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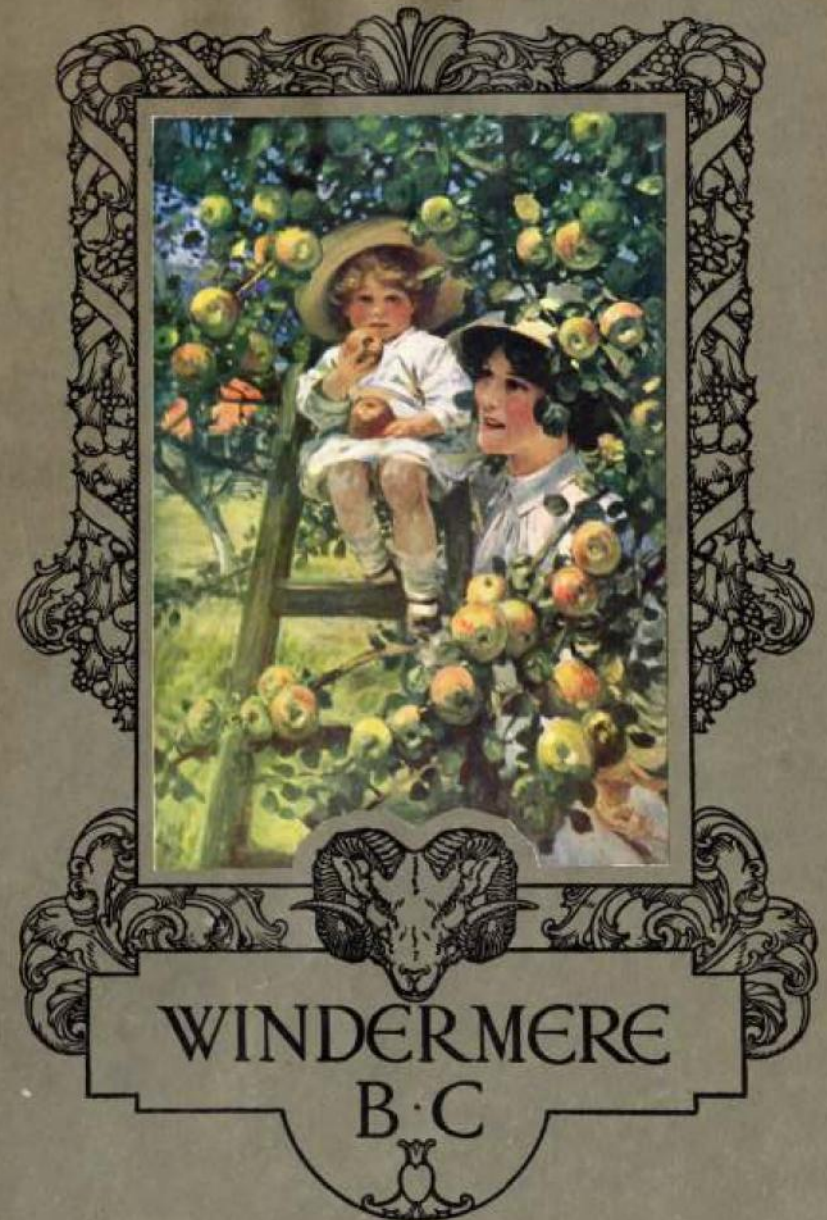
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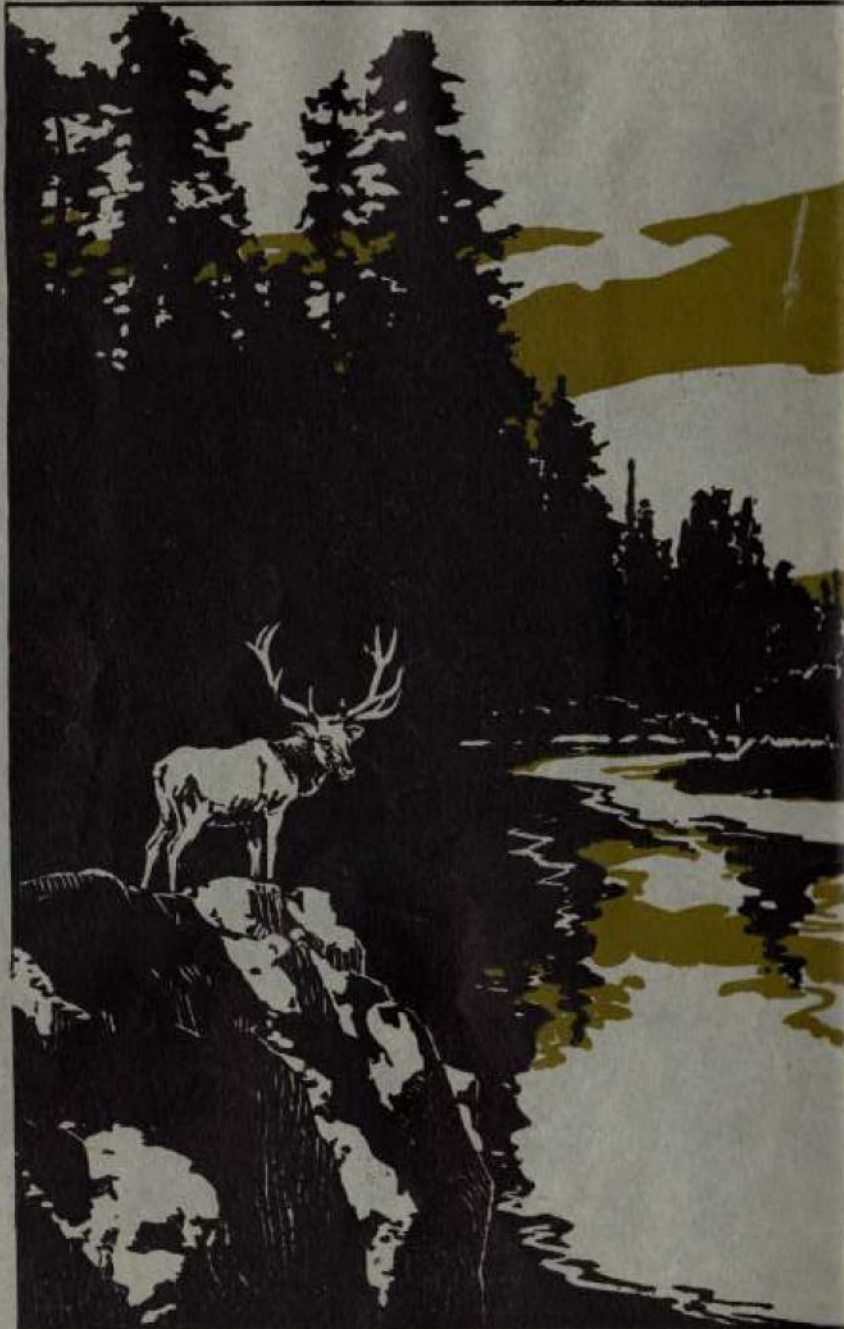
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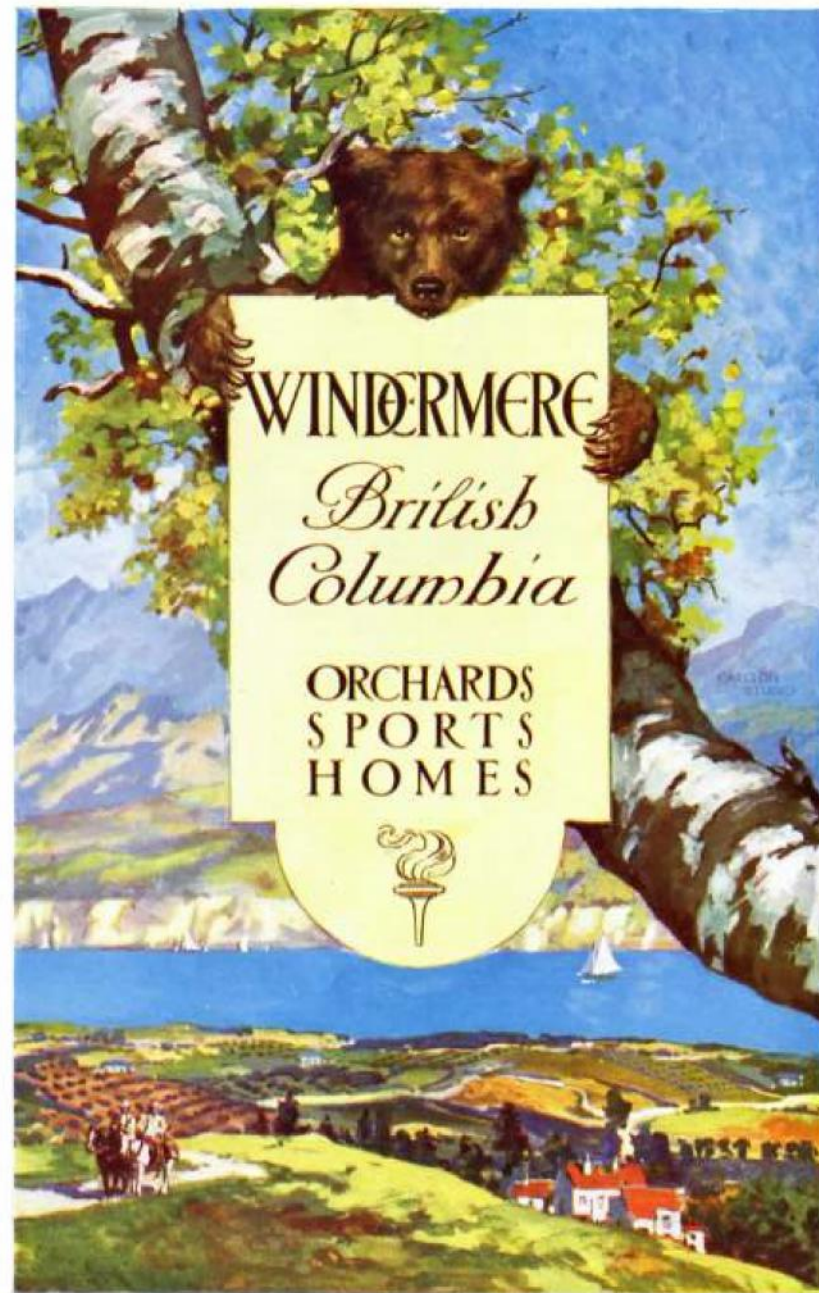
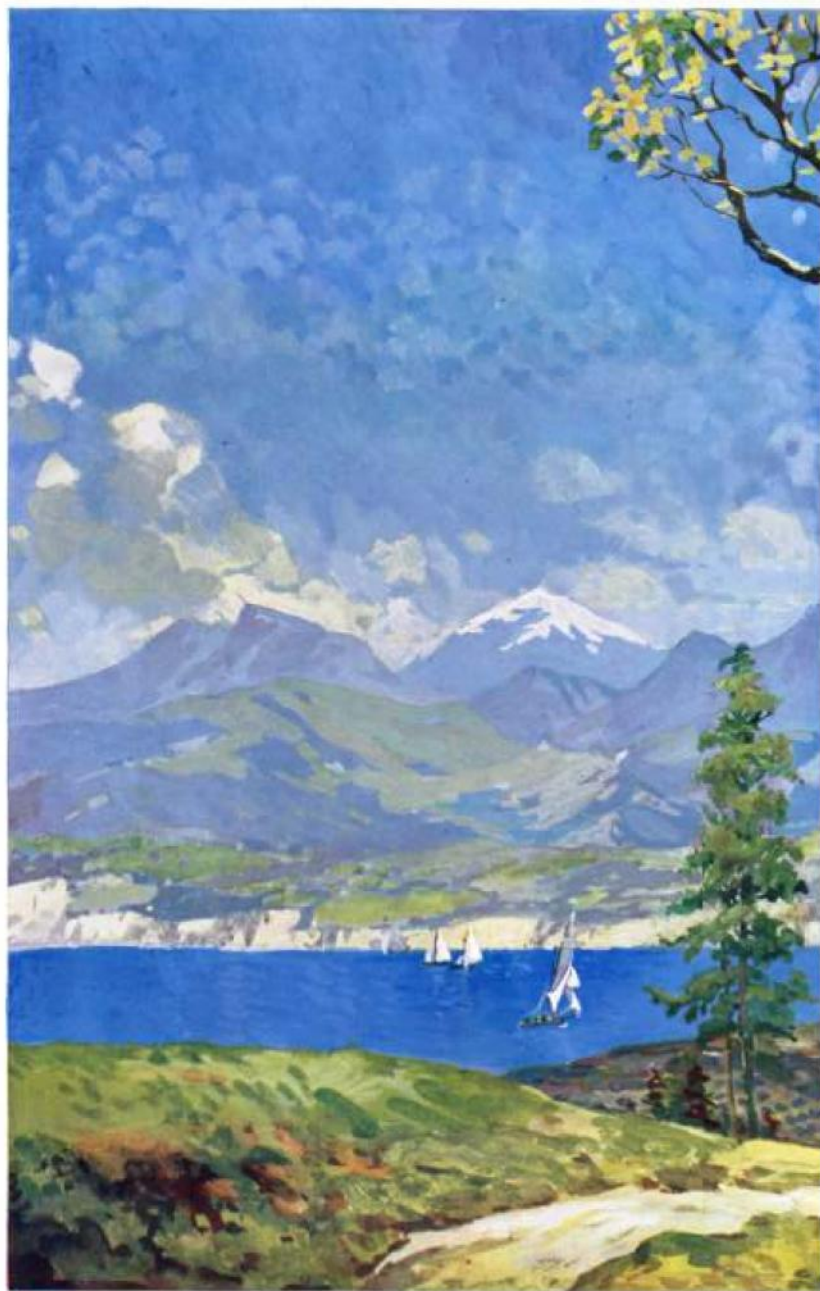


WINDERMERE, BRITISH COLUMBIA



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INVERMERE, BRITISH COLUMBIA

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THE STORY OF THE HAPPY VALLEY.

By R. RANDOLPH BRUCE, B.Sc., C.E., F.R.G.S.

(Reprinted by permission from "The Field.")

IT was way back in 1887 that I first saw the beauties of the Columbia Valley. In '95 a mining boom broke out in what afterwards became the Rossland Camp and the Slocan Camp. In '96 it spread north and south, west and east, as far as Fort Steele. The country was flooded with prospectors from the United States, and rumours of discoveries of gold and copper and silver mines kept the various mining camps in a state of ferment. In '97 hardy prospectors ventured further afield, and hunted for the precious minerals away up in the Selkirks above the timber line where the rocks are bare, and amongst the great glaciers feeding the many little rivers which go to form the Columbia. Rumours of their discoveries reached the outside world, and, being a mining engineer, I went in with others to have a look round.

In those days it was hard work getting into the country. There were few roads, so everybody travelled by saddle-horse, and took their "grub" and bedding with them on pack-horses. Sometimes we stayed at wayside houses, or stopping-houses as they are called, but more often we camped for the night by one of the many mountain streams, and made our tea and fried our bacon over a fire made from the resinous fir-trees. After supper we would picket one of the horses to ensure the others not wandering far afield, and then proceed to catch a basket of trout for the breakfast next morning.

It was stimulating to see what those prospectors did and how they got along even in the most inaccessible of places. They were a fine lot of rugged, independent fellows, interesting in the extreme, kindly and hospitable, full of wild theories as to how Mother Earth

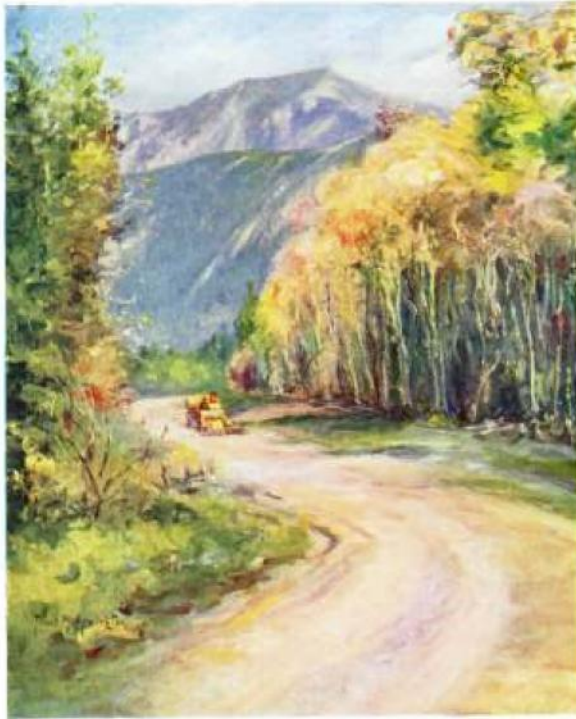
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formed her treasure reserves, and always full of hope that some day they would find a "mine." There are lots of indications of copper, silver, and lead in the hills about the headwaters of the Columbia, and many were the claims recorded. Of those recorded some were sold to speculators, but few were actually worked. Some of us tried our luck, bought claims, opened them up, and came downhill sadder but perhaps wiser men. Some had better luck and found ore in considerable quantities, and a few—a very few—actually developed mines. The ore had to be taken down the hills on the backs of the native ponies to the Columbia River, load it on the little steamer which took it to Golden, and from there sent by the cars of the Canadian Pacific to their smelter at Trail. It was a long and tedious job and an expensive one.

Numbers of the prospectors took up a bit of land away down in the valley, built themselves a cabin by the little creek flowing through their place, and there they would spend the winter and dream of their luck in the spring to come. Some would go back to the hills and trap for marten and bear to buy their "grub-stake" for next year; some of them began to farm their bit of land to raise some feed for the ponies; some of them planted out currant-bushes and raspberry-bushes, and some ventured into apple-trees, so that the first farmer in the valley was the old-time prospector.

By this time the mining craze had gone and passed. Those mines that had opened up had found it difficult to ship on account of the lack of transportation; but the prospector, now a farmer, stayed on, for the valley was beautiful and the land fertile. I also thought it was a most beautiful country and the most peaceful place I had ever been in, and lingered on with the rest. I also had my garden, planted my red currants and black currants and raspberries, and ventured into apple-trees. Rumours of a railway through the valley reached us and raised new hopes for our mines; but it was a long

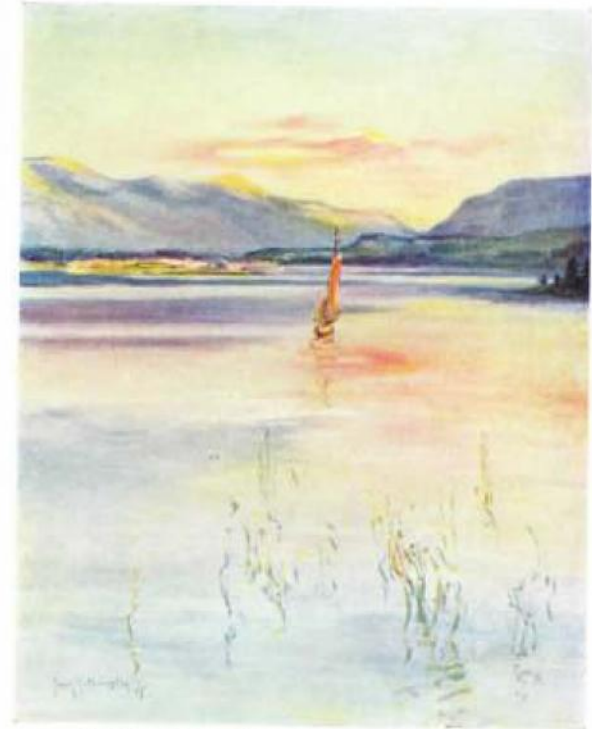
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ON MOTOR ROAD THROUGH THE COLUMBIA VALLEY--GOLDEN TO CRANBROOK, 160 MILES.

time coming, and meanwhile we began to find out that there was just as much wealth in the land in the valley as there was in the mines away on the mountain-tops, so some of the prospectors extended their holdings and gathered considerable bunches of cattle about them.

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LAKE WINDERMERE, LOOKING SOUTH FROM THE NEW TOWN OF INVERMERE, B.C.

Others bred horses and broke them in, and drove them out over the old Indian trails to the prairie market at Calgary.

We felt we were wasting time in the valley, but yet we could not tear ourselves away from it. We tried strawberries, and found them luscious and plentiful. We

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tried hens and turkeys, pigs and sheep, to find a fatter purse and a better table. We gave up buying canned vegetables, and raised our own tomatoes, asparagus, celery, and green peas, and when we were not busy we would go off back into the hills and replenish the larders with deer or bear, blue grouse or partridge, or get a boat and go up the lakes hunting the wild duck and geese amongst the bulrushes at the southern end of Windermere Lake. When the cold weather began to set in in November, and just when we got the first fall of snow, that was when we went back after the deer; and a glorious time we had when we would gather round the camp fire at night after a big day's hunt. Then on the Windermere Lake, after the frost came, we had a beautiful sheet of ice for skating and ice-boating. We found that though the temperature would go down to 20° or 30° below zero, the air was dry, and kept the system tingling with life. We were full of energy and bubbling over with health, and just had to be doing something. Then we would get a fall of a few inches of snow, and the jingle of sleigh-bells would be heard all through the valley. Perhaps a week or two later the great Chinook wind would begin to blow, warm and soft, and would lick up the snow and leave all bare and open again. In the spring we would all be busy in our gardens and fields, and the open, park-like country would be carpeted with wild flowers.

Each year a few strangers would dribble into the valley, invariably to be fascinated and take up a piece of land alongside a little creek. By and by all these little pieces became used up; there was no more creeks to settle on, but still there were thousands of acres of land, beautiful park-like land, but useless without water. Then one of the mining engineers worked out an irrigation system, a system with a large canal that would run along the base of the mountains and shed the water over thousands of acres of bench

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land. That was about six or seven years ago, and that canal is completed and thousands of acres have been divided into farms of about 40 acres each. Little lateral canals have been built, and settlers are now flocking into the valley, for recently the Canadian Pacific took hold of the proposed railway, and with their accustomed energy proceeded at once to build from Golden, on their main line, to Cranbrook, on their Crow's Nest branch, some 180 miles. This year they are laying the steel, and in the spring of the year the old time prospector will ride at least part of the way in a Pullman car instead of on the uncertain back of his cayuse. It will not make him any better a man, and will probably detract from his individuality, but it will enable him in a year from now to send his ore to the smelter by rail and ship his apples to the fruit-hungry people on the prairies.

This district is close to the prairie. It is much the closest to the prairie of any of the valleys of British Columbia, and they cannot grow apples on the prairie yet; at least, not apples like those grown in the Columbia Valley, big and red and luscious. It is so close indeed that strawberries pulled in the afternoon will be on the market in Calgary next morning, and it is a great thing to be close to your market, because you get your fruit there in the finest of condition, and you can get your returns quicker. There is an endless market in the prairie—a market that all the fruit gardens in British Columbia will never be able to overtake, for the great wheat-growing country on the plains is filling up faster than they are planting apple-trees in British Columbia. But we "old timers" do not think it advisable to put all our land into apple-trees. We can raise the very best of horses, with clean limbs and sound feet and lungs. Perhaps it is the limestone that helps the feet, and perhaps it is the fine, dry air that helps the lungs. At any rate, we have all noticed what remarkably sound horses can be raised in there, so we believe in raising

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SCENE OF THE COMING PLAYGROUND OF THE NORTH AMERICAN CONTINENT.

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a few horses and raising a few cattle, for there is money in horses and beef as well as in apples; and then for our horses and our cattle we must have some timothy, clover, and oats, and a bit of wheat for the hens, for to be happy in the valley we want to be independent and raise everything for ourselves. It is cheaper too: we can live better, and have the satisfaction of watching things growing around.

On the irrigated 40-acre farms, ten acres can be planted with fruit trees—which is as much as one family can look after—and the balance cultivated in rotation crops.

It is not so very hot in the summer, for whilst the days are warm the evenings are always cool. The mountains are well clothed with timber, so that there is none of that awful cumulative heat that there is in valleys where the bare rocks deflect the rays and cause everything to shrivel up. Hence the Columbia Valley is fair to look upon, and when the big railway officials took their first trip through it they mapped out all sorts of plans—plans that would turn the warm waters of the beautiful Windermere Lake into the centre of a great, happy, summer playground. They built in imagination a great hotel on a beautiful point that juts out into the lake where the new railway town site of Invermere has just been laid out, and they talked of motor-roads and motor-launches; and although that is only two or three years ago, yet to-day the railway is about half completed, and there are now a dozen motor-cars in the valley, some of them owned by the old-time prospectors themselves. Best of all, the motor-road, clean over the summit of the Rockies from Banff to Windermere, will be under construction in the early part of this spring. Of all the motor-roads in the west there will be nothing that will compare with this for daring and grandeur, and it is going to be made a first-class road too, wide and safe. This will bring

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many pleasure-seekers into the valley, pleasure-seekers who will help to make life cheery and bright, and who will bring, and will leave behind, dollars in the pockets of the thrifty poultry-wife, dairy-woman, and apple-grower.

Not only the railway people, but the Dominion Government have become interested in the valley. They sent their Joshuas to spy out the land, and they are now establishing an experimental farm of some sixty acres, where they will cultivate timothy, clover, alfalfa (or lucerne), and where they will experiment with the different kinds of cherries and other fruits. The "old timer" will now see how to prune and cultivate his orchard scientifically. The new settler will be told what kind of apples to plant and how to plant them, how to spray them and how to take care of them. He will have an object lesson in how land should be irrigated and just how and when to apply the water, and how to plant and grow the winter lucerne, for all this work will be in charge of the Government's highly trained scientific agriculturists. The place that they have selected for this farm is under the irrigation ditch and adjoining the town site of Invermere, close by the lake, and just near the farm a tract of land has been cleared for a polo ground, for a racecourse, and for tennis and other sports, for of late lovers of polo have been drifting into the valley. A club has been formed, which will do much to stimulate the breeding of polo ponies as well as assist in increasing the social life of the country.

Exhibition ground has also been secured, and last year the "old timer" and the new settler joined together and held their first exhibition; it was a wonderfully good exhibition too, of great, big, fine, mealy potatoes, of cabbages, corn, and apples, of oats, hay, and turnips, of currants, and onions, and beetroots—a show that surprised nobody as much as the "old timer" himself. There were flowers there by the basketful—sweet peas,

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AN "OLD-TIMER'S" BUNGALOW AND GARDEN.

earnations, and dahlias. Beadwork and fancywork and needlework could also be seen, for the "old timer" had taken to himself a wife. Outside the building there were buggies with driving horses, and running horses, and big, heavy dray-teams in shining harness, with the ribbons in the hands of the "old timer" in his best black hat, proudly perched in the driver's seat. It was a great day for the valley, and the thing that struck me most was that in all that display there were only a few handfuls of minerals shown, so that a change has come over the valley, and what was a few years ago a mining community has become a prosperous, thrifty, agricultural settlement.

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ORCHARD ON AN OLD-TIME MINER'S RANCHE.

There are several small towns in the valley—Windermere, Invermere, Wilmer, and Athalmer—all with good general stores, blacksmith's shop, and the usual accompaniments of such villages. We are getting on, too, in the valley, for we have a telephons now to Golden. We have telephones connecting all the little towns, and even the "old timer" boldly telephones his orders for his flour and his sugar. And still it is quite a placid, peaceful valley; but this year it will be waking up, for the great big camps of the railway contractors will be scattered along its length.

The valley is just in the making, and now there is all the fun of helping to make it, with new towns springing

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up, new businesses to be gone into, new roads to be constructed, land to be cleared, and homes to be built. Some have taken to burning bricks, others have taken to burning lime, some have gone into building and contracting, and some have established liveries, and the drone of the sawmill disturbs the calm of Invermere. So the new settler coming in has not much difficulty in starting now. He can buy his 40 acres with the water laid on for irrigation all ready for him to start. The price of land is from £3 to £10 an acre for the non-irrigable portions, and from £10 to £30 an acre for the irrigable portions. The new settler can pick up a milch cow or two to start with, probably a Hereford or mixed Ayrshire, at about £10 to £12; he can get a team of light horses suitable for farm work at from £50 to £60, and he can buy a setting of eggs and start off his own poultry-yard. He can get his farming implements locally as he needs them, as well as his supplies and materials for his home. He can sell his beets and his vegetables, his hay and his grain, at far better prices than the "old timer" got for his produce. He will get £4 to £5 a ton for his hay, 1s. 3d. to 1s. 8d. a dozen for his eggs, and 1s. 3d. to 1s. 8d. a pound for his butter, and a dollar a pail for all his gooseberries and small fruits.

In other ways the new settler is much better off than was the "old timer." He will get his mail three or four times a week. He will find companions who have been at Eton; he will find golfers who have played at St. Andrews, and in his hunts he will be joined by men who have shot tigers in India and the rhinoceros in South Africa. When he wants relaxation he can take the old prospectors' trail along one of the many creeks, which will lead him up amongst the glaciers, where he can get his "grizzly" and his black bear on the fresh green slopes in the month of May, or he can go away up to the Duncan after a cariboo, or in the fall go over to the Kootenays and get a

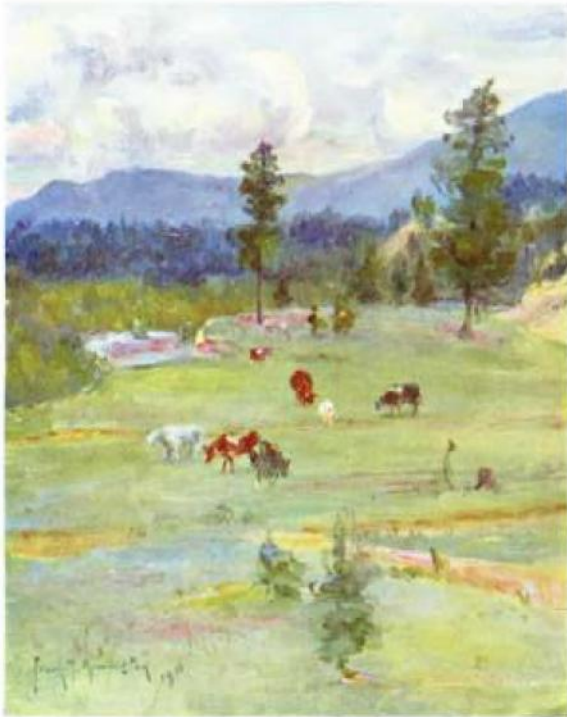
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moose or sheep. If his tastes are more placid, he can go down to the fish lakes or over to the Kootenay and fill his basket with mountain trout; the best time to do this is in the month of September when the creeks are running clear of the mud that oozes from under the great glaciers.

I have often been asked how much a man needs to settle on one of these 40-acre farms. It is very hard to say, because so much depends upon the individual; but an average man who is willing to work himself and help in all the various jobs about a farm can get along very nicely if he has £1,000 capital, and is very careful and "canny" as to how he lets it go. Land can be purchased on the instalment system, payments extending over a period of seven years, so that the settler has not to sink a large proportion of his capital at the outset.

As I said, this valley is the closest to the prairie, and is easily reached from Calgary; but the easiest way to get there is to book straight through to Golden on the main line of the Canadian Pacific Railway. From London to Golden the fare is, I believe, about £31. The little old boat that used to run on the Columbia River has now been replaced by several steamers, which of late, in summer, have been making daily trips south to Windermere. The fare is about £1, but perhaps the Canadian Pacific will be operating part of their new railway by the spring, in which case it will be possible to travel by rail halfway down the valley to the little new railway town of Galena, and it is only a couple of hours' run from there by motor-car to Invermere on the Windermere Lake. At Invermere a new hotel has been built, with excellent rooms and good, plain, homely cooking. There the newcomer can hear all about the valley, and there he can see what the valley produces. He can get a motor-car or he can get a carriage and take a drive round the west side of the lake, away

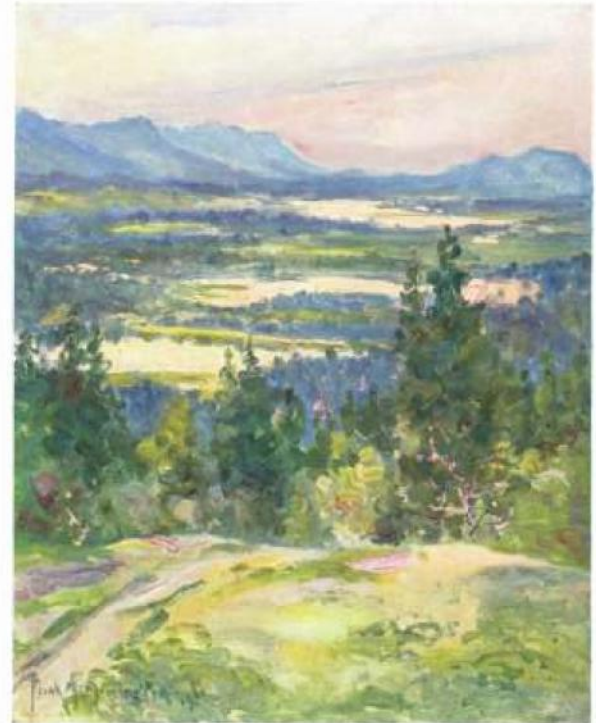
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"CYDER DALE," A NEW SETTLER'S (FORTY-ACRE) SELECTION.

down by Dutch Creek and along the shores of Lake Windermere and the Upper Columbia Lake as far as Canal Flats. On his way back he can go past the Fairmont Hot Springs and have a delightful hot bath in the open air, for the mineral water comes boiling out of

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LOOKING NORTH FROM FAIRMONT HOT SPRINGS.

the earth at a temperature of about 104°. The "old-timer" will relate some great tales about how this same water cured him of the rheumatism which he had contracted in the mines away back in the hills or when he was crawling through the underbrush with his prospecting

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pick in search of the glittering metal. After trying the virtue of the waters for himself, the newcomer can come down and have a glass of milk or an apple at the Fairmont Post Office, and then a beautiful drive back along the east side of Windermere Lake, through the reserve of the picturesque and prosperous Kootenay Indians, through the beautiful little village of Windermere, and so back to his hotel. You will see that there are schools now in all the little towns, and he will see nice little painted churches which have replaced the old log building in which the missionary used to hold forth to the old prospector. Queer services some of them were, too, for I have heard the old prospector break in upon the discourse, expressing his approval of the sentiments the missionary was delivering.

Yes, it is a beautiful valley, with its mountains and its glaciers, its rivers and its lakes, and its beautiful sun-lit glades shortly to be perfumed with the apple and cherry blossom, and may those new to it find in it as much pleasure in the future as this "old-timer" has experienced in the past.

The only direct through route to the Windermere District of British Columbia is by the
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