

## THE COUNTRY OF COAL AND CATTLE, COWBOYS AND CHINOOKS.

**S**OUTHERN Alberta, the country which will be dealt with briefly in this article, is bounded on the south by the United States, on the west and southwest by the Rocky Mountains, on the north by, we may say, the main line of the Canadian Pacific Railway, and on the east by the territory of Assiniboia. Southern Alberta forms the extreme southwestern corner of the prairie region of Western Canada.

The country is level, open prairie in the eastern portion, but is much broken along the western side of the foothills of the Rocky Mountains which bound the district on the west. Beyond the foothills the mountains rise, forming a long, continuous chain extending in a southeasterly direction, their snow-capped peaks glistening in the sun. In clear weather the mountains are discernible from any part of the plain region of Southern Alberta, their snow covered summits giving them the appearance of glittering clouds on the western and southwestern horizon. Numerous streams of the clearest water issue from the everlasting snows of the mountain, winding their way often as dashing torrents through the mountain defiles, then meandering more peaceably through the foot-hills, and finally roll out into the plains region. The general course of all the rivers and streams is eastward. The principal stream is the South Saskatchewan which has two principal branches in the territory. The northern branch is known as the Bow, and the principal southern branch as the Belly River. There are innumerable smaller rivers and streams flowing into these. There are also branches of the great Missouri River in the southern extremity of the territory, which flow in a southeasterly direction, while the Saskatchewan and its branches generally tend in a northwesterly course. The large number of streams and rivers indicate a country well watered, at least in its western portions, though there are considerable districts east and south of the Belly River which are not so well supplied with water. The streams are clear with gravelly beds, and run through deep valleys.

The eastern portion is open prairie, and is almost completely bare of timber or even brush, except in the river bottoms or valleys, where there is usually a thick growth of small timber or shrubbery. The approaches to the mountains are wooded with fir, spruce, pine, &c. The forest becomes more dense as the mountains are approached, until it becomes general. Logs suitable for sawing can be cut in the mountains and along the borders thereof, and floated down the streams for sawing at desirable points. There is a saw mill at Macleod, on the Old Man river, and if necessary, saw mills could be located at other points. The rivers keep up a good flow all the year, but are highest during the warm weather, when the snow is melting fast in the mountains.

Though a large portion of Southern Alberta is bare of wood fuel, this difficulty is made up for by a plentiful supply of coal of good quality. Coal can be observed at many points cropping out along the steep banks of the streams. At Lethbridge coal has been mined for years. This town, which is one of the most important towns of the territories, may be said to be almost entirely dependent upon the coal mines for its growth and prosperity, and certain it is that the coal mining in-

dustry called the town into existence. The quality is a high grade of bituminous coal. We will deal with the coal industry a little more fully later on.

The railways of the district consist of the main line of the Canadian Pacific Railway on the north, and a branch of that road from Dunmore on the main line to Lethbridge a distance of 110 miles. This road from Dunmore to Lethbridge was formerly built by the "Galt" Coal Company, on the narrow gauge plan. Last year it was taken over by the Canadian Pacific Railway and widened to the standard gauge. There is a considerable traffic in coal over this branch to points over the main line of the Canadian Pacific Railway. There is also a railway, built on the narrow gauge plan, running from Lethbridge to Great Falls, in the state of Montana. This road was built to enable the shipment of coal to Montana points, and quite a large export trade is done in coal with the States to the south, as there is no coal found south of the boundary in that latitude which would compete in quality with the Alberta coal. There is also a railway running from Calgary to Macleod. This road runs north and south, through the centre of the famous range country.

Upon these railways depend the transportation facilities of the territory. Though portions of the river are navigable, they are not made use for transportation purposes. Steamers have been run on the Belly and Bow rivers between Medicine Hat and Lethbridge, in the coal carrying trade, but only to a sufficient extent to indicate that there is a possibility of navigating the rivers. With necessary improvements, there are some stretches of water which could be made navigable to fairly good advantages.

With the words Southern Alberta, the thoughts naturally turn to cow-boys and cattle. Southern Alberta is the principal ranching section of the territory, and the western portion, from Calgary to Macleod is taken up principally with stock ranching. Cattle and horses are principally raised. The animals graze out all the year round. It is in this district that the Chinook is best known. The word "Chinook," has, only during the last decade or so become familiar to Canadians, and that principally since stock ranching began as an industry in Southern Alberta. The word is applied to the warm winds which sweep across the country in the winter and lick up quickly what snow there may be on the ground. These chinook winds are the friends of the stockmen. When the snow falls in the winter to cover the prairie to such a depth as to interfere with the grazing of stock, it is then that the thoughts of the ranchers turn towards the chinook, as the thoughts of the farmer are centred upon rain when the crops are suffering from drought. When a chinook sets in, it makes short work of the snow, and sometimes loosens the rivers from the icy grasp of winter.

Stock-raising is the principal interest in the territory, and with coal mining it forms the two important interests of southern Alberta. There is very little effort made at general farming and in fact it is generally believed that the climate is too dry to cultivate the soil successfully. This, however, does not exclude Southern Alberta from becoming in time a famous agricultural district. The soil and climate is all right, except the lack of rainfall, and but for this disadvantage there would be no finer agricultural region in all Canada. The lack of moisture is of course owing to the proximity to the mountains. There is means, however, of overcoming this aridity of climate, and this