

The Commercial

WINNIPEG, OCTOBER 20, 1935.

FROM THE RED TO THE BOW RIVER.

Regina may be considered one of the most central points of our prairie province, and is at present close to the western limit of the wide belt of Northwestern settlement. From the city westward the settled country takes up but a narrow belt along the C.P.R. main line, and tapers to very limited dimensions before reaching the Saskatchewan. There are, however, some settlements away from this C.P.R. belt, and north of Regina, in the Long Lake country, quite an important one is to be found. A branch railway from Regina is now being rapidly constructed through this district, and a live town or two must spring up, as the partially settled state of the surrounding country will demand such as soon as railway communication is an accomplished fact.

As the belt of settlement tapers off, so the towns along the C.P.R. main line get fewer and further apart. There is therefore no point west of Regina that could be even called a village, until the forty-two miles to Moosejaw is travelled. Here we find a town of about 250 population, and nearly twenty business institutions. It is the terminus of a C.P.R. division, and has consequently some railway population, mostly of an unsettled class. There are quite a few settlers on the lands around the town, and there is more business done in it than the visitor would think, while the location is really a pretty one, and quite pleasing to the eye, after leaving Regina with its flat monotonous surroundings. Like Regina, it has suffered from booming, but has now reached a state from which it must start on a steady period of healthy growth.

From Moosejaw westward the country is very sparsely settled, and although there are at least a dozen stations stopped at before Swift Current is reached, the traveller does not see at any of them enough evidence of trade or traffic to warrant the stoppages, unless where water has to be taken in by the engine. There is thus one hundred and twelve miles between these two towns, with nothing intervening which could be dignified into even a village. Swift Current is the point at which traders leave the

railway for the far north settlements of Edmonton and Battleford, and the business done is almost entirely with such traders. The quantity of goods sold, and the stocks carried by the few merchants in this small town of a little over one hundred people, would astonish an eastern business man, as might the fact that the town has trade connections extending over one hundred miles in any direction, and towards the north over two hundred miles. There are no farmers or farms around the town, agriculture in that district being still a thing of the future.

Going westward from Swift Current we strike into the valley of the South Saskatchewan, and proceed to Maple Creek, a distance of nearly ninety miles before any trading point is reached. Here we have another little town which draws trade from long distances around it. The place has about a dozen business institutions, all of which are doing a prosperous business. There are a few circumstances which point to this place having a healthy if not rapid growth. In the first place it is the point of shipment for the lumber mills of the Cypress Hills district, and is also the receiving point of the C.P.R. for the Montana cattle shipping trade, and these two facts add greatly to the trade importance of the place. Besides there are some peculiarities in connection with the soil, the timber dotted state of the surrounding country, and other matters which seem to have allowed this district considerable immunity from the irregularities of climate so peculiar to all unbroken prairie countries. At Maple Creek farming operations have been more successful than at any point for over a hundred and fifty miles east or west of it, and already agricultural settlers are taking advantage of this.

From Maple Creek a ride of sixty-four miles brings us to the crossing of the Saskatchewan at the town of Medicine Hat. Here we have decidedly the most important trading point between Regina and Calgary, and a town which must in time be one of the great cities of the Northwest. It has at present a population of about 500, and has about twenty-five business institutions of all kinds. It is not uncommon for merchants here to carry stocks of \$40,000 to \$50,000 in value, and the trade done with buyers from the surrounding country demands that stocks both heavy and varied be

carried. About a hundred miles or so south is the town of Lethbridge, at the Galt coal mines, and from that place and Fort McLeod, the demands of ranchmen and others, swell the trade of Medicine Hat, while away to the north an equally large tract of country is tributary to it. It is the key to the South Saskatchewan, and when the day of competition between Atlantic and Hudson Bay routes comes, there will be an important competing point somewhere near Medicine Hat.

From the Saskatchewan crossing to Calgary, a distance of 178 miles, there is no trade point of note, and at this town we have crossed the Bow and Elbow Rivers, and are under the shadow of the peaks of the Rockies. The town itself is in the middle of a natural amphitheatre scooped out in bygone centuries by the wash of the two rivers mentioned. The bluffs around it rise like walls, and for a background we have the distant peaks of the great mountains. It is a lovely spot, and made by nature for a town location. Calgary has now nearly one thousand of a population, and has over sixty places of business, many of which are large mercantile concerns carrying huge stocks of general merchandise, such as could not be found in eastern towns of 5,000 population. The town must ever remain the key to the whole surrounding mountain country, and as the cattle trade, mining industries and other resources of this great upland district develop, Calgary must increase in commercial importance. That it must rapidly develop into an important trade centre cannot be doubted, as it seems impossible to locate a town which would be in a position to compete with it for this mountain country trade. It is in reality the last point on this side of the Rockies where a city can be built and is in short, the gateway of ingress and egress to and from the Mountains and the Pacific Slope beyond.

At Calgary our commercial travels through the Northwest cease, and our sketch from the Red to the Bow River is at an end. A few years hence, should we again undertake a sketch of this country, a comparison of the same with the one now completed will doubtless furnish a wonderful transformation scene.

THE WINNIPEG ELEVATOR.

It seems as if there was at last some earnestness in this city in the question of storage elevators for Winnipeg, and