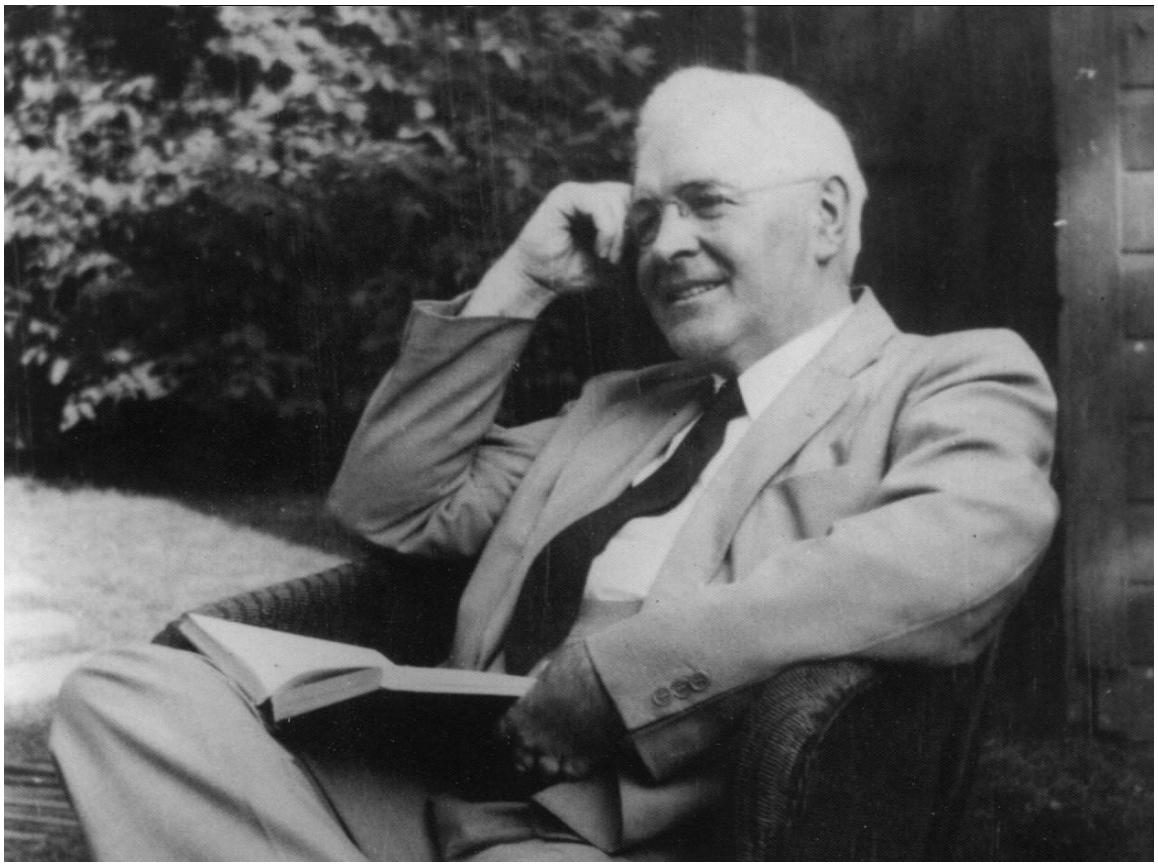
“Valley Days” and Other Stories

Rev Russell McGillivray’s accounts of his year in the B.C. interior in 1906-7 as a young man of 17 and 18



Compiled with an introduction by Russ McGillivray

Caledon, Ontario

24 January 2010

INTRODUCTION

"Valley Days" and the other stories included here shine a light on the momentous year that Rev. Russell McGillivray spent in the interior of British Columbia where he received his call to the ministry and had his first experiences at preaching. While some anecdotes of the time are remembered by his family, there were many questions, including exactly where and when it took place. Some thought the Okanagan, others the North Thompson valley. Now we know that both were right. The year can also be dated as having been from the fall of 1906 to late 1907.

The stories were written in the period 1947-51 when Russell was in Oakville and not actively pastoring a church. They were written with a view to being published as magazine articles. At his death in 1955 they were boxed away with other papers and stored at Colin McGillivray's home from where they have recently come to light. Now 60 years after they were written, and 100 years after the events they describe, the stories may yet find an audience as he had hoped.

As told in these stories, in 1906 at the age of 17 (he was born on 13 June 1889) Russell was working as a night clerk for the Grand Trunk Railway in Hamilton, Ontario and studying during the day to write his High School entrance exams. His income was necessary to help support his widowed mother and seven siblings, the youngest of who was only two. Russell was worn out from lack of sleep and food. The company doctor told him that his body was on the verge of possibly fatal collapse, and advised him to quit the railway and get an outdoor job.

His mother reached out to her brother, Richard Russell, who responded immediately.

Richard had started his career in the jewellery business he learned from his father, but somehow gravitated to being a mining promoter and property developer. By 1897 he had partnered with two others to form the Fairview Corporation to buy up gold mining properties in Fairview B.C. and to develop a town site.

Fairview is now a ghost town on the outskirts of Oliver in the southern Okanagan valley of British Columbia, half-way between Penticton and the U.S. border. There was money to be made not only from selling mining shares and operating the mines, but in selling building lots to people looking to move West to experience the healthy climate and rich farmland suitable for fruit growing and ranching. By 1901 Richard had moved his family from Hamilton to Fairview where he was, among other things, the postmaster. The Corporation built the Fairview Hotel, the finest in the interior of B.C.

From a peak of 500 residents, Fairview began to decline after 1902, signalled by the loss of the Fairview Hotel in a deadly fire that year. The gold, which was lode gold (occurring in quartz rocks), was high-grade but only found in isolated pockets.

Nevertheless, in 1906 Richard was still in the mining business, and happened to be in Hamilton. Richard offered to employ his nephew as a clerk at Fairview and to accompany him on the train trip as he was travelling there himself. Russell would earn enough to support himself and to send as much money home as he made at the Railway. He promised his mother he would come home in a year.

The train trip West was a revelation to the city boy and invoked a life-long love of the West and the mountains in particular. There was a stop in Winnipeg and the first sight of the Rockies outside of Calgary, finally leaving the transcontinental line at Sicamous on Lake Shuswap.

Another train ride took them to Vernon, where they boarded a paddle-wheeler to travel the length of Lake Okanagan to Penticton. From there, a stage-coach ride took them the 30 miles to Fairview. Up a three mile trail, past the abandoned Morning Star and Brown Bear mines, Russell found his office and living quarters at the Stemwinder mine.

Russell's first sermon was in the Fairview Presbyterian Church when the minister, Rev. A.H. Cameron, asked him to take a service when Cameron had to go to Vancouver for some meetings. A second service led to holding Sunday evening services for the miners and a favourable impression on the Superintendent of Missions for Alberta and B.C. (likely Dr. James C. Herdman) when he was visiting the area.

Then in the spring of 1907 the Fairview Corporation ran out of money and closed the mine. Uncle Richard wanted Russell to return East, but he decided instead to accompany Richard to Vancouver and look up the Superintendent of Missions to see about a mission field placement for the summer. The Superintendent was intrigued, and the Committee approved Russell's appointment despite his total lack of a theological education. The Superintendent wanted him to take the North Thompson River valley and made a special request that at some point he make a trip to the north end of the valley which had never been visited by the church before.

After a detour to preach at Shuswap to supply for an ailing minister, Russell proceeded to Kamloops at the base of the valley. He spent the next six months travelling by horse the 100 mile length of the valley, conducting services at his eight point charge, and making a foray into the north reaches. He left in November in time to keep his promise to his mother.

THE STORIES

There are three stories that address the period. Like the three synoptic gospels, some events occur in all three accounts, but each account also has unique material and a different emphasis.

The stories are presented here in the order in which they were penned. As far as the chronology of events is concerned, the stories might better be read in reverse order.

"Valley Days" was written on 12 July 1947 just after Russell had resigned his pastoral charge in Winnipeg and moved to Oakville. He submitted it for publication to a national magazine, but it was rejected. "Valley Days" starts with Russell (called "Mac" in the story) in Fairview at the time the mine was shutting down. "The Boss" is Uncle Richard Russell. The story has the only account of the North Thompson period.

"Beyond the Morning Star" was written 12 January 1948 and focuses on the Fairview period. It starts in Hamilton with the background for his going West.

"What Can You Do?" is my title for an untitled, hand-written account. It starts one year earlier in Hamilton than "Beyond the Morning Star" with a first visit to the company doctor which leads to Russell going back to school in addition to working his night shift. It is the most personal account and spends a lot of time in Hamilton and on the trip West. Most of it was written on 25 Sept 1951 with a few pages added later. It takes the story as far as the start of the Thompson period; as suggested by the title, it also takes the story from the doctor's seminal question to Russell being settled as an official representative of the Presbyterian Church.

SOURCES

T.W. Patterson, *Okanagan-Similkameen*, in the British Columbia Ghost Town Series, Sunfire Publications, Langley B.C. 1983

Lynn Alaric, Archivist, Oliver and District Heritage Society (Fairview Mine Map and other background material)

Railway map originally published by the Department of the Interior, Canada, 1906. Digital image obtained from Natural Resources Canada website http://atlas.nrcan.gc.ca/site/english/maps/archives/1stedition

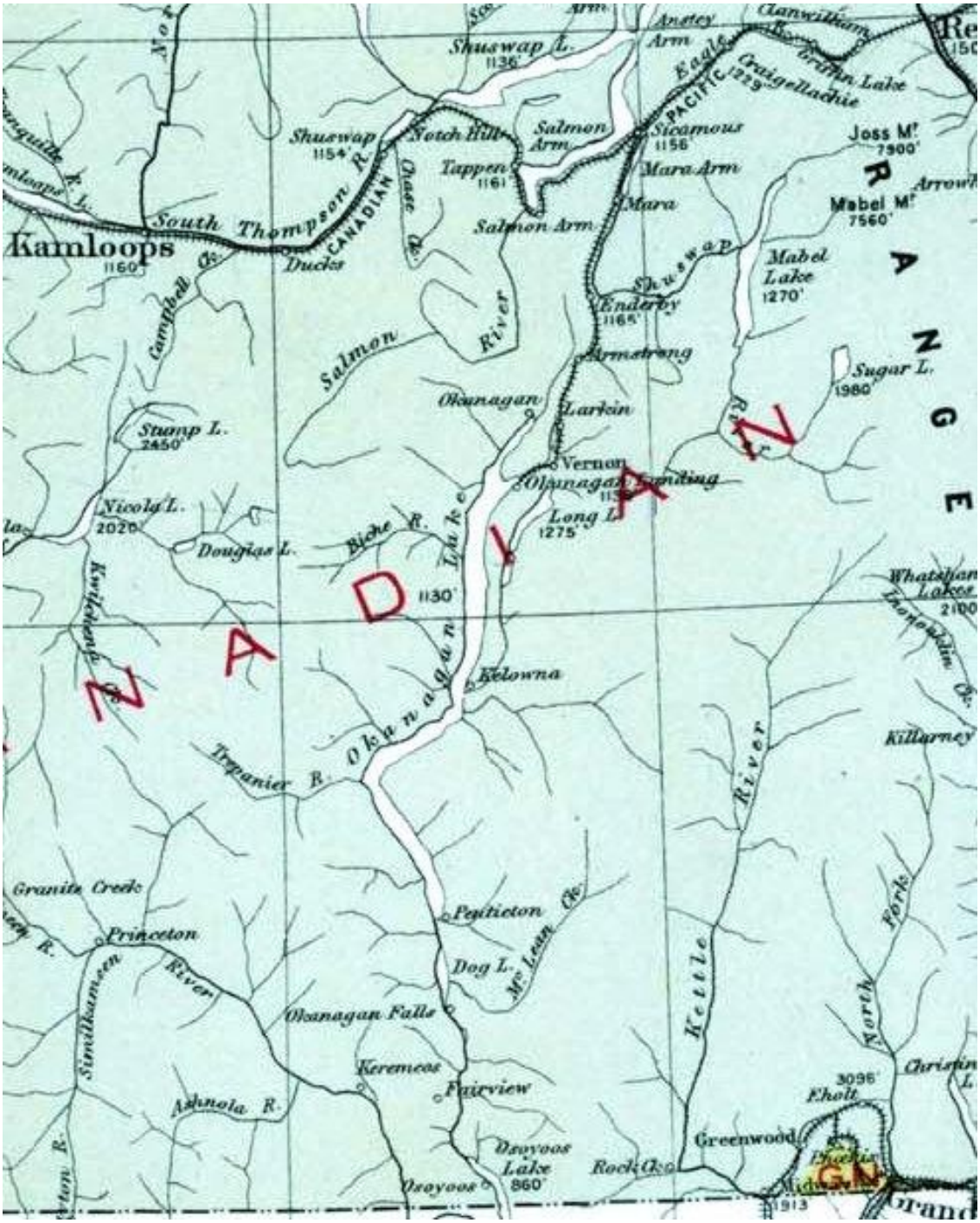
Photograph of Richard Russell (1905). Digital image provided by Elizabeth Pesce

Photograph of the young Russell McGillivray. Photocopy provided by Ann Elson

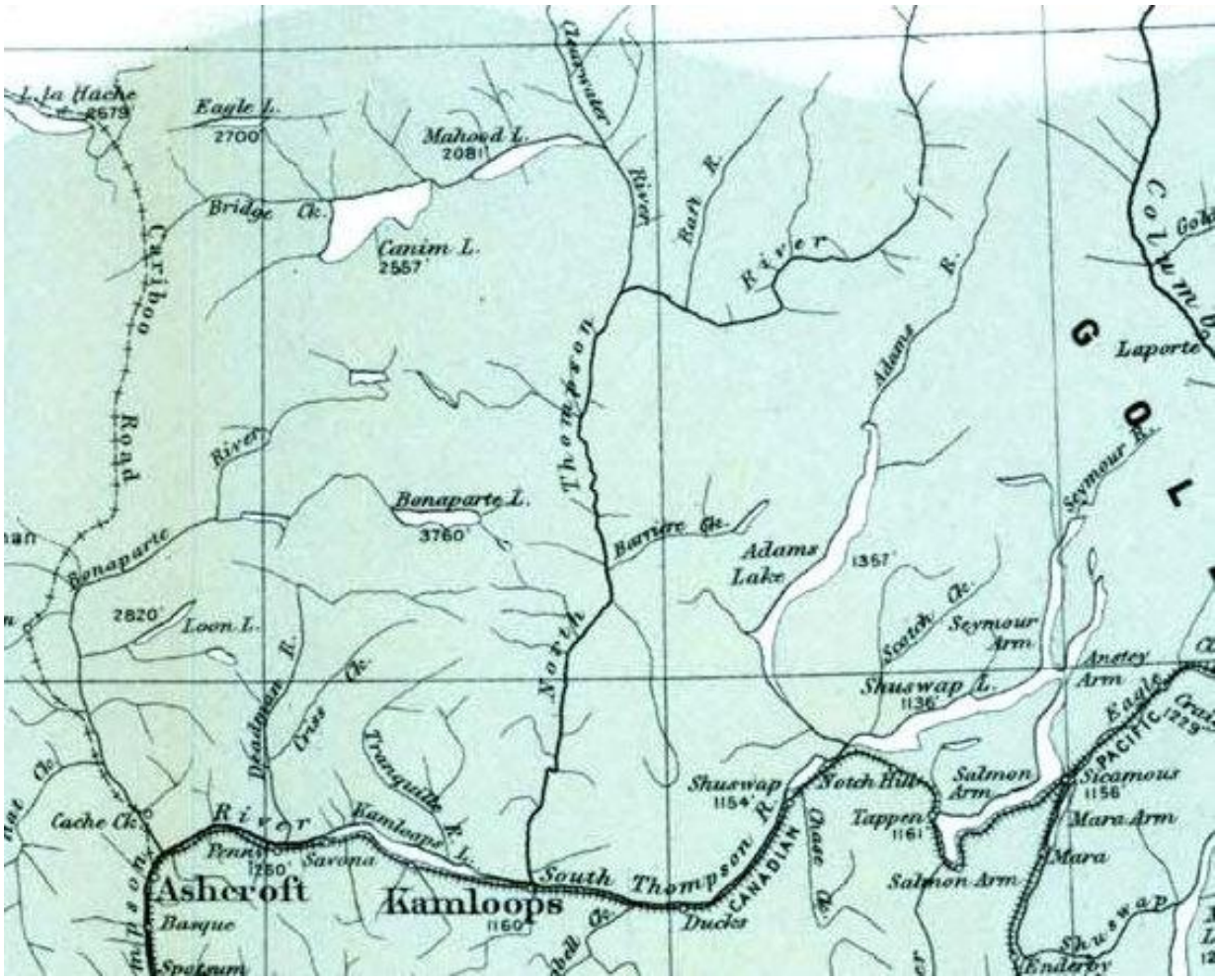
Photograph of Fairview Presbyterian Church. Digital image from the B.C. Archives Collections (www.bcarchives.gov.bc.ca). Original photograph is call number F-06565

Photograph of Rev. A.H. Cameron. Original in the South Similkameen Museum, Keremos. Digital image obtained from virtualmuseum.ca

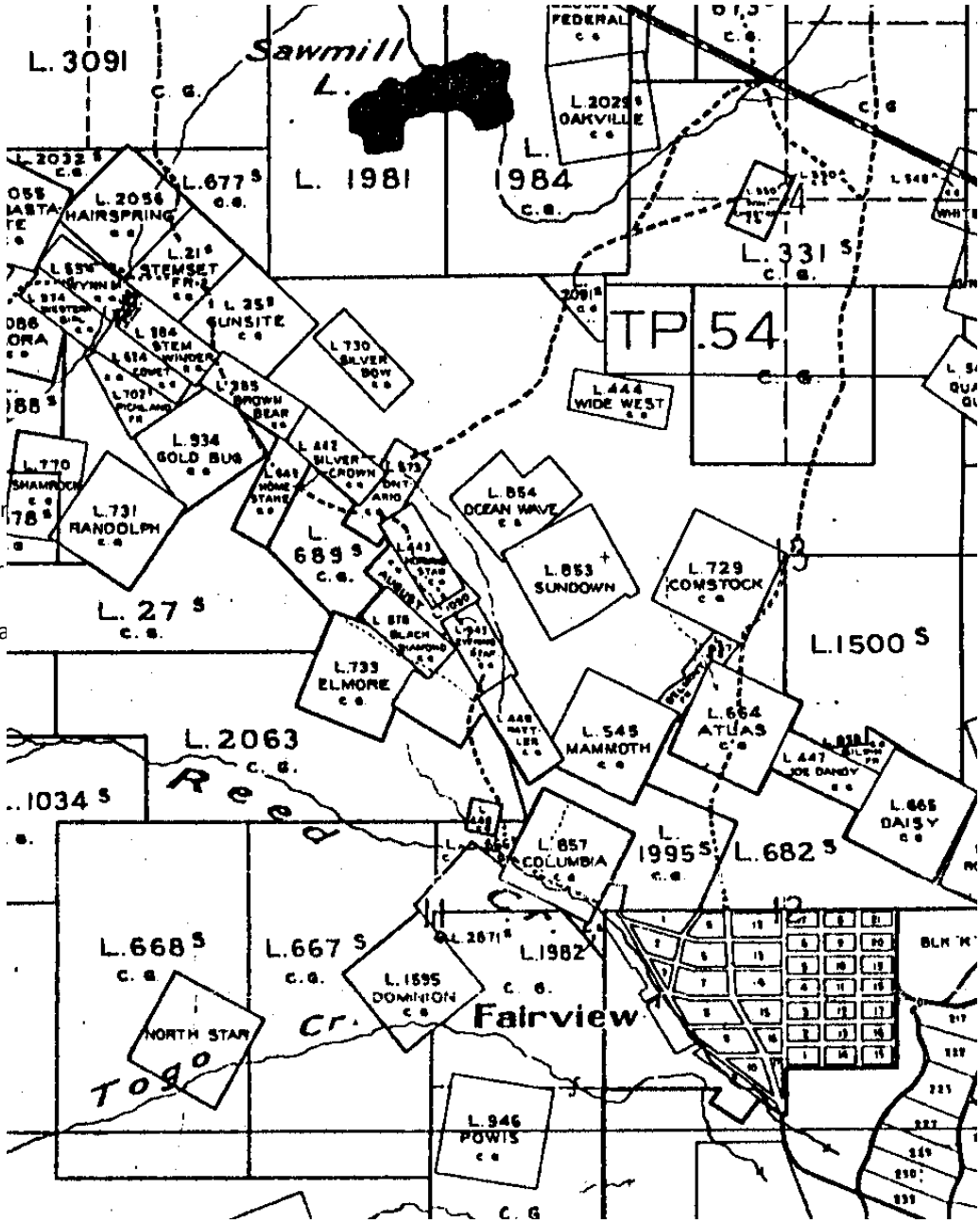
MAP: OKANAGAN VALLEY (1904)



MAP: NORTH THOMPSON RIVER VALLEY (1904)



MAP: FAIRVIEW MINE MAP



Stemwinder

Brown Bear

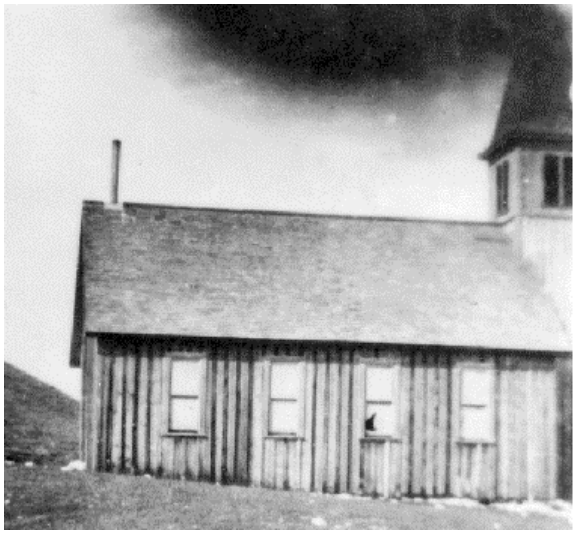
Morning Sta

PHOTOGRAPHS

Russell McGillivray

Uncle Richard Russell (1905)

Rev. A.H. Cameron



Fairview Presbyterian Church. The building survives at Okanagan Falls where it is known as the “Blasted Church”

VALLEY DAYS

by

Russell McGillivray.

Should any characters in this book seem to be like anyone, dead or living, then it suggests that the author has a pretty fair memory.

CHAPTER ONE COMING OUT

It was hard to leave the valley. And yet he didn't think of it in that way. If your job was gone, it was just part of the unending venture to go where there might be a job.

And the job was gone, for him, and the boss and the miners and the camp cook, and soon pretty much gone for the little mining town, and the bar tenders. The mine had closed.

There was gold there. A lot of money had been spent to find that out. But there was no more money, and the bank, wisely cautious, would not advance any more money. And so, nothing else could be done, but to discharge everybody and leave the valley.

Going there he had been told that it was the most beautiful valley in the world. He never knew if that was true. He had not seen much of the world and he was not yet awake to beauty, not for many years.

But he had loved the sunlight and the air, the blue skies. There was something for life, his life, since he was much more wearied than any boy of seventeen should have been. Day by day, and in the silent cool-aired nights, health and strength had come to him.

And now he was leaving it. And those who stayed behind said, “You’ll be back”, and he was sure that he would. He did too, on a far distant day.

CHAPTER TWO THE GOOD LIFE OF THAT VALLEY

So many strange experiences had been his while he lived there.

He had met miners, hard-rock miners, and found that they were just like all other people, good, bad, and in between. It may have been that there was a story behind each life, but no one would have resented any romancing about them more than the miners themselves.

There was that day at the shaft head: word had come that a man had died at another mine. A number of the men at once started to say nice things about him, just as we all try to do. But one of the men wasn't having any of that. He cut them all short by claiming that the dead man had been a rotter. The others had no come back.

Then, while labour relations had not assumed the serious terms of later years, to a claim for loyalty to the company one tall chap said, “If the dinner whistle blew and I had my shovel up in the air, I'd leave it there.”

There came that startling day when an oldish, blue eyed man rode up to the office and the young man had to meet him. The visitor said that he was a Presbyterian minister, was responsible for a service in the mining village three miles away, that he had to go away, and would he, the young man of the office, take a service and preach for him.

“Preach! Preach what?” he asked. To which the old man, with a most winning smile said, “call it anything you like.” The smile and the blue eyes did it. He consented to hold a service and preach.

CHAPTER THREE. THOSE SERMONS.

Three weeks’ notice had been given. The sermon had to be built and then it had to be gone over and over, aloud.

But where? Sometimes there were difficulties about a man to watch the air compressor, pumping noisily, supplying air for the mine. Seemed just like another one of the jobs that the young fellow could do. “Sorry” and

"too bad," the boss said, but little did he think that he was providing a solution for the problem of preaching a sermon.

There he tried the sermon out. Pacing up and down, with no chance to out shout the noise of the compressor. And he could say anything he liked, scold, point out grave defects of life and the machine kept pumping along.

He had a sense of humour, but this was such a serious business that he never did see how fitting or how funny that a sermon should have its world premiere in a room with a machine dedicated to the pumping of air.

The day of the service came. There was no knowledge then of the nice timing of a radio programme, but he did have the service timed to go an hour. The people were on their way home in thirty five minutes. He was greatly concerned. They would probably feel cheated. But strangely, they looked quite satisfied and almost acted as if it was a good idea to have a service of thirty-five minutes.

There was to be one more sermon. The old minister was the soul of courtesy. Sometime later he asked ”Will you preach again and I would like to be there. I hear so few speakers; I'd love to hear again a young Man's sermon.” Again the blue eyes and the smile prevailed. He consented to preach with the minister present.

This was to be a sermon. He knew nothing of such expressions as a "Royal George” or a masterpiece, but this was to be all those things and more.

By now, he was thinking of other sermons and preachers, and quite prepared to do as a much admired one had done.

He did just that. The service was over, a little longer this time. He and the old minister were riding up the steep, twisting road to the mine. It was very dark. The smile and the blue eyes could not be seen.

But the kind voice spoke generous words about the service. Then, with apologetic hesitation, the old man said, “but there was one thing I did not like to see you do. I did not like to see you close the Bible at the beginning of the sermon, and I did not like to hear it closed with a bang." And then the minister went on, as if fearing to hurt and yet feeling that this operation of spiritual surgery must be performed. The thought in the good man's mind was that the open Bible suggested the source from which the sermon came, and that furthermore, no book should be so emphatically closed as that book had been.

The young man had sense enough to realize the kindness of the suggestion. He did not feel that it was a criticism - and he saw how true it was, in spite of the fact that he had imitated an admired minister of other days.

CHAPTER FOUR: WITHOUT FIGHTS

Not to change the subject, but rather as an evidence of hero worship, he asked the minister, "Have you been in some of the hard places?” "Well, I don't know that they were so hard,” said the old man, “but I did serve in the Caribou Valley in the pioneer days and in the Crow's Nest in the construction days.”

Ah, this was it. Now we were getting near the times of gun play, and terrible fights and rough house services. So it was quite natural for the young man to ask the older man if he had had fights; had to shoot anyone; had to stand up against a tough crowd.

Surprisingly the minister claimed that he had never had a fight, nor, in fact, any trouble. He admitted that he was close to a disturbance once in the Crow's Nest. He was holding a service in a caboose. After the service had started two men came in. They were evidently bent on mischief. Both kept their hats on and one a pipe in his mouth.

The eyes of the foreman caught the one with the pipe and soon the pipe was put away and the hat taken off. But the other still sat, jauntily, with his hat on, quite prepared as an act of mischief to spoil the service.

The old minister said that he went on and finished the Scripture reading and at the close of the reading spoke in a general way pointing out that in his study of religions he had come upon many strange customs. For example, that amongst the Jews the men worshipped with their hats on. The knowledge of such customs had given him certain attitudes toward other religions, and he did wish to assure them that if there was any Jew present he was quite at liberty to worship with his hat on.

Yes, the hat came off quickly, and no, he had never had any fights or any trouble.

CHAPTER FIVE IN THE COOK HOUSE.

The preparation for that second sermon was not as easy as for the first. The man at the air compressor was more steadily on the job. So if there was to be any speaking of the piece it would have to be in the room attached to the office where the young man slept.

The burden of that was that while trying to attend to the words, most of the attention had to be given to listening for a footstep, to stop talking out loud before anyone got near.

One evening the much feared did happen. Right in the midst of a flight of oratory there was a knock at the door. There at the door was one of the oldest and most loved of the miners. He came in, looked all around and then, realizing that this was a lonely country and that under certain strains, things did happen, said, not unkindly “who were you talking to?”

A clean confession seemed the best thing and so the practicing of the sermon was explained. The miner said, “yes, I heard about the service in the town why don't you give us something here?” To which the young man said, “I never thought you fellows would want anything, and anyway they wouldn't come". But the old man said he would see that they came.

And so the Sunday evening gatherings were held. In the eating house. On a table there was a biscuit box, with a white cloth over it. This the idea of the French Catholic cook.

There was no collection. It was claimed by some of the miners that religion was pretty much a matter of taking up the coppers. Since the young man was an employee of the Company, he had no concern about collection.

The congregation - one of the most extraordinary mixed elements - the ritual, none -sermon, practically none. Singing anything under the sun that anyone wanted to sing. And the length of service, since there was nothing else to do, just as long as anyone wanted to stay. Sometimes there were those who slept, but the sleeping was done quite frankly, and sometimes quite noisily. But enjoyment was the key note, and everyone welcomed the evidence of even enjoying a sleep.

Of course, with the end of the camp, these evenings ended, and the men concerned were scattered, and the young man had no list of names, no one had said that their life was different, drinking did not seem to change, nor rough talk and crude ways. But they had asked for and steadily came to the meetings, so with that the young man was content. If he had known more about church demands he probably should not have been so content. But he didn't know. He was still just seventeen.

CHAPTER SIX. TO THE TOWN AND IN IT.

The town was about three miles very much downhill from the mine. And it was all of three miles, very much up hill, to get back to the camp. One of the young man's many jobs was to take the mail to the town and bring mail back. Both ways the matter was very important. The mail going East would carry well worded invitations to buy more stock in this so promising gold mine, and the mail coming in must have cheques enclosed so that the heavy expense of developing the mine could be met.

The means of transportation for such an important task was a horse -not young, seen better days, but still good for that trip down and the steady climb back.

Now the young man had never ridden a horse. Being told to do so, he tried to get on about as he would board a street car. It was one of his lucky days, because the bronco does not like people getting on that way, but this day the horse was in a tolerant, easy-going mood. He just laughed and waited. It had been suggested that spurs be worn, but that according to Eastern standards would be cruel. So spurs would not be worn. Again the horse laughed and for several days, enjoyed the trip to town, starting and stopping, just as he felt inclined.

Then the boss came into the picture. He knew the reason for the delay, but he said that it was taking far too long to get the mail, and that probably the young fellow was hanging around the saloon. Explanation about the horse was made, and then it was insisted that the spurs be worn, and that being so, the horse knew that the fun was over.

The mail came in by stage - a contraption hung on straps, drawn by six horses, and, the miracle to the young man, driven by one man. And the one man was not big nor old, rather small and quite young. And it was mail that gave that stage its importance. Oh yes, there were passengers, but it was letters, word from outside, from the East and from the Old Land for the many who came from the far away land.

There were days when the stage was late, and on those days, he would ride down on the flat country, looking toward the mystery of the boundary country and wondering about all the life beyond the line.

CHAPTER SEVEN. TO THE COAST.

But now it was all over. There was no mail to go out and none to come in.

A phrase had been used to close up the mine. It was used again and again. The phrase was "financial stringency”. The young man thought it was a fine sounding phrase. He wasn't quite sure but he came to understand that it meant that there was no more money.

He and the boss had got on the boat in the evening. The boss was very weary. He had carried such a heavy load. The young fellow did not know much about failure, and he had never heard the word frustration. To him it was just part of the changing venture of life. But to the boss it was the end of quite a portion of his life.

And the boss was worried about the young fellow. What would he do about earning a living? To which the young fellow made easy reply, “You remember that man who came through with the old minister, the Superintendent of Missions they called him? Well he seemed to be interested in what I was doing with the miners. I'm going to ask him for a job on what they call a mission field.”

The boss didn't mean to be unkind, but right away he said, “he couldn't give you a job like that -you don't know anything." The young man admitted that - being seventeen, and having left school when he was eleven, he knew that he did not know much, but still he was going to ask for that job.

And so they slept, to wake in the morning to beauty. The boat was well out in the lake, the water was as smooth as glass, the sun was shining, and the air - well when I tell you that it was the month of May, you'll know about the air. May in that valley - it was not possible then or now to think of anything much more beautiful.

As they waited before rising, someone quietly played the piano out in the lounge. Not any piece of music: not loud; no just some one doing that lovely thing, thinking quiet and gracious thoughts on the piano.

The boss heaved a great sigh. It was almost like a groan. The young fellow had never heard such a sigh from the boss. He had been so brave and tried so hard. And then he said, so intensely, but without bitterness, "that's what we have missed. There has been no music in our life for so long now.”

The journey by boat and train finally brought the two to the parting of their ways at the coast. The train journey had only one mark of note. The phrase "financial stringency” now having become personal for both the boss and the young man, the porter on the sleeper was asked if he had an unreserved upper berth. He said he had. The boss was a big man, and the young man tall. Soon the porter realized that the idea was, just one upper berth for two such persons, and with a pitying smile, it may be that he too knew something about "financial stringency”, he said, “I'm afraid boss, it can't be done”. The young man had the upper, and there he thought of the city and the coast, and not as much as he came to do later, of the lovely valley he was leaving behind.

CHAPTER EIGHT. GETTING THE JOB.

In the coast city, first a room must be found. It must be inexpensive for reasons that need not be stated again. And it could not be taken for a long period, because the hope was, to get the job and get away.

It was a nice room. And then there was a tragedy. He wanted to look his best so he polished his boots. Boots, notice, not shoes. A piece of the blacking fell on the carpet making a spot. First he thought of covering it and saying nothing, but he just couldn't. So in great concern he spoke to the lady of the house, offering, out of nothing, to pay. To his great relief she said it was nothing at all and not to think of it.

At a church, he found the superintendent and said he would like a job. The superintendent said that he was willing but that the young man would have to go before a committee and whatever they said would determine the matter.

Not knowing committees the young man thought that was fine. But he wasn't so sure when he saw the committee. They looked pretty serious. He couldn't help but think of what the boss had said, "But you don't know anything”. Something was said about theology. It sounded as strange as the phrases the bank had used when they forced the mine to close.

Then a minister from the dearly loved valley spoke, and said, "I have heard no heresy from the south end of the valley. I move that the young man be appointed to a field." And so it was done, and he found that he had been given another valley, not as lovely, but a valley all his own in which to do the work of the church. And more than that he need not stay in the city long, but could go first to help a sick minister, then buy a horse and saddle and ride in to the valley, to him the unknown valley.

CHAPTER NINE. THE MISSING HORSE.

Before his new valley there had to be the Sunday relief for the minister who was not so well.

He was entertained most kindly at the home of the minister. The minister's wife did not say, “How dare they send an untrained boy to presume to do the work of my husband”. Rather she treated him as if it were quite part of his life to stand in the place of a trained man.

The few days before Sunday held some thing for him quite unforgettable. He realized deeply that there was a need in the home in the East and so he went to the telegraph office of the little station and wired back nearly all that he had in the world; his last pay from the mine and a glorious gift of forty dollars from the miners.

He knew nothing about burning your bridges or crossing the Rubicon. He expected to belong to his valley. If he gave it any thought he knew now that he had to stay.

With Sunday he faced in a school house his first effort now that he was known as serving the church. In all the experiences of those days, the text of that sermon, as of the first one preached in the mining town stands out. The first sermon had for text, “He spoke as one having authority." A strange text for one who had the people out of the church in thirty five minutes.

The sermon, now that he was known as a student missionary was, "'We would see Jesus”. That too was strange. Used, quite likely in a regular fashion, and providing suggestions of how we closed our eyes to Jesus. The young man, now over the years and the deepening of life, now knows that quite likely there was no heart ache of desire to either see or understand Jesus. In fact, neither then nor over the years had he ever presumed to measure what it would mean to any life to actually see Jesus.

The congregation was pretty much a family affair - a family which had done very well in that new country, a family too, which in intelligence and thoughtful service was to do much for that part of Canada.

They were kind. In fact, the young man knew finally that those were the words that he could say of the people of both his valleys, and everywhere in between. True, the days were pioneer days, and there was a sense of dependence on one another.

But in many ways he might have been taken as an intruder. Being so young he might have been received as an impertinence. And where work was the very life line, he might have been thought of as a lazy parasite.

But always they were kind.

There was an afternoon appointment - again in a school house, and having no other material, again, “We would see Jesus”.

The congregation was different. There were young people. There is no way of ever knowing their reaction to this youngster who was preaching to them. It may be that they thought he took himself rather seriously. It may be that they thought he was conceited. Over the years, now and then, others have thought the same.

They had their own method. Service being ended, the young man went out for the minister's horse. He had secured it and loosened the saddle before the service. But the horse was gone. He made some search. No one seemed concerned. In fact he soon realized that he was being watched - that the horse was hidden somewhere, and that he was either supposed to get angry or plead for help.

He then did the most disconcerting thing. The day's work for the minister was done. The town at the entrance to his valley was ten miles away. He spoke to the young man school teacher, and said that he trusted him to see that the minister's horse got back. Then, without any more fuss, late in the afternoon, giving no one a chance to offer him food, he turned west, for the ten miles walk.

Long after he heard how distressed they were. This joke some way had gone wrong. They were a hospitable folk, and for one to go away hungry and with any feeling that he had not been fairly used, hurt them. And especially when the one was so young.

He knew there was no malice, but his action was the natural desire not to be laughed at.

CHAPTER TEN. THE WALK

In motor car days one does not walk. In horse riding days one does not walk. Ten miles out in the open, in that free west land sounds just like a refreshing appetizer. But they were long miles.

About half way, and no sign of life, no place even for a drink of water, let alone a bite to eat, the sky darkened.

Soon, there came a terrific, beating thunder storm and down pour of rain. If he had known his Bible better he might have thought that this was some indication of Divine anger visited upon him. As it was he knew, now that the month was June, that the rain might be quite a help.

There was no shelter. The phrase "I can take it" had not yet been born. But he had no option. He just had to take it.

In all the time in his valleys there were a few times when he felt thoroughly home sick and down. This was one of the times, and almost the worst.

He just felt that he didn't belong anywhere. The mining days were over. The new valley was still far away. The East was just a blur. And he was soaked, and hungry, and weary beyond words. Had he not buoyantly dealt with the yearning of the human heart that day and talked of seeing Jesus?

And now here he was, a tramp, or worse than a tramp. A tramp would know how to handle such situations. He didn't know.

Finally he reached the town. He didn't want to go to the minister's house. He showed then that which followed him all through life, a great desire not to intrude, or putting it another way, a great desire to be on his own. So he went to the one and only hotel.

There was a room. There was not much chance for food; there was no chance at all for a hot bath; and no chance to get anything done about pressing clothes.

Nothing in the world, however, neither loneliness nor inadequate hospitality, could prevent sleep. So ended for the young man the first day of service as a student missionary. And he slept.

CHAPTER ELEVEN. A HORSE HE CAN RIDE.

Morning came, and not blue Monday either. He could see the road into the valley. A bridge had to be crossed, since the mighty river of the valley joined an even greater river.

First to see the minister - not as a means of food or shelter, but as the agent of the church to see about a horse and saddle.

The minister reminded the young man of ministers of the East. He would likely have been flattered if he had known that that was the impression. The idea seemed to be, in so many ways, to escape from the likeness to a pioneer western town.

The minister gave no hint as to what he thought about the appointment of a mere youngster to the great valley. Two older men in succession had not had happy experiences. The result was that as far as the people were concerned, if they were ever interested, now they were not interested at all.

But since he was sent, then into the valley he must go. And that meant a horse and saddle, money for which was to be advanced, and then repaid, and the hope always of a good sale at the end of the term.

How easily the horse dealer might have fooled the young man. Instead he did a generous thing. Standing at the corral he told the young fellow to pick his horse. He selected a gray bronco. The price was forty dollars. It was not a wonder horse, but it always did the work.

And a saddle, a beauty, a deep mahogany almost wine shade, as comfortable as a rocking chair; of course, a stock saddle. And it was twenty five dollars.

Being told that the young man was heading into the valley the horse dealer said, “You'll have to go easy. This horse has just been on the grass and will be soft yet for such a long hard trip."

To which, the young missionary said that he didn't know much about horses but he would certainly try to be good to his purchase.

And now he was ready for the valley.

CHAPTER TWELVE. INTO THE VALLEY.

The directions for getting into the heart of the valley were somewhat sketchy. In fact, he came to find out, that a good deal of knowledge of the valley was sketchy.

There was one main road, for sixty miles or so, due north and on the east side of the river. The centre of the work for the valley was about forty miles from the town, and on that east side.

There were people on the west side of the river. They were to be reached. There were no bridges anywhere. If one naturally asked “How do you get across this swift flowing river, icy cold from the mountains”, the answer was, “Just any way you can”.

But for the trip in, he was not to go to the central place, but north, and then cut away in to the back east part of the valley. There he was to present himself to a rancher's home, and the people would get him started.

It is possibly the hopefulness of youth. After all these years he would not now start on any journey with such scanty directions. But he had no fear, but somehow, sometime, he would come to the door indicated.

He likes the looks of the valley. And it really was his. It was explained to him that barring a Roman Catholic priest who visited the Indian reservation in the heart of the valley, there was no representative of any church. There was no church anywhere - no organization of any kind.

The horse did well. Mindful of the warning, he did not urge him. He found, like so many such horses, that he had only two gaits: a lope, fairly smooth and easy, and a walk, so slow that he scarcely kept moving enough to keep from tripping. Many times he wanted so badly a horse who was a good walker, since much more walking had to be done than galloping.

Finally, after a journey of about fifty miles he came to the door of the rancher. It was a small cabin, very small. Greater things were to be.

He had quite made up his mind, being tall, that he would tell no one how young he was. The rancher's wife came to the door. He introduced himself, and told why he was in the valley.

She looked at him, kindly and keenly, and then asked the question he did not want anyone to ask. “How old might you be," she asked? He answered, "Seventeen," and then quickly, as saving some hope, "but I will be eighteen next month”. “Bless me,” she said,” just a boy. Come in".

In the months, he came to be glad and not sorry that she had discovered his age. She did not pass the word around. It was before the day of easy methods of passing a word around. But when he came there, once a month, she rendered those kindnesses in cake and the mending of sox that one would give to a boy so far from home.

The rancher came in and after supper there was talk about the valley and the people and what he was supposed to do. They were somewhat puzzled as to why he should have been sent first to them. They were sure that their situation was not central and they could not be counted as pillars of the church, especially when there was no church.

The arrangement, too, with regard to the living of a missionary was sort of news to them. Some day, from some office there would come a cheque covering so many weeks work, but only long after the work was done.

Meanwhile, the people were to supply, presumably by the collection plate, the funds necessary to live. The young fellow was to finance his horse, and hope for the best in a sale.

It did give one a living interest in the collection plate, especially when no services could gather more than ten people.

However, he wasn't afraid, and although he did not know it, he never needed to be afraid. He always had food and shelter, and a little to spare.

After a good deal of conversation, the matter of a place to sleep showed one of the great problems of a pioneer settlement. There was no place in the house save for the rancher and his wife.

Something was said about the hay loft. The young chap, to ease a delicate situation, let it be known that sleeping in hay lofts was one of the great joys of his life. He never had slept in such a place, but he was sure it would be fine. And he was right. It was no hardship, but rather a restful experience. If he had known anything about the rest of beauty, he would have said that the hay loft had it.

And so he spent his first night in his valley, amongst his people.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN ESTABLISHING HEADQUARTERS.

Directions being followed, the young fellow came next Monday to the ranch of the man whose name was mentioned more than any other when the valley and its church interests were spoken of.

The man and his family were much interested in the new comer. They were quite disappointed when they found, by direct questioning, that he came from Ontario. That disappointment could have been eased a bit if he had come from Bruce County. He never knew why so much store was set upon Bruce County. As far as he could find it seemed to be a good place to come from. There were so many from Bruce.

Alter a time he ventured to ask where these people came from. They said, as if the answer was complete, “From the Island”. He knew that Ireland was an island, but he could not think of them as Irish. There was just something they did not have for that. Seeing that he was puzzled, they laughingly explained, “Prince Edward Island”.

The explanation was helpful because quite frequently he met people who quietly and proudly said they were from the island.

Then the discussion of ways and means took place. Although they were busy enough and for the women there was work enough, they were willing, when he was home, to provide him with meals. The being home would not be too often since there were eight places to serve in the whole valley.

But a place to sleep, a place that he might call home, have as headquarters, that was a problem. Finally it was suggested, that there was an abandoned cabin on a farm that the Islander was working. It has been used to store grain. It was now empty. A sort of bed could be rigged up and it was his. The cabin was out of sight of any other habitation. It would be dark at nights. There were some sheep nearby and for them the coyotes might howl at night.

But it was home and to be all his. The bed was wide. It gave him the opportunity he so dearly prized of extending hospitality to some far-riding man. So many said to him, "put up your horse and stay all night”. Now he could use the same kindly words. Of course there was a drawback. Bush tail rats had come for the grain. The grain was gone, but the rats stayed on. They were large and daring, and strong with a musty smell, and they loved shiny things like sterling silver and gold watches. Not having either, he did not worry about that. But at first, so great was his desire as far as the rats were concerned to be alone that he planned to do serious things about the rats. He never did. Just sort of got used to them.

Being young enough, if any weary traveller did stay all night, he fully explained the presence and antics of the rats. Then he went to sleep, leaving his visitor to listen and wonder.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN. LOCAL ARRANGEMENTS.

It was a happy experience to have some association with a family again. He had seemed to be alone so much, and had lived in his other valley so much in a man's world. This was a busy family. There was no time for anything like entertaining. There were women in this world, and children, one girl about twelve and one about six. The younger girl and her aunt were visitors from the States and behind there from the Island.

To be quite modern the young man realizes that at about this point, he now being eighteen, some love interest should be worked in. But you see, he was not modern. He had no one either East or West who caused his heart to quicken a beat, nor did he seem to want anyone. He did, however, greatly enjoy the company of the farm family, and the hired help, including a dignified old Indian with a continuing sense of humour.

At the table, quite often, there was a dish heaped with leaf lettuce. Passing the dish to the old Indian, he would say, gravely enough, but with a twinkle behind it all, “Me no horse, me no eat grass”. And the movement could be repeated many times, since the Indian did have a continuing sense of humour.

As part of the entrance to this family there was the question of laundry. The nearest Chinese laundry was forty miles away. In such a busy group, something must be done to lighten the load, if any new work was added. So the bargain was, to get his washing done, he was to turn the washing machine for the whole family wash.

The machine was one of those kind, pictured in the advertisements of the day, showing a slight lady turning the wheel, and reading a book at the same time. The young man dreamed of the day when he could do that. The day never came. He never needed a book. Probably the lady in the picture was far stronger than she looked.

The making of butter for the distant town was a real part of the life of the farm. Twenty five cows were milked. That meant turning a cream separator. The young man offered to assist there and the offer was accepted. Strangely enough he never felt heartbroken because of the many times, being away, he could not turn that separator.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN THE POST OFFICE.

Having established headquarters, before a start was made through the valley, the post office must be found and arrangements about mail understood. Who could tell, a letter might come. One of the hard experiences was that sometimes the letter did not come.

The incoming and outgoing mail worked on some system the reason for which was probably concealed in a department back in Ottawa. One time the gap was two weeks, and the next time it was three weeks, and which was the one time and which the next time took careful watching. So if something did not click for the two weeks, it would be five weeks before the mail would be secured, an envelope with a one cent stamp on it telling the young man to be sure and take a course in leadership training in Ontario in August.

The keepers of the post office - they made up for any worry about the mail. They were a couple, never old, but far from young, he from the Island, and she from Boston. There may be finer combinations. The young man could never think of anything finer than that dear couple.

She could cook chicken and such like, fit for a king, or a young missionary. But the topmost point for her, and for all who had a chance to eat them, was her cooking of pork and beans. It was the work of an artist.

Little picnics being arranged, this one and that would be asked to bring sandwiches. But the lady of the post office was always asked to bring a pot of beans.

After the young man had returned to the East, probably plaguing his mother about these beans, she said," Well write to your friend and find out how she did them". So he did and the directions were generously given. His mother's, quite justified comment was, "life is too short to do all that for beans". And so, the work of the artist still stands, fine memory.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN BEING SHOWN AROUND.

Part of the arrangement for the taking over of the valley was that the missionary who had been there might stay a while and show the new man around.

The missionary seemed to the young man quite middle aged. He was very positive, had a demanding and commanding way with him. Entering even a rancher's cabin, he sort of took charge. Added to that was a rather strident voice.

The young man was deeply disturbed to even seem to be under such direction. The man was kind and good, and meant only helpful things.

But the young man could not bring himself to demand or command. He so appreciated hospitality that any idea of seeming to take charge in another man's home simply was not possible. And the young man, all his days dearly loved soft voices and the strident voice grated always, especially when it attempted to deal with the words of the One who must have had an agreeable voice.

To be shown around, to have trails explained, and given the names of people, was a great help. But there was a bill to be paid for this help.

The missionary's theology had to be listened to. As he talked so strong and sure, about the ways and plans of God, and the life of man, the young man was so afraid that he might be discovered. Still he could hear the words of the boss, "But you don't know anything". And as against this man's knowledge he knew that he was blank.

The missionary talked so easily about the plan of God, the plan of salvation, fortunately he was so busy talking that he never thought to swing back in his saddle and say to the young man, "You understand these things! You think so". If he had, the young man might have halted the trip through the valley, because he would have said, "I don't know."

Strange how that positive man haunted the years. His ghost is only being laid now. Again and again the young man thought, "I should be as positive as that. I should be able to declare all God's plans as if I had a blue print or a private wire to heaven". Having suggested these things to himself, still he had to say always, about so many of the mysteries and unanswerable questions, "I don't know".

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN. SERVICES

At last, alone, and the job to do. The arrangement was for the length and breadth of the valley, eight points, with about twenty miles between, one in the morning, and one in the afternoon on a Sunday, thus covering the whole field once a month. There was to be a month with five Sundays. For that Sunday, a special venture into the unknown, of which more later.

At one point, the nearest to the town, there was a school house and an organ. All other places, the service had to be held in a house or in the open air, and with no instrument save the voice.

And the congregation - more than many great churches could show. In any section the turn -out was nearly 100%. That might mean seven, or ten, and on one special occasion where the people had made a good deal of it, the attendance was seventeen. What a service that was - even a quartet was attempted. If any had known the expression they surely could have thanked them for the effort.

Sometimes the group was all men - others men and women and at a few extra happy spots, children. Did someone ask what they were, in the way of religious relationship? The young man never knew. He never asked. If anyone told of the old home ties he was generously interested. Otherwise, it was none of his business, so he felt.

How much the service meant to them he never knew. Five months, five times, they always attended, that was all he knew.

Mostly the singing was enjoyed, though one contest stands out. It was the service in the one and only schoolroom. There was an organ but no one to play it. The young man thought that "Jesus, Lover of my soul" might be familiar.

He started it and so did a tall, oldish man at the back of the little school, only he started on a different tune. Each held lustily on through one verse, and then, in the midst of more than discreet smiles, the tune was conceded to the older man and all was well.

On another occasion, the service was in a house for about five. There had been a hymn, Bible reading and a general prayer. As the second hymn was about done, the sound of horses was heard, and quite a party, seven, having come quite a distance, was eager for the service.

They really weren't late as far as they knew, so it seemed a pity to make them feel late. It was easy to sing again and read again, but to pray again, that was a major problem. If he said the same words the people from the beginning might think that that was all he knew. If he didn't say the same words what could God think about such freshness. However, the service opened again from the very beginning. He never knew what God thought about the second prayer.

Sermons in the services? He doesn't remember. They were not long - because he hadn't much to say. These people, away from the swing of the world - working so hard, enduring real hard ships - living on hope, sometimes a very greedy hope. Decent and helpful neighbours, harming no one - what did they need? He may never have known their need, but there was no scolding and no shifting to some far off time and place. Anything offered was for then and in the valley.

Recalling that the young fellow's very existence depended on the collection plate, he knows that he never needed a treasurer, and that he never lacked anything he did need.

It may be pointed out that he did not realize then how nearly perfect the pattern was. The services were for worship only. There were no other meetings nor organizations.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN, HOSPITALITY

In the other valley, with a business job, one bought everything. Eating was done in the company eating house.

In this valley, the most heart warming experience was of the generous and ever ready welcome and hospitality of the people. Always food, shelter, conversation, and feed for the horse according to their ability and beyond.

There is no recollection of any fuss, except in one case. Two bachelors were hosts. The call was to sit up and have something to eat. Then one of the men laughed and blamed the other. He pointed to the table and said, "There are no tools". And there were neither knife, fork nor spoon.

This being arranged the older man took a look at the table and then said the strangest thing. He said, "You can go ahead and ask a blessing - there is nothing that will hurt."

There was a home to which the young man was warned not to go. The man of that house was an atheist. Since the missionary did not clearly know what atheist was, he could not be at all clear what an atheist might be like.

So he went to see. They were delightful people -one of the nicest homes. And of course, the usual kind invitation to stay.

In the evening the young man went out to the corral to watch the atheist milk the cows. It was a bad evening for flies and mosquitoes. The cows were restless. The man spoke to them emphatically with strong words.

Bye and bye the young fellow had the impression that there was a degree of fluency greater than the situation really demanded, so he said, “If you are saying those words for my benefit, you can stop, because I know them all”. The man took it good naturedly, in fact if he had been a Christian and not an atheist he could not have shown any more good nature.

The next Sunday, passing down the trail near their house, the man stepped out and stopped the young fellow. “Go on in”, he said, pretending so unsuccessfully to be gruff, “the missus wants to see you".

In the house there was the most kindly welcome and a dainty lunch. They both knew that the long ride gave no time for food before starting.

The missionary came one afternoon to the cabin of one of the most careful bachelors - a man who baked his own bread, and it was good bread. There was extra work on, and four or five men helping. It was necessary to crowd in the cabin for the night and because of mosquitoes to keep the window and door closed.

What a night! Too many people, too little air, too many work clothes, too few baths.

In a few days the return trip. Again the offer of hospitality. As it came to the time for rest, the young fellow said to his host, "If you don't mind, could I sleep in the hay loft to-night?" The host laughed so heartily. He said, “I thought so, I'll tell you, it pretty nearly did me in, and I wondered how you could stand it. Sure, we can both have the hay loft. I think I would prefer it, too.”

But everywhere and always, the beauty of that great pioneer valley was the friendliness of its people, shown so generously in their unhesitating hospitality.

CHAPTER NINETEEN. RIVER CROSSINGS.

Maybe now the great river in the valley may be looked upon as a thing of beauty and a great help to the valley. In those days, it was only a difficult barrier between the people of each side of the valley, and especially a problem for the missionary who was supposed to reach all.

So the river had to be crossed.

At one place by row boat. The horse was put up on the east side of the river, a boat was there, you rowed across the river, walked a half a mile or so, held a service, walked back, rowed back, got your horse and that was all there was to it.

But there was the current of that strong river. And then the walk. Come now, don't complain about a half mile or so. Well you see the river had overflowed and then gone down. The flat land was still damp. The minute the young fellow stepped on the west bank, the mosquito signal system sent word to the first hundred thousand handy.

They advanced to the attack. He fought back. On and on, contesting every yard, until long before that piece of the walk was over he felt that he would like to give up and lie down for sheer weariness, at the danger of being bitten to death by mosquitoes.

They can be terrible attackers. They gave rise to the only deeply searching question on “the why of things” l ever put to him.

Having tucked the netting tightly under the mattress, and realizing that there were still one or two skeeters inside, the young man prepared to settle down and make the best of it. Then in the dark, from the other bed came the

voice of the farmer. "Say" he said, "Can you tell me why God made mosquitoes?" The emphasis of bitterness was all on one word, the word God. But the missionary had no answer for that one. Strange, but so many things they seemed to accept. But the hoards of mosquitoes - no.

Further north on the river a crossing could be made thanks to the generous strength of the man who made bread and who knew when a hay loft was better than a cabin. The technique was to shout at a certain place on the river bank. Bye and bye there would be an answering shout, and when he could, he would come across the river with a large raft affair, worked with great sweep like oars, all of it home made, and the farmer, the strong man to bring that heavy raft across against the current.

This time the horse had to cross too. The saddle and pad were put on the raft, an arrangement of rope about the horse's head - since he had to swim and the young man had to keep the horse's head up, the farmer to work and guide all across to the other bank.

The crossing was made, all the time being cheerfully warned that horses had been lost just in that sort of crossing.

Farther north still a crossing was made with a group of Indians. Coming to a spot where they had a sort of war canoe dug out, the saddles were put in the canoe, and the horses were driven into the water. They did not want to go, the water was icy cold.

Once in the river, Indians and missionary got into the canoe, and tried to get to the landing to meet the horses. They crossed in safety, were secured and saddled and everybody seemed content. It did seem to the young fellow like a good way to lose a horse in the river or to fail to pick it up in time on the other bank.

Farthest north of all, the most skilful and most unexpected crossing. Coming to a cabin on the East side of the river, the missionary found there a father and son. The son would be about twenty five, tall, not an ounce of unneeded flesh, the father looked as if he had been sick.

The question was, do you know of any place or any way for getting across the river? They looked at each other, and the son said, "I can get you across". "But", it was pointed out, "the horse too". "Yes" he said, "if you want to take the chance."

He had a small, canoe size dug -out, homemade and quite tippy, as if not quite in balance. He did the paddling; the missionary supported the horse's head. At different times the missionary had seen some fine paddling. He had enjoyed using a canoe himself, but never had he seen such graceful skill as this unknown young man showed in crossing that river.

For all these services, the general idea being that "he would do as much for me," the only exchange was a deeply meant, "thank you."

CHAPTER TWENTY. TRIAL OF FIRE.

Quite north in the valley, one Saturday evening there was a great display - a forest fire on the opposite side of the river. It was close enough that the strange hissing roar as the flames shot up the complete tree, could be distinctly heard.

There was assurance that no one had a cabin anywhere near the fire. The man and his wife, where the young fellow was staying seemed very anxious. The missionary was too inexperienced and too young. For him it was just a great spectacle that a chap was lucky to see. Just imagine to have such a grand - stand seat for a forest fire!

The next day, the young man had a chance to show his lack of experience. Riding south, following a fairly good trail through the woods, he came to fire. Sparks had travelled and now there was fire in the west bank.

The trail still seemed clear enough, but how far the fire extended and if it got worse he did not know.

He decided, however, to go ahead. The horse, being wiser, said “no”. But he, not knowing any better, said “yes”. And so, the horse in terror, and he wondering, they went into it.

Fortunately it was not too extensive. When he tried to explain afterwards to certain men of experience what he had done, they just stared at him, and shook their heads. One did say something about some people being meant to be hanged but what that had to do with a forest fire was not clear.

CHAPTER TWENTY ONE TO FIND OUT.

The month with five Sundays came, and the extra task assigned by the superintendent had to be faced. It would look if one had earned a Sunday off - but no, this was to be real work. The idea was that there were some people many miles farther north than missionaries or others usually went. How many, no one knew. Just how to get there was left up to the missionary.

Asking this one and that, they said yes, there were folks, and you go this or go that, and some said they were on the east side of the river and some said the west side. About the only way to find out seemed to be to go and find out.

It never entered his head then as to why he should go. If these people wanted that much privacy why should he or anyone else or any church go knocking at their door? Should they want anything they could ask. But no, the idea seemed to be, go and enter their life.

The best plan seemed to be to go north on the east side of the river. After some miles the road and trail ended, and then the long, hard struggle with a blazed trail.

Such a trail is usually not too difficult. It is made to be followed. But the fire had been over this trail. So many of the blazes were burned out. That sounds funny but it wasn't funny.

He dare not take risks, because if he could not go forward he always had to know the way by which he might give up and go back. He hated to give up, but at times it just seemed impossible.

But, finally, yes, and at long last, he came to the cabin where the father and son lived and there got passage across the river.

Still more trail on the west bank, and finally the clearing. One quite substantial house, where a man and his wife lived. There were about four or five other ranchers nearby.

A most hearty welcome was given by the man and his wife. They seemed such a happy couple. They had waited long for each other and then had settled in this far north spot, where living together was about all they could count on.

Interesting comments were made on the few other people of the little clearing. As in so many cases, there was one man about whom they gathered the most fantastic stories. Had it have been a later day they would have been sure that he was an "escapist”. At any rate he wanted the escape to continue because he deliberately had no contact with the missionary.

The next day was Sunday, so a service was held in the house, with seven present, oh in the best room with furs as rugs on the floor.

It may well be that the young fellow had romantic feelings about the service. There had never been a service of any kind that far north in the valley. They were one hundred and four miles from the town. In fact, both town and all the world seemed so far away.

And yet all that he could do was to use the familiar, both in hymns and thoughts.

There was, to his concern, a collection. It had been explained to him that there could be no worship without an offering, and therefore he felt that he must, although in many cases, and this was one of the cases, he had a sense of shame.

The feeling was shown in that he never counted the collection, just put it away, a little surprised that there was a bill in the offering. That bill was a worry. In the morning the man of the house spoke to the missionary. He was deeply confused. He said that by mistake they had put a twenty dollar bill in the collection and that while they would like to give that much they actually could not afford to do it.

The young fellow understood that talk better than most could. He knew only too well that if anyone had a twenty dollar bill they should frame it. The exchange for a more modest bill was arranged. But it was thrilling to think that once in that valley there had been a twenty dollar bill in his possession - even if he had never known that he had it.

All that remained of that journey was to get back to headquarters - a trip just as trying as going in, but minus the uncertainty of destination of the trip north.

It was on the way back that he joined a party of Indians, riding along the trail for miles in silence, and then joining with them in the crossing of the river.

When about fifteen miles from home a most dismaying thing happened. For the first and only time the horse gave up. With a long sigh of utter weariness he sank to the road. The trip had been too hard. The rider felt something the same but he simply couldn't quit yet.

Soon the horse was on his feet and sometimes with the missionary walking and toward the end riding again, the journey was completed, and we were home, where even the bush tail rats seemed part of accustomed things.

It was probably mock heroics but he never meant it so. But the trip had seemed so rash and so uncertain, as to warrant a letter being left for his mother. He destroyed the letter, and slept.

CHAPTER TWENTY TWO.

During the summer there had been talk that there should be a log church, somewhere not far from the post office.

The missionary, thinking of how close he came to having no place to stay, but for the deserted granary, said that there should be a room as part of the building that would be the missionary's home. This idea seemed to be accepted.

Logs, at least, standing trees, were promised. Some people in the town put up forty dollars for shingles, window frames and such like.

Now it looked like the time if the valley cathedral was to be built.

But the young fellow was still just eighteen. He didn't know people very well. There were generous offers from two or three of a piece of land as site for the church. But no piece of land was near the centre of things.

Then, the offer in each case not being acceptable to the other, the whole thing was off, the strong people withdrew and there could be no church.

Somebody talks about the tears of children. Well, this was a young man's bitter disappointment, and there was nothing that he could do about it. He couldn't cut trees and he couldn't build.

So he sat alone in his house and felt, of course, the depth of failure.

There was a knock at the door and a man of about forty came in. He was a man who would have been more at home in the mining end of the other valley, save that lumbering and not mining was his line. He was not quite acceptable to the good people of the valley. No, not bad, but just not steady, not thrifty, in a valley where thrift was the way out of that kind of life.

He sat for a while. The young fellow too, had learned never to rush a conversation. Finally he said, “They let you down, eh?”The young fellow was cautious about a charge that serious. He said it looked like that but probably they knew best.

Then after a pause, "You were kind of set on getting that building there?”

Then the young fellow opened his mind and showed the special importance of having a place that the missionary could call home.

At long last the visitor, said, "If you really want it, I'll get some of the boys together and we’ll build it, down near the post office."

And so it was. What a time of work and excitement, and probably just a touch of not too noble joy at snatching victory out of the hands of those who wouldn't play.

They even put the missionary on one end of a cross -cut saw, and then made the old joke, "look, we don't mind you riding on your end of the saw, but you've got to quit dragging your feet."

It was an exciting and a happy time, especially as towards the difficult part everyone came in on the undertaking. They were desirous that the corners be good, with the best dove-tailing. It was pointed out that so and so did that kind of thing better than anyone in the valley, but that he wouldn't come in on a job like this.

But he did, and the last the young fellow saw of the job it was waiting for the promised supplies from the town.

Probably they never knew, but the little building could only have been because of the efforts of a man who was never a church man.

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE.

It was no longer May, but getting into October. The missionary was still eighteen but now a very old eighteen.

He knew he had to go and leave his valley.

One of the last days he spent with the man who did the dove tailing on the little church. He did not usually entertain missionaries. He had made the young fellow very welcome, all the time keeping up a certain gruffness.

The evening darkened, the conversation lagged. Finally, as if with an effort the man who was supposed to be rough and supposed not to care said, " there's something I'd like to put up to you. Why are you leaving us? We need you. You've just got to know us and we know you. We want you to stay. Why are you leaving us?"

Of course, in that valley he had no right to use the word, "we". There was no congregation. These were all sturdy individuals. But some way he felt that he had the right to say "we".

The young fellow knows now, having been fortunate enough to receive a few tributes by the way, that he never received a more generous, more sincere tribute.

So he was absolutely frank. He said, "When I came west I promised my mother that I would come back in a year. If I hurry I can make it and keep my promise".

The gruffness was all gone, as the older man said so quietly, as if talking from some place far away, "Of course, you have to go" and then added, a most unusual admission from such a man, " if I could keep a promise to my mother, I'd gladly travel a lot further than you are going."

And so, the journey out, the sale of the horse and the saddle made, ticket secured, and the valley left behind.

CHAPTER TWENTY FOUR. VALLEY DAYS, GOOD-BYE.

Years after, the missionary travelled down his second valley in the comfort of a first class Pullman, on a great railway system. It was dark. He was rather glad.

It could not be his valley, the place of trails and only one road, of pioneer friendliness: the place of no bridges and yet rivers to be crossed.

He knew his valley was gone. He was glad it was dark. In another year, he travelled his first valley. All the beauty of sun and sky and lake was still there.

But there were no miners. All simplicity was gone. There was no steam boat on the glorious lake. The speedy bus skirted the shores of the lake making such good time.

That valley too was gone.

And those valley days would never come again in Canada. There just were no more such places.

But to have lived there, and to have shared the life of the people, will always give in memory a richness to the valley days.

July 12, 1947. Russell McGillivray.

The chief clerk said, “Mac, your papers for the Brotherhood are not complete. You need a doctor’s certificate.”

Mac carried that can’t be bothered look, which can sit so naturally on a seventeen year old face. “Why not let it ride, “he said. “I don’t care whether I ever belong to the Brotherhood.”

“It’s o.k. with me,” the chief answered, “except that you can’t hold your job here unless you do belong, so you better get busy.”

“But gee, a Doc. I don’t know any Doc. Never needed one. You just sign on there and say, ‘Doesn’t need a doctor’.”

“I think you’re half scared to go,” said the chief. “But there’s no trouble. Just go to the company doctor; he’s the Brotherhood doctor too; nice cosy set up. He’ll not likely even look at you, but just sign the papers to say that you and Sandow are all the same.”

“Well, you say so, I’ll go, and give the doctor a thrill in having a chance to look at a real he-man.”

But the doctor was different. At first it looked as if he was going to sign without looking. Then he started listening, putting that do-hickey telephone of his in his ears, and taking a good listen at Mac’s chest, back and front.

After a time he pushed the papers away from him, and said, “I’m sorry, boy, but I’m not signing.”

“What do you mean,” asked Mac. “Do I go to some other doctor? They told me to come to you.”

“Well, you can go to any other doctor you like, but I am sure that you will get no signature on that paper.”

“I gather, doctor, that there is something wrong. Not serious, I hope. I’ve never been sick; got no time to be sick. Tell me, what is it?”

“I just don’t know, boy. I can’t make it out. Do you drink and smoke and carouse around?”

“None of those, doctor. I have no time, nor money, nor desire for that sort of thing.”

“Well all I can say, boy, is that your constitution is all shot. If you haven’t been sick, I am not saying how soon you will be, but my feeling is that if you were sick, you wouldn’t get better. Now you know why I won’t sign. What have you been doing with yourself?”

“My job is a night one. I start at ten at night and quit at seven in the morning. My work is on books, having to do with freight trains coming in during the night. Sometimes I have a lunch during the night, but lately I haven’t been hungry, so I don’t bother. Then I go home, sleep the morning, sometimes up for the midday meal, sometimes not, and then as soon as I get a bite, I start to study.”

“Study what?”

“Well, you see, I left school when I was eleven. I finished up public school somewhat this way, and now I’m trying the high school. Some way it’s not so easy to handle, but I think I can make it.”

“How long have you been trying this particular arrangement?”

“Oh not long, just about four months now. Don’t tell me I’ve got to quit.”

“I’m trying to tell you that you are not going to have any say in the matter. The body that is yours, which has been doing this night work, and this studying, is just about ready to quit on you. You should really quit your job and the studying too. Better talk it over with your Dad.”

“My Dad is dead; there’s just my Mother, and gee she’s got enough to worry her, without me putting this stuff on her.”

“I’m sorry, boy, but you’ll have to talk it over with her. If there is anything that I can do, I’ll be glad to do it. Right now, it just seems as if all I can do is to advise you to quit.”

Mac just couldn’t picture worrying her mother. Always she had seemed to have to carry too much in the way of burden. But there seemed no way out of it. The money from the job was mighty important, and quite apart from the frightening things the doctor had said, the job was not his without the proper signature on those papers. So it had to be faced.

If he was somewhat shocked at the seriousness of the doctor, he was nearly bowled over at the way his mother took the news. He had seen her under many trying circumstances. This just seemed too much.

After a time, Mac said, “Don’t take it too hard, Mum. We’ll handle it some way. I don’t want to stop studying, but I will, right away, until the doctor says it is o.k.”

“But I’m afraid, my dear boy, that the solution for this is more difficult than just to stop studying. I’ll have to see your Uncle.”

There was an Uncle, his Mother’s brother. To Mac he was a kind of fairy-tale figure – always there to meet a need, and always some way able to bring a solution. He was a wonderful brother and Uncle, and always to Mac, as boy and man, there was the deepest gratitude for the thoughtful, saving qualities of that man.

As usual, he had a solution. He put it almost as if he had been waiting for this change to employ a nephew, although Mac sensed then, and found to for sure afterwards, that the proposed job was made up, on the spur of the moment, especially for him.

The Uncle was in an executive position in connection with a gold mine in British Columbia. Mac could have a job there. The pay would be so much, and it sounded very large, but then it was pointed out that so much would be taken off for meals, and then the amount would be ten dollars a month more than he had been getting. He could keep himself and still send enough home to be a help.

Mac was thrilled; from the heart of Ontario to the interior of British Columbia was such a long way, a wonderful trip. For his mother it was not so thrilling. It was a long way to send a son about whom the doctor had said such serious things.

The trip was arranged, with the Uncle, as usual, making the rather heavy financial arrangements, and seeming to keep it on the basis that naturally his company was so glad to get the new employee that a matter of expense was neither here nor there. Mac did not know of any seeming let down in travelling tourist. In fact, it seemed all to the good, because in the tourist car you could take a lunch basket. Now that things were opening up, his appetite had returned, and it was quite a picnic to have a basket of food prepared by his mother, presumably enough to take him across Canada.

Much of the trip is a blur. Some things stand out. One was the thrill of being host to this interesting man, his Uncle. He was riding in the classy Pullman, but he came back at the time for the first meal, and so they sat together and. ate some of the things that his mother had provided. Mac did not know why he was thrilled then, but he knows now. It was that strange delight and happiness which he had when he seemed to be host. All his life, there seemed to be the sealing of a compact, the completing of an understanding, if he could break bread with someone for whom he cared.

Another unforgettable thrill was the first sight of the first sight of the mountains beyond Calgary. Even now that particular view seems as of something unreal. Then it was just like the imposition of a startling piece of scenery.

This journey, being in the days before the spiral tunnel, another great thrill was the trip through the Kicking -Horse Pass; the endeavour to see as much as could be seen, to the annoyance, quite likely, of busy enough trainmen.

And finally, the last of the train, as a full stop was made at Vernon. From there down the glorious Okanagan Lake, in that strange steamboat with the wide paddle arrangement at the back, so that here and there along the shore, the boat could rest its nose right at a landing.

As Mac stood on the deck looking at the busyness of Vernon and the small enough train which had brought them down from Sicamous on the main line, he was jolted into a realization of just what the doctor had had to say about him. One who knew something of the situation stood beside him and. made one of those breaks which just stick for always in the mind. They said to him, “take a good look at the train; you may never see another." It seemed strange to Mac to hear such a statement. He had all the hopefulness of seventeen. The trip had been such a great experience that he had quite forgotten to do any thinking about what might happen to him.

And on that boat, what enjoyment of food. Not that he had picked up a great appetite. But the diner on the train had frightened him. In all the years Mac has heard about the prices on the diner being higher and higher. But never again did he have the feeling that had been his on that trip. He did not know how much to dare. And now on the boat, waited on most expertly by Japanese the meal was priced at 75 cents. For that amount one could go ahead and eat. The whole story of' expense was told.

Then at the southern end of the lake, another experience, at Penticton, to stay in a hotel. Not of course the unknown luxury of a room all to himself. A much travelled young man from far away Australia shared the room, but even to be the guest of a hotel for a night was something for the record. And tomorrow- well tomorrow would mean more travelling, still about thirty miles to go, and now with no train or steamboat to help.

At last, Mac was in the story-book land. The rest of the trip had to be made by stage and what a stage. As he faced it in the morning he could scarcely believe it. It was drawn by six horses- oh, not big, powerful fire-reel horses. They seemed small and none too fat, but there were six, and Mac found that they could do the job. The coach seemed to sway from side to side and forwards rather easily. It was explained that instead of the usual springs the whole body of the carriage was hung on straps.

During the trip, with his excited eyes going in all directions Mac saw a country which seemed to be just brown and grey and dead and very dusty. At one part of the trip, a man who looked like an Indian came over a bit of a rise by the side of the road on a horse. To Mac it looked almost like a circus, or if he had known of it, like a rodeo. He exclaimed to his Uncle and he said, “oh, that’s nothing; in a few weeks you will be doing far more spectacular stunts than that on a horse.” About the possibility of that Mac could make no promises even to himself.

And so the long journey was over, or nearly so. The stage stopped at a store, in a place of a few houses, another store, a frame hotel and a white frame church, the calendar picture kind. This was the town but not the place of the mine. That was about three miles right up a winding canyon road. It is strange what blanks memory will leave. There was qu.ite a company, at least four people and a good deal of luggage, and yet Mac can never recall how that first trip in to the mine was made. First an abandoned mine called the Brown Bear was passed. Then farther on, another abandoned mine called the Morning Star and beyond the Morning Star was Mac's mine.

It was not a large mine nor a large camp; two bunk houses, a cook house and eating place, an office, a few other houses, and all dominated by the shaft house and the mine buildings.

To provide for the new office staff a room had been built on to the office itself. The room was simplicity itself. There was a small camp bed, a shelf fixed into the wall to do as table or desk, one straight chair, and wonder of wonders, a small piece of carpet on the floor, and a window, facing east. The window made it that most glorious of' rooms, a room with a view. Away across the valley, always high and lifted up, there was a round headed mountain, often with snow on it, and so often with glorious rays of sunlight on it. The men called it Baldy, but Mac came to find that in the mountains there were lots of hills called Baldy.

During the day the office staff, an accomplished Englishman and himself, were kept busy enough. It was a peculiar office as far as the usual standards go. There was no telephone, and very few interruptions. There were no callers, no travelling salesmen to show their wares.

For the evening and night Mac had the place entirely to himself. If the experience were his now he might think that he was very lonely. There was no radio, no record player, no callers, few magazines, few enough books- in fact his library was exactly two books, neither of which he could make much out of- ; but there was plenty of silence.

The job had interesting variety. It was now November, and cool. Mac had to chop the wood, and keep the office fire going. That was no great hardship, except, for a while, the matter of chopping. You see Mac was entirely city. An ax was new to him. The miners were quite amused at his efforts. They never offered to help. No, indeed. That was the young fellow’s job. They did offer a suggestion to Mac that he should stand in a tub while he did the chopping. They said it would be much safer as far as his feet were concerned. But the wood was chopped; the fire was kept, no damage was done, and the men lost interest.

The important part of the job was typing addresses on endless numbers of envelopes. The mine was a matter of stockholders. The idea was to interest more and more people, and to quicken the interest of those who already held shares. So again and again and again, hundreds of letters were sent out. It came to be one of the recurring nightmares of Mac's life. In after years when some outfit for which he was working suggested sending out a letter, Mac groaned inwardly. Even if he did not have to do the work, he hated that grind of getting out a letter.

But letters bring up the third part of the job, the real thrill. Letters had to be posted at the post office in the town three miles away. Mail was picked up there, and the mail coming in, with cheques enclosed, was mighty important. It was Mac's job to get the mail to town and to bring the precious mail back. And the journey? Sit tight- to be on a horse, a bronco, with a real Western saddle, and everything. At last, Mac was right where the West begins. True, he had certain ideas, one of which sort of mixed things up a bit.

The Boss, the Uncle himself, was still in Camp. He was often away, but he did stay to see Mac get started. So the Boss said, “Dandy (the sad-eyed bronco, with the perpetual droop) will need spurs." Mac was shocked. Oh no, surely not. That would be cruel. He was pretty sure that that sort of thing was not done by decent people. The Boss grinned and said, “We’ll see.”

So for the horse. Mac tried to get on Dandy with about the same grace and speed that one would use to get on a Toronto or Hamilton streetcar of those days. The horse was so surprised and amused that he forgot to throw Mac into the middle of next week. Then the trip. Most exasperating. When Dandy saw a bit that might be eaten, he stopped and ate. Mac kicked and yelled, and said things, probably not the right things, but none of these things moved Dandy, until Dandy was good and ready. So the trip was made, taking more and more time each day, until the Boss said, “you've expressed yourself, and lived up to what you think is right in the matter, but the trip has to be made in faster time. That means spurs,” And so it was spurs, and the trip settled down to routine.

Mac never at any time fooled himself that he could ride. He could stay on and came to greatly enjoy the trip in the dry, glorious air and sunshine, down past the Morning Star, and then back beyond the Morning Star.

In spite of the number of men working at the Mine there was very Iittle personal mail; all for the Company, not much for the men. It was as if they were the forgotten men, or the lost patrol, or something. They were a mixture in appearance and quite likely a great mixture in background and story. But Mac was strange in his relation to the men. It was absolutely a contemporary relationship; it was of the day. Anything of the past was never spoken about. And when any of them went on their way to work at some other camp there was no word ever of trying to keep in touch with them.

As far as Mac knew they were all good miners. He heard this one or that one referred to as “flannel mouthed” whatever that meant. Mac knew nothing then about labour-management relationships. He thought the company was all right. As far as he was concerned he was getting paid to get his health. One day Mac spoke to a group of the men at the mine shaft about loyalty to the company. One of them said, pointing to a long-handled shovel, “if I had that shovel up in the air when the noon whistle blew, I'd just leave it there. “

They drank whiskey, sometimes lots of it. They said that it was the only thing that would clear the dust of the mine out of their throat. Probably it was. More and more Mac had a feeling of understanding, seeing the bunk houses where they lived, and knowing of the hard work and the letterless lives, that the whiskey was for them a way out, It was their road beyond the Morning Star.

Except the French cook, who did such a good job, for a bunch of men who ate without appreciation. They could complain, but never say that a thing was good. So when the cook was fed up, his was dope. Not the lights and noise of the saloon. No, the quiet of his bunk, and off to fairy land. And then, no breakfast, no nothing. Of all the desolate places on earth, to Mac one of the pictures of forlorn desolation was that mining camp cook house, with the cook off on a dope spree.

So the job settled down into a health giving routine. In fact, Mac never thought about his health; he could sleep, and work, and ride, and lift up his eyes to Baldy, and revel in the air and sunshine. He was getting stronger in every way, but there was no check on that. It was just happening. There were a couple of real jolts not far around the corner, but Mac knew nothing about that; and thought of the days as filled full of addressed envelopes, until, thank goodness, there would be no more envelopes.

Then jolt number one came. He didn't look much like a jolt, about five foot ten, not lean, ,just solidly built, iron grey hair, fresh face, and smiling eyes, china blue. Mac gave no attention to him as he came into the office. Callers were few and far between, but certainly no one would call to see him. Anyway if he looked up the first thing he knew he would get some Montreals addressed to Toronto.

But the rest of the office staff, the Secty. Treas. of the company soon made it clear that the caller was for Mac and carried out the introduction. He said this is the Rev. Mr. Cameron from the Similkameen Valley and he wishes to talk to you. Mac could not believe it. A Presbyterian minister to see him.

Mr. Cameron was very pleasant. He pointed out that he had been accustomed to holding a service every so often in the nearby town, in the calendar-like white church. Now he was supposed to go out to the Coast to some church gathering, and would not be back in time to hold the service, and, in a word, most explosive word, would Mac take the service and preach a sermon.

As far as Mac was concerned, if he had been asked to take over the duties of the President of the mining company he would have felt more as if he could do the job than this business of a church service and a sermon. He explained to Mr Cameron that he had never done any such thing nor spoken an address nor preached a sermon.

But, those smiling blue eyes would not be denied. For no reason that he could give to himself, Mac consented and Mr Cameron rode happily away, mission completed.

Then the preparation; first the sermons Mac never knew why, does not know to this day, but the text that he decided to work on as a sermon was, “He taught them as one having authority and not as the scribes.” Why such a text for one who felt that he had no authority of any kind?

Once the sermon was written, the learning of it by speaking it out loud was strangely assisted at the mine. Air was pumped into the mine by a large air compressor. Sometimes the man in charge on the four to twelve shift was not on the job. It was no trick to watch and see that the machine kept going. So Mac was told off, after office hours, without envelopes or type writer, to watch the compressor. It was a great loose-jointed noisy machine. The very place. There Mac paced up and down and explained again and again to all the world, just what the text of his sermon meant. He did have a saving sense of humor, but not just then, because it never dawned on him how funny, or how very appropriate, that his first effort at public speaking was greatly assisted by an air pumping machine.

The Sunday came, as all long dreaded operation days come. Mac knew nothing about careful timing as for a radio programme. But he had tried to work it out that the service would go at least an hour. And the people were out on the road, on their way home, in thirty five minutes. Mac felt so defeated. The bottom just seemed to drop out of so much. He was not in a position to notice, but the people seemed strangely bright, almost gay, as if this thirty five minute business suited them down to the ground.

So that was the end of that jolt. But it really wasn’t. There were two more cracks in it, enough to last a long time.

As soon as he could, Mr Cameron made the long ride, and came to say thanks for the service given. Then, as if to heal any soreness there might be in the young man’s mind, he said, “I seldom get the opportunity to hear someone speak; would you please take the sermon while I take the next time I am this way?” He was clever. It was the healing that the young man needed. Mac consented.

Once again there was the grind of preparation, with and without the air compressor. Then the service. Now, having become a man of some experience in public speaking Mac decided to try certain things that he had admired and noticed in others. One was, at the time he announced his text to shut the Bible with quite a bang, stand right out and talk, and prove to the world that he had no notes or anything else hidden in the Book. So he did, but came pretty clear to proving to the people that he had nothing, not even notes.

Mr. Cameron was to stay at the mine that Sunday evening. So Mac and the minister rode side by side up the winding canyon trail. It was very dark. There was no chance for the blue eyes to be effective. But the kindly voice was in operation. He said a number of very nice things about the sermon, and then —. Yes, the man had grace and courtesy, but also courage. He said, "There was something; I scarcely like to mention it, but I feel that I must. I did not like the way you shut the Bible, neither the shutting of it nor the bang. You see, if you are going to use something from the Book you should keep it open until you have finished, and I do not think that any book should be treated to the bang you gave that Book. I hope you do not mind. I am sorry that I have to speak about this."

It was a bit painful, but Mac took his medicine, and incidentally, he never forgot it. Then, being very anxious to change the subject he asked Mr Cameron about his work in the West. The old minister said that he had been in the Caribou and in the Crow's Nest in the construction days. Mac, with his mind filled with the ideas of Wild West, asked, "Did you carry a gun and have lots of fights?" Mr Cameron said, "No, I never carried a gun, and I never had a fight." That was terribly disappointing. So Mac insisted that surely there were touch spots. The old minister, to try and satisfy Mac's eagerness, said, "There was a time when it was touch and go. It was down in the Crow's Nest. I was holding the service in a caboose. I had started. Two men came in, both keeping their hats on, one with his pipe in his mouth. They sat down smirking. The foreman noticed one and said, take our hat off and that pipe out of your mouth. But the other sat, with a swagger of mischief on his face, still wearing his hat. I finished the Scripture reading, and then said that in my study of the customs and practices of religion I had noticed many strange things. One was that amongst the Jewish people the men worshiped with their hats on. And, I said, if there is any Jew here present, he is quite at liberty to worship with his hat on. The hat was off like a flash. But you see, that was not so tough."

Mr Cameron only came into Mac's life once again, when he brought a Superintendent of Missions through from the Lower Okanagan to the Similkameen. Then Mac lost him. Just as with the miners, all the contacts of life were so much of the day, and when they passed, well, they passed for good.

But there was one other result from all this. One evening, all alone in his office room, Mac was pacing up and down, practising aloud that second sermon. He had both ears alive for any footfall, so that he could stop talking in time. But before he could stop, on this particular evening, a knock came at the door. Mac answered and invited in Fred Hawkins, the oldest and quietest miner in the camp. These were lonely places. Men did go off their rocker, so Fred looked carefully round and asked, almost gingerly, "who were you talking to?" Mac could have made the circle complete by quietly saying, "To myself." That would have been foolish, risky, so Mac told Fred that he was trying out a sermon since he was to preach in the town church. "Yes", Fred said, "we have heard about you talking down there. Why don't you give us something here? No one thinks that we need anything in the camp. Everything for the town."

Mac was shocked and ashamed. "Why I never thought that any of the men would come for anything I could give them. They see enough of me. I'm around all the time. Fred, they just wouldn't come."

"You give it a try and I'll promise you that they'll be there", Fred answered.

And so began the queerest type of weekly gathering. The meeting place was the eating house. After the evening meal on Sunday, the tables were pushed back, the chairs and benches sort of lined up. The French cook showed a high church background. On a small table up at the front he put a large biscuit tin, and draped over the tin, a piece of white cloth.

Fred kept his word. The men came. Mac had more than a suspicion that at times there was pressure, a case of, "come on over to the meeting, or else." The idea was that it was to be pretty much of a wide open sing-song, and

wide open it was. There was no instrument. Any man suggesting a song was liable to have to show how it could be done. Roll out the barrel was not yet the thing, or something like it might have been tried as a theme song. There were lots of hymns, nearly every hymn that was every sung anywhere, and there was every other song that such men like to sing.

There was no time limit on the gathering. Pretty much a matter of quitting when everyone was exhausted. Some slept; some came even if they had had a few drinks. Some Chinese from wood cutting gangs came, were pleasant and smiling, and fortunately, suggested no songs.

At the beginning the understanding was that there would be no offering. The expression of the men who would talk was that religion was pretty much a matter of taking up the coppers. Mac pointed out that since he was on the company pay-roll it didn't cut any ice with him. But on that one trip through made by the Superintendent of Missions, he said it was bad, a mistake, that there should be an offering. So the men agreed, said they felt differently about it now, but again made their position clear, that as far as they were concerned there was none of it going to buy red flannel petticoats for heathen.

So with the contact with the town, the relationships with the men in the Sunday gatherings, the fact that no letters were returned as of wrong address, that Dandy was behaving and that he was feeling half friendly to his strange rider – well, all told things looked nice and quiet and secure for Mac. There weren't. The other jolt was heading along but everything seemed normal.

It seemed to Mac pretty much a man's world. The lurid romances that were supposed to strike such camp life never seemed to come the way of this camp. There was a house, so it was said. But not for long. Evidently it had no place in this set-up. The only wistful bit of romance came from a very quiet Chinese. He did market gardening, and washing. He seemed to work about eighteen hours a day, and looked like it. Mac liked Charlie. Everybody called him Charlie and he seemed to like it. Mac presumed to say to him, "Charlie, you work far too hard. Why?" He replied quietly, "I know I work lots; make lots of money; send back to my wife in China, every month." Somebody said that Charlie was just stringing him, but Mac believed him.

The wild life for miners, and town's people, and travellers was provided by two stopping houses. The provision of all pretty much in the form of hard liquor. Mac never was on friendly terms with the keepers of these places. He never felt that his men were angels, and that they wanted drink and a place to drink. But he did feel that all too often they were 'rolled'. The thing that mattered Mac was what was done to the men after they were drunk.

In this connection, Mac had a thrilling experience and got a queer promise. Coming down the canyon trail one morning Mac saw that the stable across the way from one of these stopping houses was on fire. With the assistance of a rancher who was passing, Mac fought the fire. The rancher suggested taking long handled shovels and knocking the roof off. That was great fun. Not only to be in a fire but to have a chance to knock something to pieces, and be cheered for it. It was a smudgy job, but finally the fire was out.

The next day as Mac was about to ride by, the owner came out to express his gratitude. He was an old man, a pathetically old man. He said, "I know you don't like my business. I can't get out of it now. I'm too old, but I'll promise you this, that from now on I'll not sell liquor to any man after he is drunk." Sounds queer to you, but it was something of importance if the old man kept his work. Mac never knew whether he did.

And now the winter was passing. It had not been hard. It was still quite frosty up at the camp. The low plain below the town looked quite different. One day, the stage being late, Mac rode down to the flat country and on the southern exposure of a little gully found some wee yellow flowers. He had to hurry back to the town and the mail,

because some way the sight of those wee flowers made him so home-sick that he wanted to cry, and in a man's world, that just mustn't be.

About a month or so after the wee flowers, the hint of the big jolt came. Going to be fired? Well, yes, and no. Not Mac to be fired, but everybody. The road was going to be, the Brown Bear abandoned, the Moring Star abandoned, and beyond the Morning Star, Mac's mine, and the camp, and his little room, abandoned.

For some time Mac had sensed some strain around the office. The Boss was away, on one of those every recurring trips of trying to interest more people in the mine. It was said that the times were not good. The phrase that Mac heard again and again, was, 'financial stringency'. It just seemed to mean the thing that Mac had known plenty about for years, that there just wasn't enough money.

And then about the gold; it was there. Mac had seen it. Plenty of it. It was hard to get. All sorts of things had to be done to get it. And it wasn't in big bunches. So that finally it came down to this that the gold was worth so much a ton, and it cost so much more a ton to get it out.

So the boss came back. Mac was young. He has known a bit of a scare about the possibility of going out. But he had never known the terrific shock of failure. All his young heart went out to his Boss, his Uncle. He wanted to say, "Let's keep at it, let's try a little more." But there was no chance. There was no money. The Bank would not advance any more, so, that was that.

Fortunately all the strain of those days of wind-up is pretty well a blur for Mac. The picture only comes clear as he and his Uncle are on that boat again at Penticton, this time on the way out.

The lake was beautiful in the morning sun, the whole valley glorious. It was a serious business for both men, so serious for the older man. Mac thought with the hopefulness of youth that sometime he would come back to the lovely valley, but someway he knew that he would never again go up the canyon trail beyond the Morning Star. He never has, and never expects to.

January 12.48 Russell McGillivray

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

“What can you do?” the doctor asked in a bossy way. The doctor was the typical company doctor, quickly going through a routine and not liking it if anything jarred him out of that routine.

Just now he was staring at a fingerless left hand belonging to a thin boy standing before him. The doctor knew that the hand was no fault of the boy’s; that it had always been that way. Nevertheless the doctor seemed inclined in a cranky way to make something personal out of it.

So he snapped out, “What can you do?”

The lad, nearing sixteen, but seeming older, had been around. He was called Mac by those who worked with him, and a nickname and family name at home. He wasn’t inclined to let the doctor get away with the cranky tone and question.

“What do you mean, what can I do?”

“Just that”, the doctor snapped back. “You clerk in a railway office. What do you do if you get fired from there?”

“That’s easy”, Mac answered, “I’d just go to the other railway and get a job.”

The doctor brushed this to one side. “Have you any schooling? Do you know anything beside this job you’re on?”

“No, no schooling. Quit school when I was eleven, and this kind of work is all I know. Why? What’s wrong with my job?” Mac came back.

“It’s your hand”, the doctor said.”You should know something else. Some day you could be a charge on the public. Did you ever think of taking a course of any kind?”

Now that was a poser. Mac had never thought about any course. The way that he was to take seemed clear enough, up and up in the railroad office until the President’ s job was reached. But there had been a course. In reality some others had thought about it rather than himself. He had heard his grandmother speak of it. Now, not as expressing any real desire, but for something to answer, he said, “I have sometimes thought I would like to be a minister.”

Not until long after did Mac know just what a hard one that was for the doctor to take. The doctor not only had no interest in ministers, but more, he disliked them. However, having got an answer to his question, he rather gruffly ended the appointment by saying, “Well you’d better do something about it, or some course.”

Quite likely many seemingly very grave decisions are made in a casual way. There was no pacing of any floor for Mac; there was no blinding light, no voice heard by him and not by others. He had to hurry. There was a walk of about fifteen minutes before he could get home, get something to eat and back at his place in the office.

The walk was very much as usual, and there was no other reason except the doctor’s question to impel him to walk right into the kitchen and say to his mother who was working at the stove, preparing dinner for the family, “Mum, I’ve decided I’m going to be a minister.”

His mother just looked at him. She knew just how impossible it was that he should ever be a minister. But she measured up, and said,

“I’m glad: that’s fine. Your grandmother will like that.”

If the young fellow really meant business he was declaring there one of the most selfish decisions that a man could make. And if his mother really meant what she said when she said “that’s fine”, she was making an unselfish decision in the best tradition of fine mothers.

Mac’s mother was a widow. She needed then, and would need for many years, the help that her son could bring in by sticking at his job. Some day his responsibility might end, or be taken over by others, but at that time his strength and time belonged to his mother. Instead he said, “I’ve decided to be a minister.”

He was all weirdly mixed up. Mac had no intention of quitting his job. He had no idea how long it would take to complete a course for the ministry. There was no use asking about the cost. He had nothing. His mother could not do anything and there was no one who could, or would, do anything.

There was some notion that something could be done at night to complete those untaken public school years. After that, well, keep on at night: do something by correspondence courses.

The doctor had said, “Do something”. He had said, “The ministry”. His mother had courageously said, “That’s fine”. But he knew that he had to get back to work and stay at work.

CHAPTER TWO

“What on earth have you been doing with yourself”, the doctor asked, with more concern than gruffness. This time he was not looking at Mac’s hand but at his face.

Mac answered, “I’ve been working”.

“But”, the doctor exploded, “you’re almost burnt out. I couldn’t give a nickel for what you have left in the way of a constitution. What hours do you work?”

“I work from ten at night until seven in the morning” was the answer.

“I see”, said the doctor. “And I suppose you eat a good lunch at night and get plenty of sleep in the day time.”

“Well no,” Mac slowly admitted. “I used to eat at night but everything got to tasting like sawdust so I don’t bother. And as for sleeping, well I can’t sleep all day or I’d never get my studying done.”

“What do you mean, studying?” the doctor almost roared out.

Then Mac reminded him of the interview of a year or more past, and the direction to so something about a course, even if that course was for the ministry.

He told the doctor about finding a most helpful public school principal who in six months at nights took him through the junior and senior fourth and prepared him to try the entrance examinations for high school.

Mac could not make it clear to the doctor what a tremendous struggle that had been. He never could make it clear to anyone save those who had gone somewhat the same way. In the years between there had been no need to

study, nor to memorize, and again and again it did seem as if the memory had gone and the power of concentrating had departed for all time.

Then came the examination, and Mac felt that he was so big and so old amongst the small, young boys trying their Entrance. But he had succeeded and gained the right to proceed to a high school.

The slang expression, “Where do we go from here” was not known then. But Mac made it clear to the doctor that that was the situation.

There was no chance of quitting work. There wasn’t the least glimmer of hope of getting in to a high school. It would seem as if, such a period of study having been successfully completed, that there would be some rest.

But no – there was a drive now inside Mac, and against the wishes and judgement of his kind teacher, the school principal, a start was made at the high school subjects. An attempt was made to get Greek out of a Greek grammar with no teacher to assist.

It was slow and discouraging work. Mac realized that he was not making any headway and that only made him try all the harder. So, he ate less and slept less. And that was the story – night work, study, no appetite and little sleep – that he had to give to the doctor.

The doctor was very grave. Mac couldn’t understand his concern. Apart from an over-powering weariness he felt well enough.

The doctor said, “You will have to stop your studying. Some day you may take it up again, but for now you must stop entirely. You’ll have to give up your night work. It is not a matter of getting the company to transfer you to another job. You’ve got to get outside, away from in-door work. For how long I do not know.”

To all this Mac assured the doctor that he could not quit his job: that the money was of vital importance. The studying, with regret, could be stopped meanwhile, but only with the hope of going at it again.

The doctor took one final, very stern move. He said, “I appreciate both your desires and your difficulties. I can’t force you to do what I say. But to the company insurance plan I am going to say that I cannot recommend you as being a wise risk to be carried. I am sorry, but you have hurt yourself too seriously.”

Again there was that walk home to face his mother who had had to face so much. Now it was not to tell her that he had made a decision for a profession, but to tell her that the doctor had refused to pass him.

He would have saved his mother if he could. With all the strange mixture of selfishness of his decision which was to deprive his mother of his much needed help, he deeply loved his mother. To serve her and to spare her any anxiety had long been his way of life.

Mac knew that there was nothing that could be done to make any helpful change. Not realizing the gravity of the situation appreciated by the doctor he felt that with the dropping for the time being of the studying he could pick up some sleep and so stay on the job. If only he wasn’t so tired, even as walked home.

Once again into the kitchen and to his mother, “Mum, the doctor thinks I’ve got to get out in the open, change my job, but how can I?”

It puzzled Mac, that his mother was as serious as the doctor about the whole thing. She acted as if something almost tragic had happened or might happen.

She did not reproach him, did not say, “I told you to eat your lunch, to take more sleep, and to leave those school books alone.” She did say, “I’m sorry, my boy, because your mind was set on those books. But there will have to be a change. You’ll have to get an outside job. You should go somewhere to a better climate.”

Mac laughed, because it was all so impossible and because he felt his mother needed the laugh. He said, “It’ll be all right. I’m not sick, and I’ll make no changes.”

“But you will”, she said.

“And how?” Mac asked. “Who will make any such thing possible? We don’t know anyone anywhere else.”

To which she answered with a great confidence, “There is my brother, your uncle”.

CHAPTER THREE

That uncle, his mother’s brother, to Mac he was a wonderful man. There had been times of seeming complete defeat for the family and the uncle had been the one to put up money and save the situation.

Likely for all such men, there is a good deal of exaggeration about their wealth. Mac had the feeling that his uncle was a very rich man.

At this particular and critical point he was connected with a gold mining proposition in British Columbia. Just what he could do to help out was not very clear.

However, he was informed and as always he was equal to the need.

He said, “Since the doctor says he has to have a change and get outside, he had better come out to British Columbia and work for me. I’ll give him plenty of outside in the best climate in the world and I’ll pay him seventy-five dollars a month; he can help by sending some home and regain his health.”

It was like the waving of a fairy wand. What was more, the uncle then being in the East said that he was going West soon and Mac would travel with him.

Amongst other things, that meant one thing; that Mac could quit his job in the railroad office. He had never thought that would happen. It just seemed that stern necessity would hold him to that job no matter what happened. Years after, again and again a nightmare dream for Mac was that he was back at that old job.

There was a bit of a thrill when the boss, a most frightening man, seemed to regret Mac’s going and made a very real gesture to keep him. He offered a raise of $10 a month which would have meant forty-five dollars a month. Proudly Mac declared that on his new, far-away job he would be getting seventy-five, to which the boss said he could offer no competing bid. So Mac was free.

A trip West in those days to experienced travellers was no great adventure. The time made by the railway was slower than now, but the railway was well organized.

For Mac, at the age of seventeen, it was all adventure. Because he was a boy, and a boy with no money, the arrangement was to travel tourist. That seemed to worry his mother. Tourist was not the best and the best could not be too good for her son. But Mac didn’t mind. In his excitement he would have been willing to ride in the baggage car.

His mother tried to reach as far into that trip as she could. She packed a basket with her own good cooking, with enough food to last a hungry boy for many days. For a number of reasons this boy was not hungry and the basket had no great thrill for him, save that it was the thought of his mother.

But to the uncle, busy travelling man of the world, man accustomed to face so frequently hotel meals, the basket was a thrill not to be withstood. He was hungry for home cooking. And he enjoyed the good things and Mac was glad to see him have such enjoyment.

The basket was soon worked over and then the problem arose, what and when and where to eat? The uncle generously said, “The diner”. And so to the mounting number of new experiences there was the dining car.

Mac has always wished that his introduction to the diner could have been different. He knew that he couldn’t pay much himself. He felt that his uncle would pay, and yet he felt that he should not take advantage of that. Therefore the figures on the menu were frightening to the boy. There was no joy in the experience. In fact, it planted a fear that has remained even when one is sure that there is enough money to meet any figure of a dining car.

In those days the stop at Winnipeg was for some reason a matter of hours. The stop was marked by kindly hospitality in a home away from the railway.

It was marked and marred for Mac by a gesture of hospitality for which he was not prepared. He was received, not as a boy, but as a young man, taken into a bar and offered a drink. This was the realizing of the thing that his mother had warned him about, and the thing that Mac had never thought would happen to him.

He refused the drink. Long since Mac has felt his refusal was rude, and quite possibly a bit pious. He didn’t mean it that way. It just seemed that he had to say no and make it stick.

Mac was never able to square the matter with the hospitable man of Winnipeg. He couldn’t ever tell his uncle about it, because he felt that his uncle would not understand. It made a bit of a shadow, which only lifted with the thrills of the trip.

The thrill of the prairie was something more than the vast expanse, as far as your eye could carry you. The real thrill came when the train stopped at some place where there were no trees in sight, nothing to catch and indicate a breeze. At the ten minute stop, Mac got off and was completely surprised that there was a strong wind blowing. It was strong enough to make a whistling sound, if there was anything it could whistle through. But with no moving branches to tell of the breeze, that prairie wind was a thrilling surprise.

And then beyond Calgary, the surprise for which he was prepared by picture post cards, but the sight which never failed to be a surprise. Looking beyond the foothills there was a long line of jagged peaks, some white with snow. His uncle said, “Those are the Rockies but it will be some time before we get into them”.

CHAPTER FOUR

That first day in the Rockies: to the other passengers what an excited boy he must have seemed. He moved from side to side of the car; he got on any observation car provided; in the Kicking Horse Pass, much to the train man’s worry, Mac wanted to stand on the steps of the coach, just to see: see everything, see everywhere.

There was moonlight on a glacier and his uncle tried to explain about the movement of the glacier. It just looked green, and snowy, and very still as if it had not moved for a long time.

Since that first trip, there have been those who have said to Mac, “Don’t you just love the mountains?” He never could answer yes to that question. There was something very fascinating, something that frightened, and there were a lot of other somethings, which made Mac always glad to return to the mountains, but never sure about caring so deeply for them.

At last, the time came to leave the train, to stand on a platform at a station and see the train which had been almost like home go on its way to Vancouver. There had been too much excitement for Mac to feel real home-sickness. Now, with the information that one turned away from the main line, there was a catch in the throat. This would, indeed, be farther away from home.

Sicamous Junction provided for Mac something that was to remain all his life. It was the dark, almost mysterious beauty of Lake Shuswap, especially in the misty distances of the wooded shore line beyond.

Mac was to see, and be deeply moved by, most of the lakes of the Rockies, but this first lake had a strange appeal. If there had been time to explore it, some of the appeal might have gone. But there was no time for now the local train was to make the short run into the Okanagan Valley.

The train stopped at Vernon: really stopped, and his uncle said, “This is the end of the railway” and pointing to a queer looking steam boat, he said, “We travel the lake on that boat”. It was a comfortable, squat looking boat, with a huge paddle arrangement right across the back end of the boat. On the trip Mac found out why there was such a propeller arrangement.

Standing on the deck, in the first full experience of Okanagan sunlight, Mac was watching all the busy work on the dock. He was interested, not wistful. One who knew something of the reason for Mac’s being there stood beside him and said, “Take a good look at the train. You’ll likely never see another.”

The unthinking remark hit Mac with great force. There had been so much change and excitement that he had forgotten the doctor and his grim forebodings; forgotten that he was where he was for his health; and had not really realized that there were those who thought he would never make it.

For the first time at Vernon Mac heard the work irrigation. There were a few eager men who said anything will grow here if we can only get the water to it. There were others who were sure that the valley only had possibilities as a range for cattle, with always the hope of gold in the hills. And, naturally, there were those who were sure that the water could not be got to the land. But the venture was being faced. At that very time, at a place called, if Mac’s memory serves, the Coldstream Ranch, ditches for irrigation were being dug.

With the boat on its quiet way south on Lake Okanagan there was the thrill of dinner on the boat. It seemed like a glorious meal, one that could be faced without the usual careful counting of the cost. For anything there was, from soup to nuts, the cost was seventy-five cents.

Here and there on one side of the lake or the other, the boat made a stop at a few places. The stop was a matter of quietly running the nose of the boat on shore, and then to get away, the churning paddles to pull the boat away.

At the end of the journey Penticton, a busy place through which passed everything for the need of the south end of the valley. Before the long journey was completed there had to be an over-night stop at the hotel in Penticton, another new and memorable experience for Mac.

It was made clear that the start the next day must be early. There were only thirty-two miles to go, but they must be made by a horse drawn stage coach. That information gave no feeling of anticipated hardship to Mac. Rather it seemed quite natural that the journey should end in some such seeming romantic way.

The stage coach lived up to all the dreams of romance. It had no shock absorbers nor springs, but it was explained that the body of the coach was slung on straps. It sounds now like a real arrangement for a good bout of sea-sickness on land, but to Mac, absorbing new experiences, there was no time to feel queer.

The coach was drawn by six horses, not handsome, big horses, but nondescript, tough looking animals. The driver was a young man, quite natural and composed about the whole thing. There was no wild words, no tobacco juice, just steady, good driving.

And so at long last, the town of Fairview, a few houses, the hotel, the store, which was the post office and stopping place for the coach. But the most outstanding building was a white church, with a steeple tower, not large but very marked, on the bare earth, in the bright sunlight.

CHAPTER FIVE

There were still three miles to go, steadily up hill, by a narrow road. There were few signs of life on that road; just the buildings and rock refuse of two abandoned gold mines. Finally, the mining camp and journey's end.

Mac had nothing to measure by. He didn't know whether this was a big or small camp, a well laid out or haphazard camp. He saw some building they said were bunk houses; some large buildings with one high building which they said had to do with the mine; a great pile of grey looking rock; another building with an adjoining house which they said was the cook house and the president's house. In the very centre of all the clearing a building with more of a new look about it than the other buildings. This was the office, and the new look was caused by the addition of a room for Mac's residence that he might not need to use a bunk house.

There were, of course, no sidewalks, no arrangements of any kind which were not required for the successful mining of gold.

It was surprising how quickly life worked out a routine. Meals were in the cook house, at fixed hours. They were good meals prepared by a French Canadian cook, evidently a man of great experience in such quantity feeding. As far as the miners, wood choppers and others were concerned, meal time was for one purpose: to eat. There was no talk, just a steady use of any tools necessary for the taking on of food. Those meals cost Mac and all the others a dollar a day, taken out of pay. In those strange days, this was the only deduction made from pay.

The office work was very much a matter of addressing envelopes, folding letters, constant information and appeals to stock holders in the Company, mostly in the East.

All winter long, it was Mac's job to chop the wood for the office stove, which of course was the stove for keeping his own room warm.

There was one other duty which called for some special attention. Mac had to take the mail to the post office three miles down hill and bring back any mail for the Company. It was a life line, with appeals for support to eager investors and answers providing the necessary funds to keep the work going.

This trip was to be made on horseback. Mac had never been on a horse in his life. There were no special hazards in getting used to the riding, except that Mac had notions about not using spurs. Finally he had to give in and bear them, since the horse simply would not pay any attention to word or blow.

The trips were very enjoyable to Mac. The road was so full of solitude: there was the sunshine, the blue sky, and the magpies. Often the mail was late which gave Mac a change to ride down on the flats below the town, and gaze across those few miles of flat country into the boundary country and the United States.

The intense times in this quiet routine were, one, when samples were brought up from some new cutting in the mine, and were examined, and then assayed for value in pure gold. There was then, and there is more now, of rule and science about this thing, but to Mac it had the thrill of a gamble. He had nothing involved. At least that is what he thought, with pay coming regularly. It was always after some special satisfaction in the sample of ore that a letter would be sent to hundreds in the East and Mac would have to get feverishly busy addressing envelopes.

The other intense time came at pay day. Not every pay day fortunately, but too frequently. So many of the men involved had spent their hard earned pay in one great drunk, and for a few days there would be very little work done, while the whole camp recovered from the pay day spree.

CHAPTER SIX

One day, a real break in routine came. Mac did not know it but it was a break in his life. Before, barring the interruption of study, his intention was to go on and be President of the railroad. Now there was nothing to prevent going on to be President of a gold mining company.

The break came in the form of a visitor. His boss in the office introduced the visitor to Mac as the Reverend Mr. Cameron, the Presbyterian minister at Keremeos and Fairview. Mr. Cameron had pleasant light blue eyes, a friendly face and he was friendly.

He explained to Mac, that he was going to a meeting at the Coast and would be away over the time that he should hold service in Fairview and would he, Mac, take the service for him. Of course, Mac explained that it could not be: that he had never done such a thing, had really put away any dream of doing such a thing, and wound up, under the influence of those friendly blue eyes, by consenting to take the service at Fairview.

Mac had no theories about conducting a service. He had no technique at his disposal. He knew nothing about inspiration. In fact, in that regard he had the feeling that nothing should be left to chance.

By careful repeating of nearly everything aloud, he had the service timed to last an hour. In these days any radio program director would be happy with the careful timing. The only thing overlooked was what a human being might do. The result of the careful timing was that the few people who were at the service were on their way home in thirty five minutes. It just seemed as if the body dropped out of nearly everything and it could not be made to last.

There was no feeling of defeat as far as Mac was concerned. It was something done to oblige Mr. Cameron. It would not need to be done again and he could return to his work at the mine quite sure that that was his job, and not preaching.

But Mac had not rightly judged Mr. Cameron. He never said so but he evidently had no intention of allowing gold mining to have this young man.

Very soon Mr. Cameron was in the office again, and this time with a request that Mac should preach while he, Mr. Cameron, conducted the service at Fairview. Again there was refusal, with finally, consent.

When the service came Mac, by this time feeling that he was an old hand at this thing, determined to do something that he had seen back East. When he announced his text, he closed the Bible, and for good measure, with quite a bang.

Riding back to camp, Mr. Cameron was grateful and kind and then said, “I’d like to speak of one thing. Being a lover of books I don’t like any book to be closed with a bang and since you are using the Bible as your authority to speak I think it should say open while you speak.” He was timid and asked for pardon for suggesting these things, but their kind suggestiveness stayed with Mac all his life.

The preparation for this second preaching venture had brought something very new into Mac’s life. Trying to time his material, and to get to know it, much of the preparation was done aloud, in the aloneness of his office room, long after anyone was moving about.

One evening, in the midst of the outpouring of fervent words, there came a knock at the office door. It was one of the older miners. Being invited in, he looked carefully around and asked, “Who are you talking to?”

Mac had to tell of the sermon. The miner said, “Why don’t you do something for us here at the camp?” Mac had felt sure that nothing would be wanted at the camp. The miner urged it, and so, every Sunday evening, in the cook house there was a strange service: mostly singing, nearly always with no instrument, some praying and a little attempt at preaching. Everyone who could possibly be there was at the service. There was no organization of any kind, no obligation, no pay, just the strange enjoyment of a group of assorted men, meeting, and soon to scatter.

CHAPTER SEVEN

And so the months slipped by. They were winter months, but with plenty of sunshine and no bitter cold. Mac enjoyed all the busy ways of his life, especially being outside, and the meetin with the varieties of humanity in the men working at the mine.

He had no worry about health. No studying was attempted. Quite likely nothing could have been done because with the full days, and the good air, very early in the evening he was far too sleepy for any serious study.

It may be counted an achievement of living or just a lack of realization that at that time Mac had reached an almost complete satisfaction in living one day at a time. There was no future that could be planned for, and increasingly there was no menace concerning health; each day was complete in itself.

But there was a shadow. Long since he has realized what a worry that shadow was to his Uncle. Then, however, all that he heard was an expression about “financial stringency”. If that meant a shortage of money, Mac was not too greatly disturbed because he had the most complete familiarity with shortage of money.

Two situations arose to deepen the shadow. One, the bank was expressing concern and was quite unwilling to permit the mine to have any more money by way of an overdraft. Mac thought the bank manager was showing a poor spirit. The other feature was that there were fewer cheques coming from investors in the East and there were more anxious inquiries from those who had sent money. The work of the mine went on, but in the office there was a deepening realization that an end was in sight.

And then came the day of silence. The shrill whistle at the mine did now blow. There was no throb of machinery in the air. The thump of the air compressor was not heard.

Then the miners came into the office to get their pay, and on their way. The mine was closing down. There was gold there, but there was not the money to keep on working to get it out. Some day something might be done to protect the large amount of money which had been spent. For just then it look like a venture that would not pay anything.

After the miners, came the office staff to be paid off, and Mac knew that he was many miles from home, with little enough money, and no job in sight. But with no desire to seem to go away East, defeated.

Almost at once the mining camp seemed to take on a dejected look, a "nobody lives here" look. The miners did not tarry. They had been out of jobs before. Now they would go on to some other mine.

Some of them gathered about Mac before the break-up. They tried to tell of their appreciation for the Sunday evening efforts in the cook house, mostly for the singing. Having found a wallet somewhere they made a present to Mac, forty dollars in the wallet – all the dollars from men out of a job.

With the presentation they showed too their concern for this young fellow out of a job. One after another would ask, "What are you going to do?" To these inquiries, Mac could only reply, "I haven't the least idea."

Then there was his Uncle. The relationship seemed reversed. Instead of the Uncle looking after Mac, it seemed that Mac must take the responsibility of being some strength to his Uncle.

To the younger man, if he had known the expression, the closing of the mine was just one of those things. But to his Uncle it was failure, deep failure, tinged with a feeling of almost disgrace that he had urged money from others because of his own eager hopes.

Soon there was nothing to stay for. Mac's packing was quickly done. For others it was a matter of taking some things and leaving others. It seemed necessary for the Uncle to go out to Vancouver. To his anxious inquiry, "Where do you want to go?" Mac said, "I guess I'll go out to Vancouver too."

The Uncle was far from sure about the wisdom of Mac going to Vancouver. He would much sooner have tried to manage to send him back East.

He asked, "What will you try for in Vancouver?" Then Mac showed his daring hope. He reminded his Uncle that once the Superintendent of Missions for the Presbyterian Church had been in the camp and had taken note of the two services at Fairview and of the services on Sunday nights in the cook house. Because of that visit Mac said that he was going to seek out that Superintendent in Vancouver and ask him for a job on some mission field in B.C.

This suggestion was so startling to the Uncle that he expressed himself rather strongly, not meaning to be unkind. He said, "You are too young, you are just seventeen, and what is more, you do not know anything. How could you take such a job?"

However, the trip to Vancouver together was undertaken. The boat for Vernon was boarded at Penticton late in the evening. The idea was to go to bed, and very early in the morning the boat would leave and we would waken to find the trip well on its way.

So it was, and as we wakened, the sun was shining on the lake: it was a perfect morning in the month of May. Someone was quietly playing the piano in the lounge; not a piece, just saying with the piano keys what a lovely morning it was.

The Uncle gave a great sigh, almost a sob, and said, “That’s it; there has been no music in our lives for a long time.” It expressed the depth of his sense of failure, of the absorption in making the venture work, and also a first step on the way to a balanced life, in regaining the love of quiet music.

The train was boarded at Sicamous, in the night. It was to bring the first effort at facing personal financial stringency for the Uncle. The porter on the sleeping car was asked, “Have you an upper?” He took us to an upper, then turned, looking perplexed. He asked, “Not for the both of you, sir?” My Uncle said, “I had hoped so.” To which the porter replied with a grin, “It just couldn’t be done, sir, you’re both too big.” So other arrangement had to be made.

Then at Vancouver Mac secured a room, his Uncle left and he was on his own. First he must shine his shoes, and the sense of almost tragedy remains, in that he dropped a lot of blacking on the carpet. What would the lady of the house say? Would she demand some money, and there was so little money? But the lady said, “The spot could be cleaned.”

CHAPTER EIGHT

Vancouver is a sight-seeing city. But not for Mac on that trip. It was quite a few years before he could return and take a look at the sights. The big idea on that first visit was to get a job and get out of Vancouver so quickly as possible.

Looking back Mac wonders how he ever had the nerve to go and ask for the job. It was clearly a case of “where ignorance is, bliss”. Mac had no idea that he was asking for something far beyond the rules.

He found the Superintendent of Missions at St. John’s Church. Meetings were being held; committees were in session. The Superintendent seemed glad to see him, recalled the visit at the mine, was sorry to hear of the closing of the mine, and did not seem at all surprised that Mac should come to him for work. He promised to put the application before the right committee.

In two days, days of strained waiting, he was called before a committee. Happily it never dawned on him that this committee might finish his hopes of getting a place. With the eagerness of ignorance, Mac could only think of the committee as a group to make the appointment.

The committee was evidently more impressed with the idea of doing its duty than with any idea of seeing the eager anxiety of the mere boy before them. After some preliminaries, several were clearing their throats to proceed to question and find out what the young man knew. The words of his Uncle came to mind, “You don’t know anything.”

Quickly a minister for the north end of the Okanagan Valley spoke up and said that he had heard good reports and no heresy from the south end of the Valley and he moved that the applicant be given an appointment. The committee agreed and the young man had a job.

It was then the place of the Superintendent to tell him where he would work and to give him some information about the work. He had been appointed to the North Thompson River Valley. In that valley there were people

scattered here and there over many miles. Many of them were on the east side of the river, some on the west side. There were no bridges. The river must be crossed in any way possible.

There was no other representative of any Protestant church in the whole valley. Occasionally a Roman Catholic priest visited a small Indian reserve.

The superintendent thought that the valley could be arranged in eight places where a few might gather for service. Beyond these points there was the north end of the valley. The Superintendent had little idea about people in there. He wanted to know. Others had failed to follow his instruction to go in. He wanted Mac, sometime in the summer to make the trip to the north end.

There seemed to be an idea that Mac would be much on his own in that valley life and he remembers the kind efforts of the wife of the Superintendent, herself a minister's daughter, to teach him how to make porridge. Having gone that far, it seemed to be taken for granted that Mac would not starve. Happily he never had to use the knowledge.

So the move was made out of Vancouver. To be of some help to a minister in a charge Mac was instructed to go to a place by the name of Ducks, and hold service at Shuswap and Campbell Creek.

It was at Shuswap that the young man preached his first sermon as a representative of the Presbyterian Church. Over the years, the memory of that service abides. The school house with a wide window. The text of the sermon, "We would see Jesus". And in the service and after it that which made the work of those months possible, the warm kindness of the people.