across a prairie for the same distance, rather than cut through a mile of brush. In a forest they will walk for a hundred yards round a fallen tree, and others will continue

for years to follow the trail, rather than be at the trouble of cutting through the obstruction. Moberly did not despair. He saw a fracture in the range, almost corresponding to the fracture of the Eagle Pass in the Gold range. Crossing the Columbia, though it was late in the season, and entering the mouth of this fracture, he forced his way up the banks of a stream called the Ille-Cille-Waet, chocolate-colored from the grains of slate it holds in solution. Twenty or thirty miles from its mouth the Ille-Cille-Waet forked. Trying the north fork, it led him into the slate range, intersected by innumerable veins of promising-looking quartz that prospectors have yet to test, but to nothing like a pass. His Indians then struck. He used every means to induce them to go with him up the east fork, but in vain. The snow had begun to fall on the mountains, and they said that they would be caught and would never get out again. Reluctantly Moberly turned back, and as the colony could afford no more explorations, the Big Bend diggings not turning out as had been anticipated, he had to content himself with putting on record that the easterly fork of the Ille-Cille-Waet should be examined before a route for a transcontinental railway was finally determined on.

Thus it happened that up to 1881 no man had crossed the virgin range. It was covered with heavy timber almost up to the snow-line. Without let or hindrance herds of noble caribou trotted along ancestral trails to their feeding-grounds or to water. Bears—black, brown, cinnamon, and grizzly—found in sheltered valleys exhaustless supplies of the berries on which they grow fat. From the opposite flanks of the range, east and west, short swollen streams rush down to join the Columbia, their sands often indicating gold; while on the south, where the drainage flows into the Kootenay Lake and River, which also feed the Columbia, rich mines of argentiferous galena are now being worked. But no one knew of a pass.

In February, 1881, the Syndicate appointed Major A. B. Rogers, C. E., engineer of the Mountain Division of the Canada Pacific Railway. He seemed about as unlikely a man for the work of ascertaining whether the Selkirks problem was soluble as could have been chosen. He knew little or nothing of mountains; his previous experiences had been in States where there is no counterpart to the characteristic scenery and difficulties of British Columbia. But Major Rogers, like a true descendant of the Pilgrim or Puritan fathers, is a man who goes to the particular wilderness to which he may be appointed, asking no questions. Naturally intense, self-reliant,