

It was fourteen o'clock (2 p.m.) of a pleasant April day last year as I moved out in the

East-bound Express

from the handsome station of Vancouver. For over an hour we rolled smoothly along the southern shores of Burrard Inlet, in the pleasant companionship of trans-Pacific fellow-passengers and of the friendly new acquaintances that one finds so helpful and informing both on and off the cars, in every part of America. Beyond the long Inlet rose the white-tipped summits of the Cascade Ranges—their vast forms and varied hues of pine and cedar, grey rock, brown and ruddy earth, and glistening, sunlit snow-caps doubled in the smooth mirror of the deep and placid waters below. Here and there a loud humming bourdon came through the trees, and busy sawmills and their satellite villages and camps appeared in openings along the heavily wooded shores. Dingy ocean tramps and tall-masted sailing craft were 'hung up' by their wharves, swallowing cargoes of softwood, which they disgorge in the East, in Australia, and away at the ends of the earth. Of hardwood there is none: it has to be imported from Australia and elsewhere. The pleasant odor of pine was in the air as we passed through areas of forest containing gigantic trees, some of which reached a corpulent girth of twenty to thirty feet and more, while their dark-green scalps soared (as we were informed and believe) to over two hundred feet: it seemed as if

'Their slender tops
Were close against the sky.'

There was forest, forest everywhere—in the level tracts of rich valley-land, up the long, steep sweep of the mountains, on rocky shelves and ledges, in every place where clustering trees could find a foothold and elbow-room, till they dwarfed and thinned out far above on the wind-swept slopes and the sides of the long gullies where the snow lay deep. Everywhere we saw the melancholy black track of the

Devastating Fires

that wreak such wholesale destruction among the forests of British Columbia. Here it is a narrow track of scorched trees 'done brown' by the flames; there a burned patch that looked amidst the healthy vegetation around a disfigurement like that which a spreading lupus is on the human face; further on we were whizzing along for perhaps fifteen or twenty minutes through miles of blackened stems and forest desolation far more extensive than anything I have ever witnessed in the Australian bush. There were ages of unexhausted work for axe and saw in those noble forest-lands of British Columbia but for the fearful levy that fire makes upon the tree-life of the province.

Thirteen miles out from Vancouver we pulled up for a brief space at Port Moody. As stated in a previous sketch, this was the first western terminus of the Canadian Pacific Railway. It stands between green trees and deep water where Burrard Inlet, so to speak, knocks its head against the rock-ribbed hills and can squeeze its way no farther. There we had—for the time—our last look at the salt waters of the Pacific. Once out of Port Moody we rumbled over a low ridge, crossed the broad and rolling yellow flood of the Pitt River, caught a glorious glimpse of the rugged land of mountain and lake from which it issues, went humming along through broad flats and rich ploughed lands, past gardens and orchards, and by emerald pastures where the fat kine browsed. It was the rich, open valley of Canada's great salmon-river,

The Fraser,

and down there its flats, like its waters, are among the precious assets of British Columbia. At Hammond, twenty-three miles from Vancouver, we touched its waters. From there the music of its quiet swish or busy hum or noisy roar was to keep time to the clinky-clank of our wheels for 130 miles of our eastward journey. Here and further along the route you see the massive, snowy, cone-headed summit of Mount Baker. It soars to a height of 14,000 feet above the level of the railway track, and, though seeming near, is in reality some sixty or seventy miles away and across the frontier in the Washington State.

As we proceed we pass sawmills and ever more sawmills and shingle-factories, with their alert and active little Japanese employees. Along the railroad track the little yellow men act as navvies and line-repairers, and right sturdily they wield pick and shovel and iron bar. In one place in the otherwise straight-line bank of the Fraser, the yellow land bulges suddenly out into the yellow water, forming a squat peninsula that is thickly planted with willows, alders, and trailing plants such as that which—on the principle of 'lucus a non lucendo'—

is named the 'blackberry' because its edible berries are not black. The place is known as

'The Great Slip.'

In 1879 some twenty acres of bank broke loose, slid rapidly down its greasy substratum, and took a mad header into the Fraser. This mighty plunge raised a moving wall of water like an infant tidal wave or a giant 'bore' on the Seine. It crossed with a rush to the other side, dashed far up the shore, and drowned or pounded the souls out of sundry settlers that had not time or thought to get out of its way.

That was some years before a railway line or a locomotive was seen in British Columbia. Engineering skill now keeps the track by the Fraser's banks as sound and safe as rock-bed. The Canadian Pacific Company's permanent way is a model of careful building and probably justifies the boast that it is 'the best new line ever constructed on the American Continent.' The Swiss railway lines have always seemed to me to be models of what tracks and bridges should be in countries of torrents, landslips, snowslides, and tall mountains. In many respects the Canadian Pacific railway track surpasses those of the little tourist-ridden republic: in its snow-sheds, in the enormous and seemingly unnecessary strength of its bridges—solid structures of steel resting on massive masonry piers; in the unusual width of its cuttings; in the weight and closeness of its ties (sleepers, as we call them); and in the many appliances to secure the

Safety of Passengers

—the patrols through the mountains; the elaborate guard-rail system at all bridges; the use of heavy steel rails, laid with angle splices of double the ordinary strength; and (among other things) the use of a patent safety switch at all turn-outs from the main track. This ingenious contrivance automatically prevents the possibility of derailment from a misplaced switch. The Canadian Pacific Company have not yet adopted the costly dust-preventing system of the London and North-Western main line to Carlisle—ballasting with clean granite chippings instead of cinders. But their permanent way is, perhaps, at least as good as the best that has been constructed since (as Artemus Ward puts it) the iron horse was foaled. Accidents to passengers are few and very far between on the Canadian Pacific Railway—so rare, indeed, as to justify to some extent the emphatic statement of Sir Edward Watkin, that railway travelling is about the safest of all occupations. 'I have proved,' said Sir Edward some two or three years ago, after quoting a rood of statistics, 'that railway travelling is safer than walking or driving, than going up and down stairs, than watching agricultural machinery, and even safer than eating, because it is a fact that more people choke themselves while performing that act in England alone than are killed on all the railways of the United Kingdom.'

The problem of economical railroad haulage is being dealt with in the United States and Canada in two strangely opposite ways. In the east they are trying, with apparently good results, to solve the difficulty by the principle of small and self-contained units—trains of one or two vehicles run by small electric motors. Elsewhere, and especially in the wide and expansive west, the tendency is towards heavier and ever heavier engines and bigger loads. A few years ago the North-Eastern Railway Company (England) adopted giant locomotives, after the American fashion, for working the heavy mineral traffic over the heavy gradient of the Stainmore summit to the Furness and West Cumberland districts. Each locomotive may be seen hauling as many as sixty empty wagons—a train of nearly a quarter of a mile long. In the great iron-mining district of Ishpeming (Michigan) I have seen powerful engines thundering over the tracks with processions of trucks equally long drawn out. On the Canadian Pacific Railway

Engines of Enormous Power

are employed. They have soft, cooing whistles that will not startle you out of sleep at night; but, as if to compensate for this delicate attention, every locomotive in Canada (and in the United States as well) bears astride its round back a big brass bell. With the aid of a rope running into the 'cab,' the stoker sets it banging and clanging and swinging almost heels over head as the train passes over level crossings or crawls at the rate of four miles an hour when approaching or leaving the depot (or railway station, which, in the language of North America is pronounced 'dee-po').

Our express consisted of a heavy engine and ten very long cars (sometimes called 'coaches,' never 'carriages'). Each was some ninety-four tons in weight. Sir William Van Horne, the controlling spirit of the Cana-