

matter in it. Now the line takes its course through a vast prairie, entirely destitute of herbage, as far as the eye can see all around is sand, and the bright metals of the railroad look like a silver streak crossing the barren plain. Gradually ascending, the higher levels of the prairie are reached, and in the distance the first view of the famed Rocky Mountains is obtained, although they are fully a hundred miles away, a long serrated ridge like the back of a huge monster on the plains. We are now in the Province of Alberta, and before entering the Rockies, Calgary is the next place of importance; all the past year there has been a rush to this place, and it is thought to have a great future before it. It has had a temporary check, however, as it was burnt down a few nights after I was there. There is always this danger in these towns, as the houses are entirely constructed of wood, and generally in long rows, so that when once started it is next to impossible to put a fire out. By very steep gradients the summit of the Rocky Mountains is attained, "the Great Divide" as it is sometimes termed, and British Columbia is reached. The scenery is grand beyond all description; in the last fifty miles one has travelled from level plains to a wild Alpine scenery, with snow-covered peaks and interminable forests of pine, cedar, and tamrack. Through the celebrated Kicking Horse Pass the line threads its way, and it almost seems as if nature had devised these passes for the construction of a railroad. The highest level attained at the summit is rather over 5,000 feet, but the mountain peaks are many of them over 10,000 feet above the sea level. The gradients are so steep that there is a system arranged if a train gets out of control, the engineer signals to a switchman, who turns the train into a siding leading to an incline, and so bringing the cars to a standstill; but only last week I read of a train parting in the middle, and one half running back, failed to take the safety switch, and killed the pointsman. In the valley the Columbia River is crossed for the first time, and for some distance its course is followed. It is often supposed that the Rocky Mountains are the only ridge traversing this country, whereas there are four distinct