

The
**BANFF
WINDERMERE**

Highway



DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

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Minister

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Deputy Minister

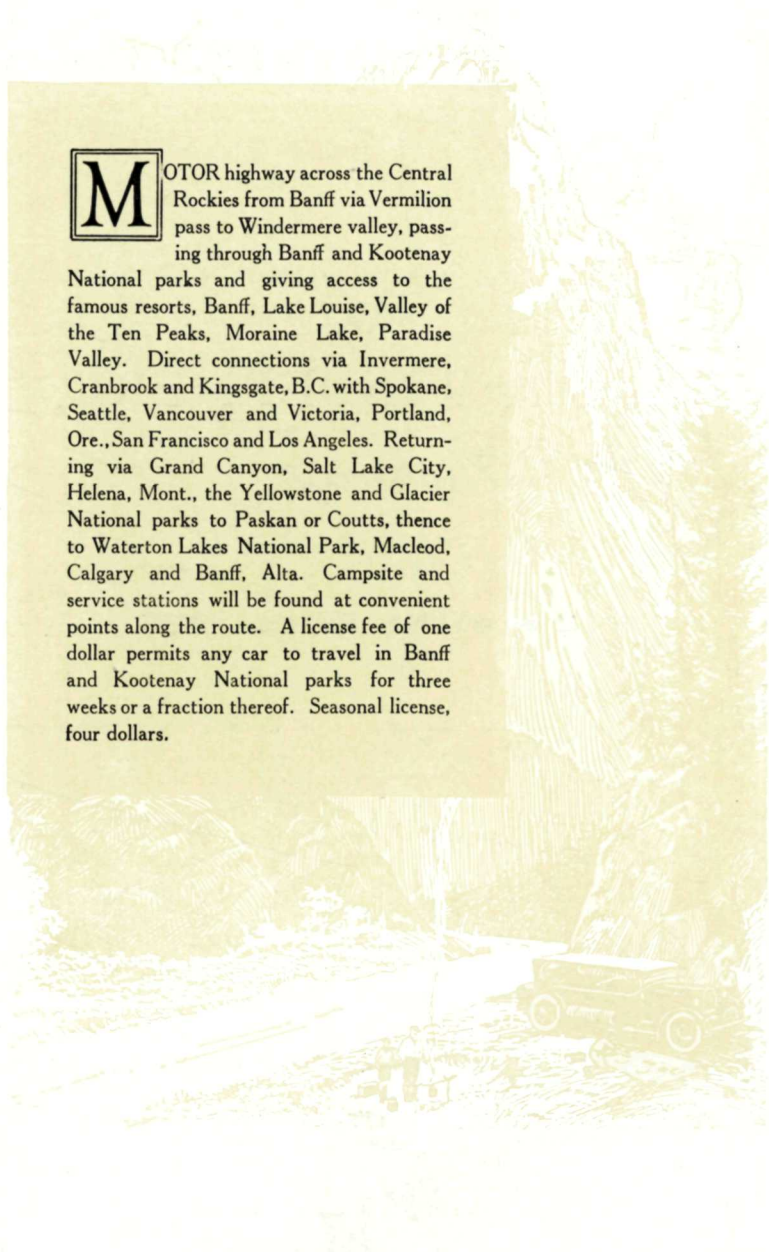
J. B. HARKIN
Commissioner of Canadian National Parks,
OTTAWA

The
BANFF-WINDERMERE
Highway

OPEN JUNE 30th. 1923



MOTOR highway across the Central Rockies from Banff via Vermilion pass to Windermere valley, passing through Banff and Kootenay National parks and giving access to the famous resorts, Banff, Lake Louise, Valley of the Ten Peaks, Moraine Lake, Paradise Valley. Direct connections via Invermere, Cranbrook and Kingsgate, B.C. with Spokane, Seattle, Vancouver and Victoria, Portland, Ore., San Francisco and Los Angeles. Returning via Grand Canyon, Salt Lake City, Helena, Mont., the Yellowstone and Glacier National parks to Paskan or Coutts, thence to Waterton Lakes National Park, Macleod, Calgary and Banff, Alta. Campsite and service stations will be found at convenient points along the route. A license fee of one dollar permits any car to travel in Banff and Kootenay National parks for three weeks or a fraction thereof. Seasonal license, four dollars.



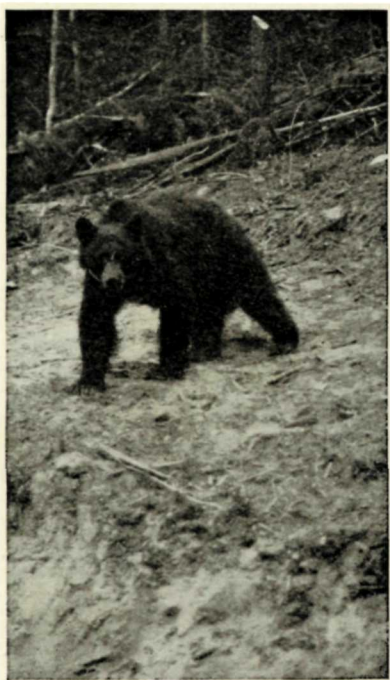
The BANFF-WINDERMERE Highway

Give to me the life I love—
Let what will be o'er me;
Give the face of earth around
And the road before me.

—R. L. Stevenson

THE building of a motor highway across the central Canadian Rockies adds one more thrilling chapter to the romance of modern engineering. It is the record of one more of those victories of the peaceful but daring imagination that should be no less renowned than those of war. Since that rainy November morning of 1885 when Sir Donald Smith, later Lord Strathcona, drove the silver spike which completed the construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway, there has been no event in the history of road construction in Canada of more dramatic significance. The ringing blows of Lord Strathcona's hammer, echoing among the lonely solitudes of the mountains, announced that the Canadian Rockies, so long an impregnable barrier between the East and the West and a terra incognita to all but the most intrepid explorers, had at last surrendered to the imagination, ingenuity and persistent courage of man. After more than forty years of effort a way had at last been found, an artery opened up along which the life of the nation might flow uninterruptedly from coast to coast. The construction, a few years ago, of the Grand Trunk Pacific and the Canadian Northern railways across the Yellowhead pass to the north, opened up two new highways of steel across the mountains, but with the exception of these more or less confined and restricted methods of access to the paradise of the Rockies the only route of travel over the central ranges, until today, has remained the mountain trail, the only means of conveyance the picturesque but somewhat cumbersome pack train. The cutting of the ribbons on the Banff-Windermere highway on June 30, 1923, will mean that a new triumph has been won over the physical obstacles of nature, a magnificent preparation made for the new and fascinating mode of travel which has already revolutionized modern life, and a new open-air and open-sky way provided to the scenic treasures of Western Canada.

A Forecast In every epoch, as Carlyle pointed out, the great event, parent of all others, is the birth of an idea. When Sir James Hector, geologist to the Palliser expedition fitted out by the British Government to discover a possible route for



"They shall dwell securely."

a road across the Canadian Rockies, turned aside from the Bow river and ascended the valley of the little Vermilion to the "wide notch in the mountains" now known as Vermilion pass, and picked his way down the rugged west slope to the Kootenay river, he beheld a vision of the future which to-day is realized in fact. In a meadow near the junction of the two rivers the little cavalcade halted. There were eight horses, three Red River men and an Indian guide, and here, seated in his "little leather wigwam," which he had traded from the Stonies, on the 26th of August, 1858, Hector wrote in his diary a visualization of the road that might one day be built. "Of all the passes traversed by our expedition," he wrote, "the most favourable and inexpensive to render available for wheeled conveyances would be Vermilion pass, as the ascent to the height of land is the most gradual of them all . . . the rise which is

certainly not more than 550 feet from Bow river, might be accomplished very easily in making a road and there is nothing like a narrow valley to limit the choice of ground for its construction."

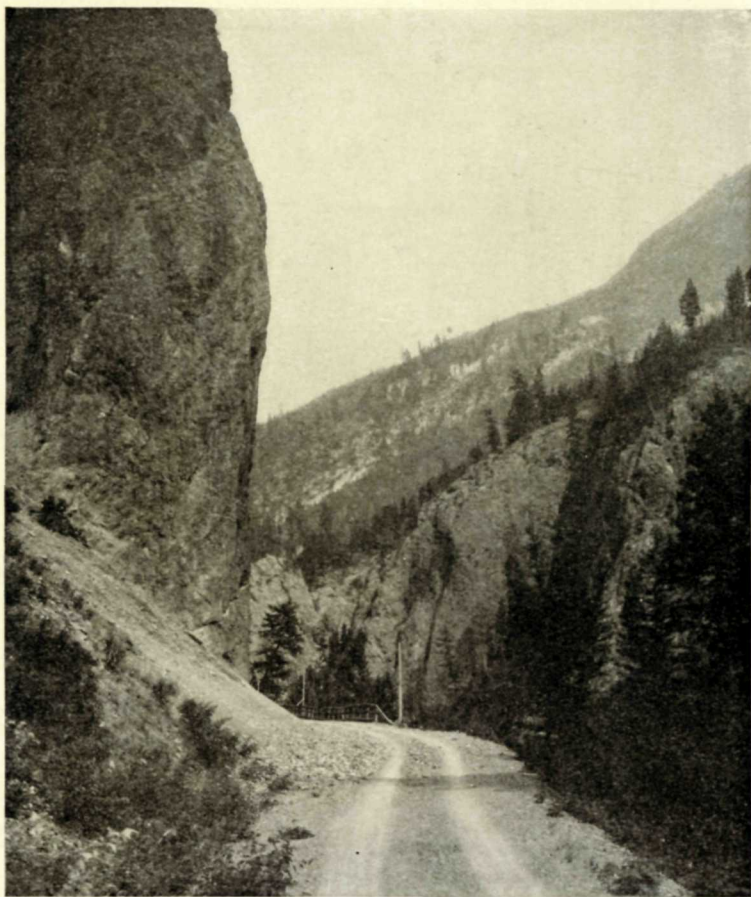
But in his wildest imaginings Hector could not have dreamed that the route he was then traversing would one day be a link in a great circular highway, six thousand miles in length, and that strange, evil smelling vehicles, propelled without horses, would sweep by thousands over the mountain passes and down the valley of the Columbia to the international boundary, thence to the Pacific Coast and Southern California, returning via the Grand Canyon and the geysers of the Yellowstone, in less time than he and Peter Erasmus and "Nimrod," his Indian guide, and the rest, with their little cavalcade of mountain ponies, took in making the journey from the foothills to the mouth of the Kootenay river. Nor indeed could he have foreseen that the whole



Photo: Byron Harmon

Sinclair Canyon—Western End Banff-Windermere Highway

"A mighty cleft within the bosoming hills.
A narrow gateway to the mountain's heart."



The Iron Gates—Nature's entrance to Kootenay National Park, formed by towers of red rock several hundred feet high

of the beautiful region which impressed him so much with its mingled grandeur and loveliness would one day be set aside for the use and enjoyment of the people in great public playgrounds in which the wild life which he found so abundant would be restored to its former numbers and the original landscape preserved in that wildness which, as Thoreau declares, is "the preservation of the world."



Near Sinclair Summit

Photo: W. J. Oliver

*The Coming
of the Motor*

The coming of the motor opened more than one chapter in history. With it came the demand for roads, roads to all the beautiful and interesting places of the earth. One of the most beautiful and interesting regions—the National parks in the Central Rockies—was accessible only by railway. A wall of mountains lay between the Prairies and the Coast. It was inevitable that the dream of a transmontane motor highway



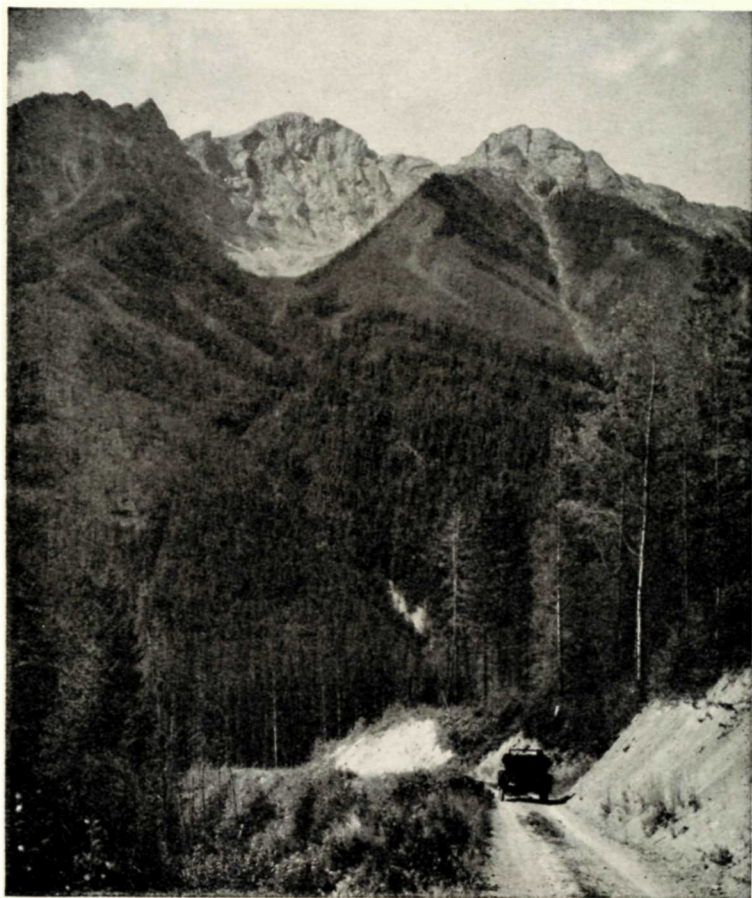
Olive Lake

"Where the grey trout lies asleep"

should begin to stir in the minds of imaginative men. About 1911 the project was first formulated and the matter brought to the attention of the Provincial and Dominion Governments. Preliminary surveys were undertaken and Hector's observations with regard to the feasibility of the Vermilion route were recalled. Engineers of the British Columbia Government reported that this route offered the most favourable way of travel for a main motor highway through the Rocky mountains and that for scenic grandeur the location could not be surpassed.

As a result of conferences between the two provinces and the Dominion Government, it was agreed that the province of Alberta should build the section from Calgary to the eastern boundary of Banff National park, the province of British Columbia the section from the Windermere valley to the Vermilion summit on the western boundary of the park, and that the Dominion should build the section through the National park uniting the other two.

In 1914 the road was open from Calgary to the Great Divide and the Government of British Columbia had constructed about twelve



Top of Sinclair Summit

Every side my glance was bent,
O'er the grandeur and the beauty lavished through the whole ascent.—Browning.

miles on the western section, work being carried on from both ends of the road. Owing to the outbreak of the war the progress of the work in British Columbia was unavoidably interrupted and in 1919, a new agreement was entered into by which the Dominion Government undertook to complete the remaining 53 miles of road by January, 1924. In return the province of British Columbia agreed to convey



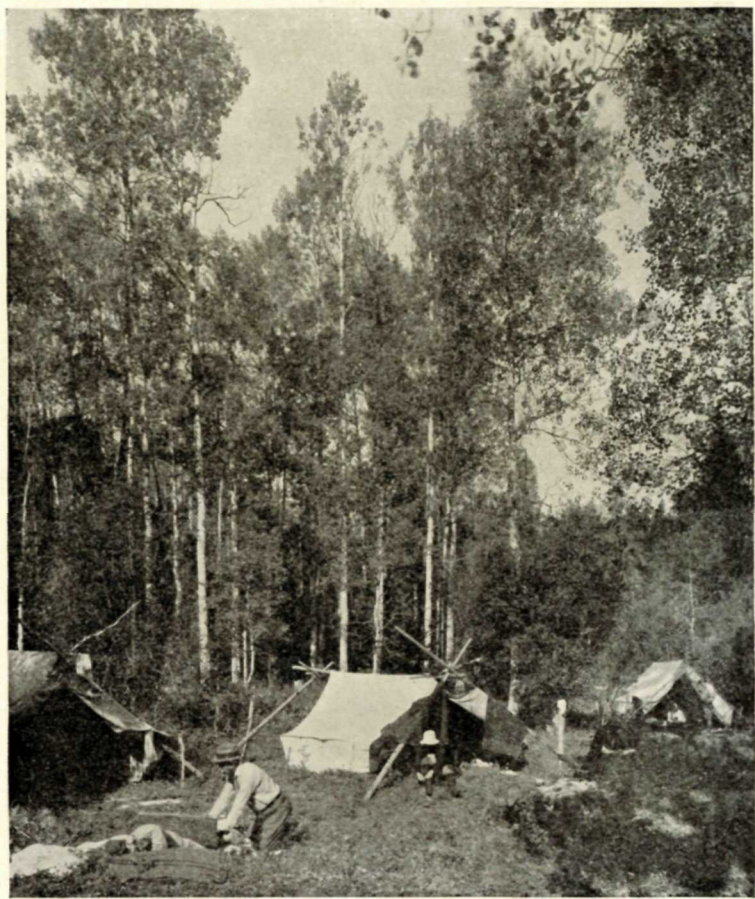
Near McLeod Meadows

Walls of green where the wind and the sunlight stir.

—William Wilfrid Campbell.

to the Dominion an area of approximately 600 square miles traversed by the new highway, for National park purposes, an area now known as Kootenay National park.

The construction of a highway through unsurveyed mountainous country and so far from a base of supplies was attended with many difficulties. Railheads at either end were seventy-three miles distant



A Wayside Camp at McLeod Meadows

and heavy snowfall during the winter months considerably aggravated natural disabilities. In spite of this, however, construction was carried on almost without interruption from the time of commencement and the road was completed by the autumn of 1922 or more than a year before the date fixed upon by the agreement.



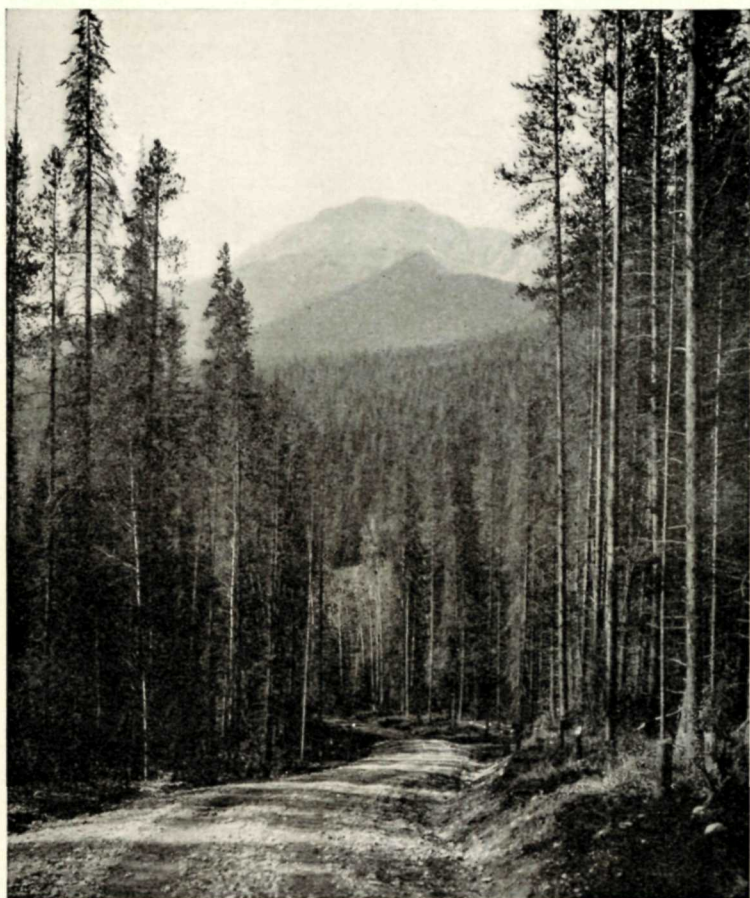
Kootenay River near McLeod Meadows

Where searching through the ferny breaks,
The moose fawns find the springs.

—Duncan Campbell Scott.

*The Final Link
of the Grand
Circle Tour*

The Banff-Windermere road is not only the first motor road across the Central Rockies but also the last link in the great 6,000 mile system of highways known as the "Grand Circle Tour," which furnishes what is probably the most spectacular motor route in the world. For the past two years motorists in both countries have been eagerly waiting the completion of this final arc. Now the circle is complete and motorists from the prairies may travel west from Calgary, Alta., passing through the Banff National park and the magnificent Alpine scenery of the Central Rockies, touching Banff, Lake Louise, the Valley of the Ten Peaks, Moraine lake, Paradise valley, etc., across the Vermilion summit and through Kootenay National park to Invermere, B.C. From this point direct connections can be made via Cranbrook to Spokane, Seattle, Vancouver and Victoria, B.C., Portland, Ore., San Francisco and Los Angeles. Returning the road swings east to the Grand Canyon, thence north via Salt Lake City, Yellow-

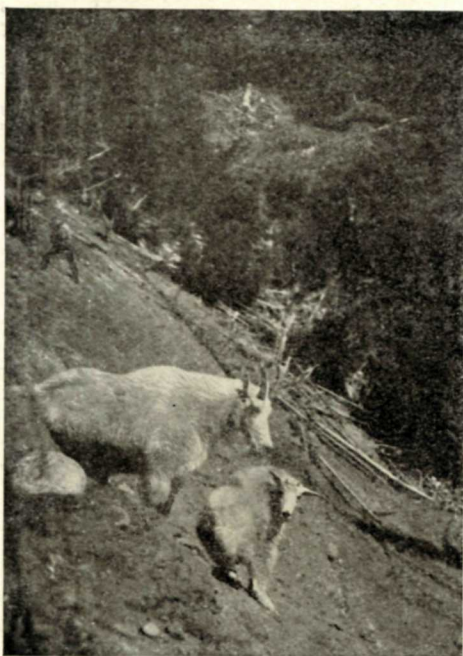


Nearing Kootenay Crossing

Sweet are the shy recesses of the woodland. The ray treads softly there. A film athwart the pathway quivers many-hued against purple shade fragrant with warm pines, deep moss-beds, feathery ferns. The little brown squirrel drops tail, and leaps; the inmost bird is startled to a chance tuneless note. From silence into silence things move.

—Meredith.

stone and Glacier National parks to the international boundary and thence to Macleod and Calgary. From Macleod a diversion of 35 miles gives access to Waterton Lakes National park, the beautiful



"The high mountains are for the wild goats."

reservation in Southern Alberta, noted for its fine scenery and unequalled fishing. The western section of the Grand Circle is known as the "California-Banff Bee Line," the eastern, the "Grand Canyon Route." With their extensions these roads make up a great international park-to-park highway system which touches twelve national parks in the United States and three in Canada.

Within Canadian territory there is also a smaller circle—the noose in this great scenic lariat—which is known as the "Canadian Rockies Circle Tour." This is formed by the Transprovincial Highway over the Crownest pass, which connects with the California-Banff Bee Line at Cranbrook and with the

Grand Canyon Route at Macleod, completing a circle of 600 miles, throughout every mile of which the motorist is either within or in full sight of the snowpeaks.

History of the Road Nearly all roads before they become a highway have had a long history, a history stretching often into the dim and romantic past. The path taken by a primeval animal to a greener pasture ground becomes the road which centuries later carries the traffic of a continent; a trail worn by the feet of countless buffaloes becomes a prairie highway, but the route followed by the new Banff-Windermere highway leads through virgin wilderness where few even of the topographical features bear a name. When the engineers went into the country in 1910 to make the first location for the road, no accurate map existed and no survey had been made. The surveyors had not even points to which to tie their lines. History, indeed, had scarcely touched this section of the



Range near Kootenay Crossing
"Where billowing mountains cast their spells."

mountains. For countless centuries, from the close of the Ice Age, a few uncertain millions of years ago, when the glaciers, released from their long sleep of frozen immobility, began to creep down from the heights, carving beds for themselves in the solid rock as they came—beds that were to be deepened later into lower valleys by the "feet of hurrying rivers"—it is probable that no human voice broke the silence of the Vermilion and Kootenay valleys. Then, some two or three hundred years ago, the Kootenay Indians, fleeing from their hereditary enemies, the Blackfeet, crossed the Rockies, probably by Whiteman or Simpson pass, and pitched their skin or rush lodges along the fertile Columbia valley. Later, amicable relations were established with the Blackfeet and the Vermilion pass probably became a route for the exchange of visits either for friendliness or barter between the Kootenays and the tribes along the Bow. Hector found the remains of an Indian camp at the Vermilion plain. "The Indians come to this place sometimes," he observes, "and we found the remains of a camp and of a large fire which they had used to convert the ochre into the



Vermilion River from Banff Windermere Highway

All heaven and earth are still—though not in sleep
 And breathless, as we grow when feeling most:
 And silent, as we stand in thoughts too deep.
 —Byron.



Rocky Mountain Ram and Ewes along the Motor Highway

red oxide which they take away to trade to the Indians of the low country, and also to the Blackfeet as a pigment, calling it vermilion."

The western end of the route, from the Simpson river to the Columbia, retains the association of two distinguished names, Sir George Simpson and Father de Smet. The former crossed Simpson pass on his famous journey around the world in 1841 and followed the river



The Paintpots or Deposits of Ochre on the Vermilion Plain. Among the Indians red paint was the sacred sign and the red pigment obtained from ochre was used to paint the face in all religious ceremonies.

now known by his name down to the Sinclair. De Smet, coming from his mission among the Kootenays to visit the Indians of the plains, also passed through Sinclair canyon, followed the Kootenay for a short distance and then the route to Whiteman pass. But till the coming of Hector there is no record of any white traveller taking the Vermilion route and since his day it has been followed only by an occasional trapper or a rare hunting party on its way to the rich big game area across the Divide. So far as this section of the Rockies is concerned it may be said that history will begin on June 30 next when the first cars go over the Divide.



Castle Mountain from Banff-Windermere Highway

Along the Way

To one who has not known them it is impossible to describe the delights of the new motor highway. From the eastern wall of the Rockies to the Columbia valley is a little more than 125 miles and every mile is a surprise and an enchantment. It does not matter whether the motorist enter by eastern or western gateway, he is swept at once into an enchanted world. The magnificence of the mountain ranges, the immensity of the scale on which they have been laid out, refuse to be put into words. Something is left out in every picture or photograph. Only the eye can gather the sense of height and vastness, the infinite serenity and majesty, which thrill the beholder on his first glimpse of the Canadian Rockies. The endless succession of ranges billowing off to the distance as far as the eye can see, the countless variety of forms, peak after peak rearing its glorious bulk more than a mile up into the radiant blue, the shifting play of light and shade, the indescribable variation of colour, yea, the very opulence of the sunshine itself, are a joy and a revelation.

"Oh, those mountains, their infinite movement!
 Still moving with you;
 For, ever some new head and breast of them
 Thrusts into view."



"And none shall make them afraid."

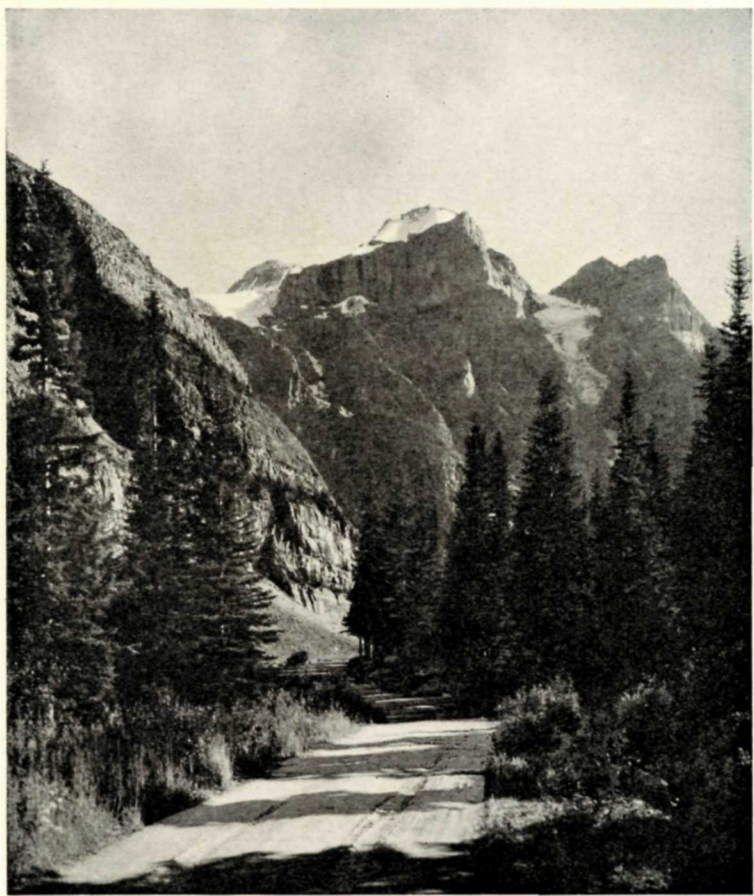
For 120 miles the motorist is never outside of a National park, a fact which reveals itself soon in the abundance and fearlessness of the wild life. Mountain sheep, those shyest of wild creatures, lift their heads to gaze unconcernedly at the intruder and then go back to their quiet feeding. A deer will flash through the thick tangle of the forest or a black bear amble off from a leisurely inspection of the recent site of



Moraine Lake in the Valley of the Ten Peaks



Glaciers draining into Moraine. Lake Castle Lake Louise extension of Banff-Windermere Highway



The Majestic Valley of the Ten Peaks on Castle-Lake Louise Extension from the Banff-Windermere Highway

some wayside camp, but the wild things here are no longer afraid of man. They realize within these boundaries he has laid aside his ancient enmity and they are quick to offer in return the gift of equal friendship. These great sanctuaries, indeed, afford a realization of those happy conditions visioned by H. G. Wells, in the closing and prophetic chapters of his "Outline of History." "It is a strange thing,"

he says, "how little has been done since the Bronze Age in taming, using, befriending and appreciating the animal life about us." The first fruits of a finer civilization, he prophesies, will include "strange and beautiful attempts to befriend these pathetic, kindred, lower creatures we no longer fear as enemies, hate as rivals, or need as slaves." While such "finer conditions" may not yet be universally possible the traveller may rejoice that within the National parks at least the prophecy is already true.



Lake Louise

"Earth's most exquisite disclosure, heaven's own God in evidence."

—Browning.

A Day's Journey From the eastern gate of the park to Banff is 27.5 miles, from Banff to Invermere 104 more, a distance that could no doubt be covered in one long day. But the motorist who rushes through the Rockies is unwise as the tourist who "does the Louvre" in an hour. Your real nature lover, with the holiday spirit in his heart and his eyes open to the wonder of the universe, will refuse to be hurried through a region so rich in opportunities for new and thrilling experience. The great advantage of motor over railway travel is that it permits the traveller to take his time.



The Dining Room at the Chateau, Lake Louise, looks out upon one of the loveliest views in the world

He may start when he will and stop when he please and there will be no time-table to regulate his proceedings. Along the new highway there are countless invitations to linger. It may be only a garden of exquisite mountain wild flowers, the song of a concealed bird or the sudden beauty of some vista which startles to breathless wonder. A near by canyon will say: Come and see what water and time can do in



Johnson Canyon—Between Castle and Banff on the Banff-Windermere Highway

The choric sound of many waters down the long veins of the hills.

—Drinkwater.

the way of natural carving; a crystalline little tarn challenge the lover of sport to try his skill against a gamey mountain trout. To spend a night, too, under canvas, to watch the blue shadows gather in the valleys and the light fade from the great peaks, to sit about the camp fire with a little of the peace and serenity of the mountain world in the heart while dim immensities crouch about in the darkness like a caravan

of slumbering dromedaries; and then to fall into a joyous sleep which is as good as food—these are adventures no motorist can afford to miss. To wake, too, and see the magical transformation of the dawn, the cold grey solitudes turning to airiest rose or golden thistledown as the fire leaps from peak to peak; to breathe great draughts of an air that fairly snaps with ozone and afterwards to fall to on a gargantuan breakfast that would stagger a city dweller—this is to know what a gloriously good thing it is just to be alive.

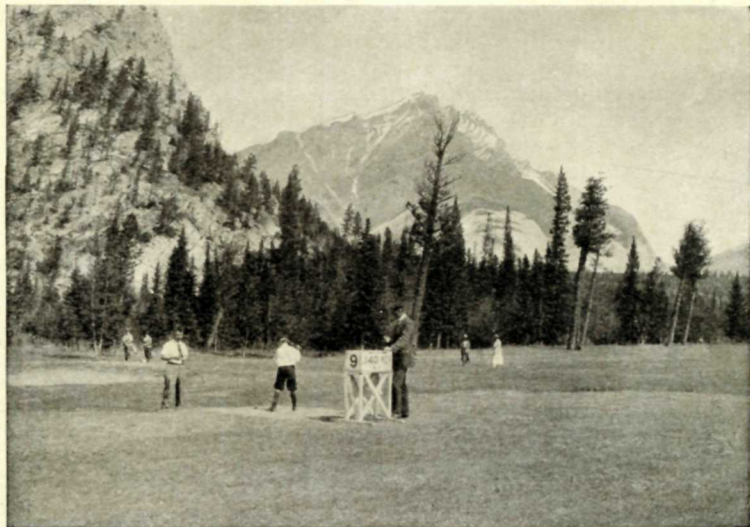


Banff—from Tunnel Mountain

In the shade of your murmuring pine trees,
Is healing and peace and rest.
The long dim trails on the mountain side
Call men of the East and West.

—May Stanley.

Whether the road be taken from the east or west matters little, there is no lack of impressiveness throughout. The western terminus is about eleven miles above Invermere in the Columbia valley, where there is a comfortable bungalow hotel. From the junction of the Columbia valley road and the new highway it is about four-fifths of a mile to the gateway of the Kootenay National park. But, although



Government Golf Links, Banff, Banff National Park



Wild Deer near Banff

this is the official entrance, nature has carved her own portal and one in keeping with the proportions of the picture. This is the magnificent Sinclair canyon. Leaving the wide and pastoral valley of the Columbia behind and passing through those towering walls of rock another world at once unfolds to view. Far below Sinclair creek tears its way down the contracted valley, rushing and tossing and rending its way through a series of rocky canyons. A mile farther on, as if for purification or refreshment, are the Radium Hot Springs. Beyond, with a magnificent



Lake Minnewanka and Gibraltar Rock near Banff

Only vast air and water and the hue
That always seems like special news of God.

—Abercrombie.

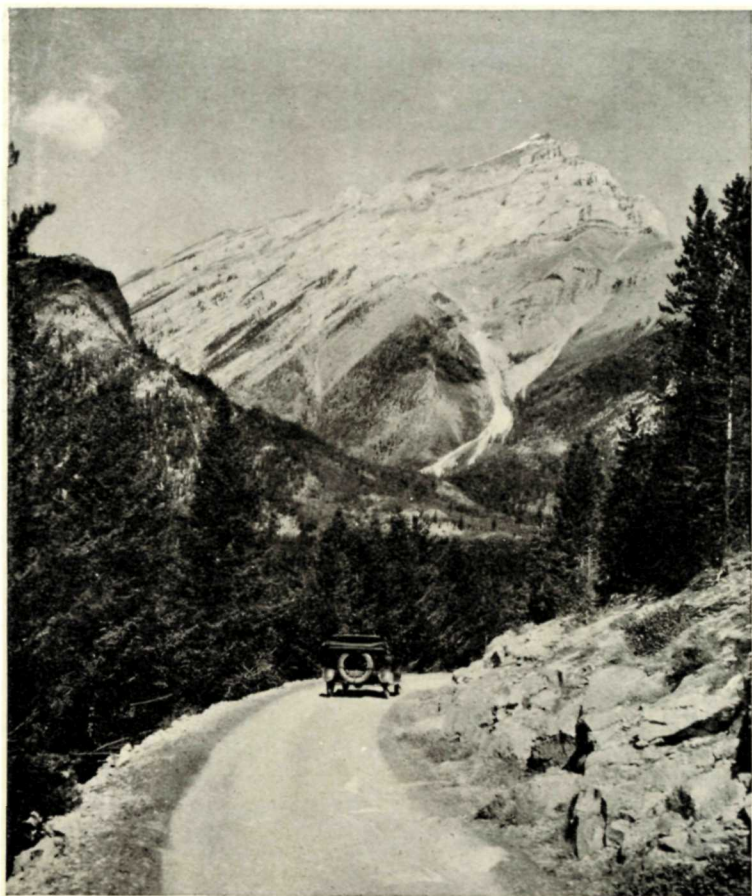
gesture, nature has erected a second and wider portal known as the "Iron Gates," formed by splendid towers of red rock on either side of the valley. Winding up by easy gradients through forests of pines and spruce the road climbs to the summit of Sinclair pass, 4,950 feet. Almost at the Divide lies a charming little lake, lovingly encircled on three sides by the forest, whose waters are of a beautiful green, shot with undertones of gold, known as Lake Olive. From the summit of the pass the road drops down in great sweeps towards the wide



and level valley of the Kootenay, affording some wonderful panoramic views. Then, leaving the river, it cuts through the forest between tall lines of slender pines that stand so straight at either side that the road becomes a canyon of living green. The cool restfulness of these long avenues carved in the virgin forest—the nostrils gratefully acknowledging the scent of sun-kissed pine and the faint tang from surrounding snowpeaks—makes these bits of the road linger long in the memory. There is no sound here but the whisper of wind in the tree tops and the purring of the motor. Perhaps a curious whiskey-jack or two will fly down to examine the new-comers or a “fool-hen” fling itself with apparently suicidal intent in front of the car but otherwise the road is all your own. Above the

green walls the sky shows deepest azure. Down the long vista a white peak will lift itself high in air in a “wedding of whitest white and bluest blue,” then the car will emerge into the open valley and a celestial panorama again unroll itself before the eye with the surprise of a new revelation.

At about twenty-eight and one-half miles from the western terminus the road crosses the Kootenay river and swings east towards the Vermilion, winding along the high ridge between the two rivers. The broad valley of the Vermilion is a favourite resort of big game and as the car rolls down from the high ridges to the lower levels a glimpse may be caught of a moose or deer. This was an old hunting ground of



Cascade Mountain from Tunnel Mountain, Banff

"Calm with perpetual beauty."

the Kootenays, and in some of its grassy meadows they may have held their religious festivals in honour of the Sun God whom they worshipped.

Another favourite hunting ground about fifty-four miles from the western end was near Ochre creek where the ochre deposits or paint beds are found. Then the road climbs towards the Vermilion summit, passing two fine canyons on the way. Although this is the watershed of the Continental Divide the road continues its ascent for another

three miles in order to obtain a more favourable location and then descends by splendid sweeping curves to the Bow valley. The changing panorama dominated always by the splendid bulk of Castle mountain, afforded by each new turn beggars description. They form a magnificent climax to this section of the road. Below in the valley is seen the smoke of the railway signalling that we are again in touch with civilization and that Banff is only twenty miles away. Before turning east from Castle, however, most visitors will wish to take the seventeen



Mount Rundle from Bow River, Banff

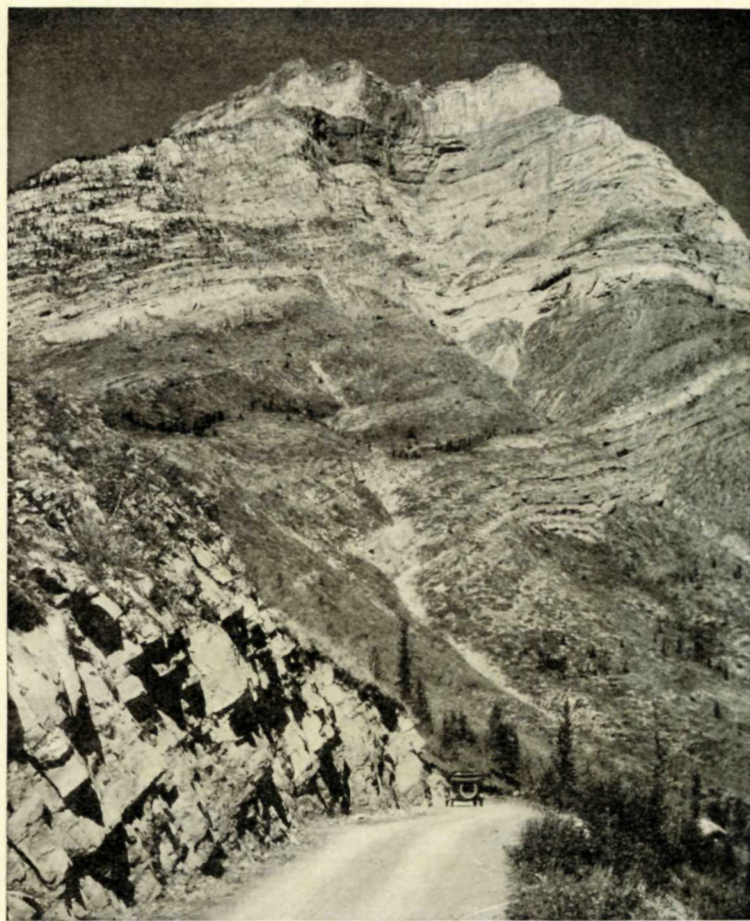
The profile of the goddess of the height,
Floating in water with a curve of crystall light.

—Duncan Campbell Scott.

mile extension west to Lake Louise, most beautiful of all the exquisitely beautiful lakes in the Rockies and its almost equally lovely neighbour, Moraine lake, in the majestic valley of the Ten Peaks. Here the luxuriously appointed Canadian Pacific Railway hotel, the Chateau Lake Louise, provides every comfort that the most fastidious can demand.

*The Valley
of the Bow*

From Castle the road leads to Banff, following the beautiful valley of the Bow and skirting the rugged mass of the Sawback range. Banff itself, the headquarters of Banff National park, is a charming little town possessing broad well paved streets, some fine stores, banks, garages



Grotto Mountain near East Gate, Banff National Park

Grey ledges overhang from dizzy heights,
Scarred by a thousand winters and untamed.

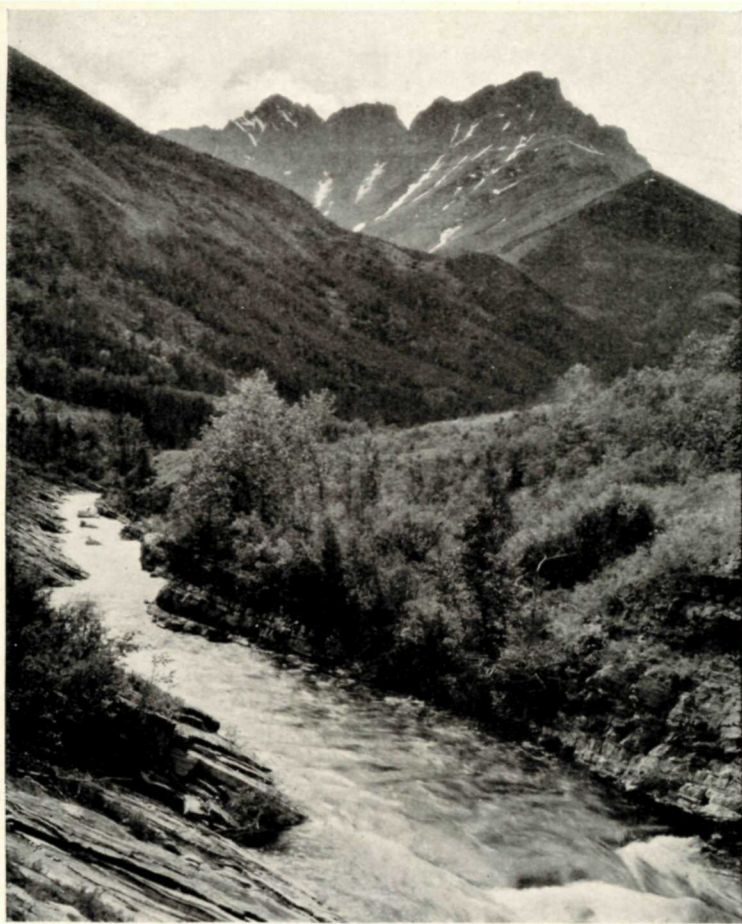
—Bliss Carman.

and accommodation to suit every purse, from the public campsite to a palatial Canadian Pacific Railway hotel. A fine golf course and hot sulphur swimming baths, both operated by the Government, afford delightful recreation. There are, too, a number of interesting spots in the immediate vicinity that no visitor should miss. From Banff a

run of 27.5 miles through fine scenery brings one to the eastern gate of the park, whence the road passes through the eastern gap and then across the foothills to Calgary, distant 85 miles from Banff.

The motorist who travels over the new highway, through the glorious ranges of the Rockies, will have a new conception of the greatness of Canada and if his journey compass the entire Circle and include the fifteen great reservations now set apart for public benefit and enjoyment, it will be strange if he cannot catch a glimpse of a new philosophy of beauty and its uses in national life. It is less than half a century since it began to be realized on this continent that places of exceptional beauty, as Ruskin pointed out, "guarded from violence and inhabited, under man's affectionate protection by every kind of living creature that can occupy it in peace," were national possessions of the highest value that should not be restricted to the use and enjoyment of a few persons but should be set aside and preserved for the use of the whole nation for all time. The recognition of this principle has led to the preservation of great areas both in the United States and Canada. The building of motor highways makes these reservations in reality what those who created them dreamed they might become, "people's parks," in the broad and democratic sense of the word. The phrase from to-day must bear, too, a wider application, for have we not come to see that there can be no nationalism, no parochialism where such beauty is concerned, that here national boasting must be silent and the spirit of man humble and reverent before creative might and power.

"The dreamer lives forever," said John Boyle O'Reilly, the Canadian poet, since the ultimate fact is only the embodiment of the dream. Out of the dreams of a few far-visioned men have come the National parks and the National highways of to-day. May we not believe that the final outcome will exceed all their imaginings and that both are only entering upon their possible service to humanity, that they may in the end prove for all the people to be roads back to a healthier and fuller contact with nature, to a wider and deeper love of country and a richer and more joyous life?



Pass Creek, Waterton Lakes Park

Reached by Transprovincial Highway over the Crowsnest Pass which forms
an alternate loop in Canada in Grand Circle Tour.

F. A. ACLAND
Printer to the King's Most Excellent Majesty
Ottawa, 1923

