

Between the Pacific and the Prairie.

Having hinted at some of the British Columbia defects in the development of export trade, it is not out of place to give a few similar hints to men and firms of the prairie country, who ship to the Pacific province. For certain classes of goods the market there belongs to the people of Manitoba and the Territories, if those people will only take pains and cater properly for it, but unfortunately the necessary care has not been given in the past.

The millers of the prairie country have already secured a firm hold in the flour market in British Columbia, thanks in some measure to the liberal rates to the coast fixed by the C. P. R. management, but in a much greater measure to the enterprise and push of the millers themselves. The flour of the Oregon mills is no poor article to compete against, but that made from the hard wheat of the prairie country is steadily forcing it out of the British Columbia market, and while prices are kept right, the latter must continue to hold its ground there. Thus our millers have a good and profitable market in a neighboring province, out of which no competition can drive them, until British Columbians themselves utilize some of their numerous natural water powers, import our hard wheat, and manufacture for themselves. That day may be near or distant just as enterprise carries out development there. The limited milling power, necessary to supply the home demand, could never compete with the huge milling interests of the eastern side of the mountains. But with a footing in the Asiatic market, where surplus products could be sold, a huge milling interest is not an impossibility in the Pacific province, especially where power would cost nothing, but the expense of bringing it into harness so to speak.

But the field in which the Manitoba exporter finds widest scope in British Columbia, is in butter, eggs, cured meats and such like goods. In the two former articles Manitoba has already secured a footing but nothing more than a footing. That the shipments of eggs there are so limited in quantity is not to be wondered at, for the surplus over local demand in the prairie country is by no means great. But the power of production is practically unlimited, and the British Columbia market for case eggs is at the mercy of Manitobans, if they will only cater properly for it. In the first place this prairie country can produce as fine eggs as any in the world, and in the second place eggs produced here can be laid down there fresher and in better condition, than they possibly can from any other outside source. The aim of shippers to British Columbia must therefore be, not to lay down their eggs as good as from any other source, but to lay them down fresher and better. That market is one, where quality tells in such goods, and Manitoba can, and should stand number one for quality. Once that position is taken, a much better market for eggs is secured.

What is true in connection with eggs is even more so with butter. There is not a butter expert in British Columbia, who will not admit, but for grain and other keeping qualities Manitoba butter properly made excels all others. One heavy dealer there asserted to a COMMERCIAL representative, that weather which would reduce California butter to little better than oil, or eastern Canadian butter to a soft state, would scarcely affect the firmness of well made

Manitoba butter. "But" added the same man, "from nowhere do we receive such a quantity of butter in such miserable condition." Even care in the selection of packages, and their arrangement in size to meet the wants of different customers, would work a wondrous reform, for it is not uncommon to see in Victoria or Vancouver Manitoba tub butter from the best creameries, selling at 25 to 26c a pound, and butter from the coast states, much inferior in fibre and other natural qualities, but made up into fresh looking rolls of about two pounds, and in beautiful fresh condition selling at 35c a pound. There is no reason why Manitoba butter should not be sent there as fresh, and in as attractive form as any imported from elsewhere. The time in transit and system of carriage is such as to give Manitoba an advantage over all others in this respect, so no blame can be attached to the C. P. R. in this matter. The entire blame lies with Manitoba butter makers, and until they mind their ways, they cannot secure a first place in the British Columbia market.

Considerable might be said about a pork supply for British Columbia from the prairie country, but the state of hog production in Manitoba is something disgusting. Year after year enough damaged wheat and other grain is sold, and shipped east from Manitoba, to be used as hog and cattle feed elsewhere, and enough potatoes and other roots are allowed to rot, which, if fed to hogs here, would produce annually hundreds of thousands pounds of pork, and make the province an exporter instead of an importer of such meat. It is useless to say that our local market is limited and does not allow scope for further development. British Columbia can take a big surplus, but it can take only hams, bacon and other meats well cured and in prime condition. All pork properly fed in Manitoba has an excellent flavor, and is entirely free from the danger of trichinae. If our farmers will only produce enough of it, our curers have advantages in climate and other essentials, which will enable them to give a good account of meat passing through their hands, and soon raise the reputation of the province for producing cured meats. In this, as in every other article of food, it must be kept steadily in view, that British Columbia wants a first class quality only.

Having used up quite a little space on the subject of mutual trade between the countries on each side of the mountains, it might not be out of place to devote a little attention to

MINING IN THE MOUNTAINS.

It is not the intention here to treat of the coal mining of the Pacific coast or the Island of Vancouver. That industry is so far developed as to require no notice. Nor would it be wise to follow the trail of mining in the Cariboo and other districts, but make a start in inland in the Columbia and Kootenay district, where there is every prospect of mining taking shape very soon as an industry of value to the country.

In entering a mining country it is tantalizing to meet with so many obstacles as are found in the track of real development. First to be met is the wandering adventurer, who has usually more inclination for wandering and dreaming than work. This speculative nuisance is one of the heaviest loads upon mining progress, for he belongs to the class, who will neither work nor starve, and he will contrive by some means to

live on the industry of others. Next comes the claim agent who usually resides in the town nearest to where a mining region is being opened. He is usually a loquacious loafer, who acts as a middleman between the wandering adventurer and the sucker to be salted, and shares in the make when the victim is landed. There is the capitalist shark too, with a few thousand dollars of loose cash, with which to secure an interest in some good claim, and work so as to freeze out the original owner if possible, and look outside for a new set of partners with funds enough to stand liberal milking. Some of those nuisances have made their appearance in the Columbia and Kootenay district, but on the whole that country has been pretty free from such parasitic pests. There are scores no doubt of claim hunters threading their way through the gorges of the mountains prospecting for valuable metallic deposits, but the great bulk of them are men of experience and in real earnest about the work they are engaged in.

Taking the town of Revelstoke as a starting point, it is now beyond doubt, that a country rich in valuable metallic ores lies all around. But it is equally certain that those valuable deposits are not to be developed and made to pay by the placer digger, and that only a combination of capital, machinery and mining skill can make them valuable. From this town the Columbia and Kootenay Steam Navigation Co., run steam boats twice a week during the open season down the Columbia river and upper and lower Arrow Lakes to Sproat's Landing, where the C. P. R. Co. have constructed a line of road some twenty five miles long to the growing mining towns of Nelson, from which another line of boats run in connection utilizing Kootenay Lake and river down south into United States territory. This combination of water and rail transportation has opened up, what is bound to prove the most valuable tract of mining country in the Dominion. The country abounds in deposits of lead, and copper, and shows unmistakable signs of silver and gold also. The days of prospect and assay are about over, and real work has commenced in quite a number of places. Among the claims being worked in the Nelson and Toad Mountain districts are the Silver King or Stall mine, the Dandy, the Grizzly and others. On these claims over one hundred men were at work in August, and the number has been steadily increasing as the season advances. In the Lardeaux river country several claims are to be opened up in the coming spring, and around the Toad Mountain country several new mines will probably commence operations about the same time. East of Revelstoke the Illecillewaet country has some rich mineral deposits, and these are likely to be operated upon with the opening of spring. There are numerous other points where rich finds will no doubt soon be operated on, and altogether there is a prospect of a stimulating of mining affairs into that healthy state, where they take shape as a valuable industry. In giving this impetus to legitimizing mining, the C. P. R. company and the Columbia and Kootenay Steam Navigation Co., have been the two great forces at work, and it seems as if their efforts in this direction are going to bear fruit very soon. It is just possible that before another year passes, THE COMMERCIAL will be able to record much more substantial progress in the mining affairs of the Columbia and Kootenay district.