

HOW THE PEACE RIVER DISTRICT LOOKS

Views of a Traveller and an Optimist—Interesting Account of a Long Trek

Editor, *The Monetary Times*:

Sir,—I have just returned from an extended tour through the Peace River country, and, feeling that everyone of your readers will be interested to learn something about this virgin country, I am sending a short account of my very instructive journey. This part of British North America is so brimful of wonderful resources that it should not fail to influence the wave of settlement bound to follow the terrible European conflict.

During the past two and a half months I have been through a most remarkable country, full of opportunities awaiting both capital and labor. Eleven years prospecting around the mining camps of Alaska and the Yukon left me with an everlasting impression of the wonderful possibilities offered to those ready to come and settle in the great north-western section of the American Continent but what I saw in those days will not stand comparison with the country which I have just returned from.

Natural Resources Abundant.

The Peace River country abounds in nature's wonders. Millions of acres of arable land, intersected with rivers, lakes and streams, which make irrigation totally unnecessary, await settlement. A greater part of this area is practically open and ready for the plough. Peavine, vetches, red-top and a variety of other natural grasses grow in the wildest profusion, and the few settlers who have gone in ahead of the railroad, speak of the whole country through which I have passed as being particularly adaptable for stock-raising, while, when it is properly farmed, the land will grow anything that can be raised outside a tropical climate.

One thing which should be particularly advantageous and inducive to rapid settlement is the unlimited supply of game, fish and wild fruits, which can be taken with the greatest possible ease.

Throughout the timbered portions of the whole country moose, deer, bear and antelope roam the woods, and are so numerous and almost tame in certain places that it will not tax the marksmanship of anyone who has learned to handle a rifle to provide all the meat required for the table, while the country has almost become overrun with rabbit of a very delicious flavor.

The streams abound in wild duck and geese of different varieties, and at frequent intervals I ran into covers of grouse and prairie chicken.

Fish and Fur.

Fishing is another form of supply for the necessities of life. Whitefish, pike and pickerel of the finest quality, averaging five pounds in weight, can be secured in almost any quantity by using a net in the lakes, while salmon trout, speckled trout, greyling and numerous other varieties of game fish can easily be taken in any of the streams with the use of either fly or bait.

Another very valuable asset is the remarkable quantity of fur-bearing animals which appear to be rapidly increasing instead of decreasing, as anyone would imagine, for many settlers and the native Indians have relied on these as a means of livelihood for many years past. This appreciable increase is no doubt largely due to the Government regulations, which provide for a close season. I was, indeed, very much surprised to find such a large number of valuable foxes roving the woods. There were black, silver grey and red specimens.

In the Pouce Coupe district a fox farm has already been established on a profit-earning basis. Minx, martin, otter and beaver are also plentiful, and from these trappers also find a most useful source of income.

Coal, Gas and Oil.

In addition to all these splendid resources awaiting the coming of the settler, capitalists will soon realize that hundreds of profit-earning investments are calling for capital, not only to develop the agricultural possibilities, but to open up the tremendous mineral wealth. Coal, gas, and oil are known to exist. The whole country is underlaid with coal seams, and at various points along the banks of the rivers coal does not even have to be mined, settlers being

able to collect large blocks of coal afloat, and all they have to do is to haul it to their cabins for fuel purposes, thus entailing less labor than wood-splitting.

During the journey I took samples of some of the best anthracite, and also good samples of peacock coal lying in the foothills of the Rockies, while bituminous and lignite coal underlie millions of acres of the easterly portion of the country.

After leaving the Albertan oil fields I spent seven weeks on foot and raft in the vicinity north-west of Edmonton, covering a distance of about fifteen hundred miles, going in via Grand Prairie by way of Edson through Pouce Coupe, Nose Mountain, Pine River Pass, on to Fort St. John and Peace River Landing, down to Grouard, at the head of Lesser Slave Lake, thence into Edmonton.

As to Transportation.

Like in many other parts awaiting settlement, the chief thing lacking is transportation, but this is practically an assured fact. The lines of no fewer than four companies coming from the East have already been surveyed and partly constructed, while communication with British Columbia is promised as soon as details have been completed in connection with the line which will eventually run from Bella Coola through Pine River Pass to the heart of the Peace River country and out to Hudson Bay.

Government surveyors who have reported on the district are agreed that this route will afford the shortest way with the lowest grade for all the great north-west products, which in a few years will have to find an outlet to the markets of the world via a Pacific Coast port.

This being practically a virgin country, a traveller naturally has many obstacles to overcome. The Government wagon-road between Edson and Grand Prairie, a distance of, roughly, 240 miles, is fairly good in places, but has suffered from exceptionally heavy freighting between those points, but the settlers, despite those obstacles, are all highly pleased with the prospects. Sparsely timbered, none of the land off the main wagon-road presents any difficulties, so far as clearing goes; in fact, the timber will be an advantage to those going in to build up their future homes, much of the lumber being suitable for fencing and building, while the remainder will provide fuel for many years to come.

This stretch offers exceptional opportunities to the stockman. Settlers at present are chiefly confining their efforts to cattle-raising. Oats, wheat and several varieties of natural hay grow most prolifically. Horse and cattle are able to forage for themselves until early in January, and the farmer has no difficulty in getting all the winter feed for the eight, or at the most ten weeks, during which it is necessary to give the stock feed and protection. It is a curious fact that the favorable temperature at this latitude is due to the low passes in the Rocky Mountains, which offer little, if any, resistance to the Chinook winds arising from the Japanese current striking the Pacific Coast due west at this point.

At Pouce Coupe.

While at Pouce Coupe I met one of the old timers coming in with over two hundred head of cattle, rolling in fat and in the pink of condition, as far as health is concerned. Natural grasses alone had been responsible for the feeding of these animals, and one could not wish to taste anything more delicious or nutritious than the steak this hardy old pioneer prepared especially for my edification.

Leaving Pouce Coupe, I continued my journey through the Nose Mountain country across the Cut Bank River over the foothills into Pine Pass through the Rockies, to within a few miles of a point I had reached last summer when making a trip from Bella Coola over the proposed route of the Hudson Bay and Pacific Railroad. Excellent as the agricultural and mineral possibilities are from the coast inland to this point, I believe the further one goes into the Peace River country the indications become more encouraging. In addition to the farming prospects, mineral, oil, coal and gas are found in commercial quantities. Along all the streams and river banks outcroppings of lignite and bituminous coal are in evidence, while in the foothills good anthracite has been found and only awaits development. To this end limited coal areas have already been secured by the Canadian Pacific Railway and Canadian Northern Railway and other railroad companies operating in the district, and I am told that financiers from the States, who have received very encouraging reports, intend sending a good deal of capital in early next spring.

The general conditions for all are favorable in this section of the country. From geological government reports it will be seen that the underlying strata is not so broken