

The Western Ranges.

[By E. B. Osborn, Special Correspondent of the Morning Post, London, Eng.]

As the westward-bound traveller on the iron trail of the Canadian Pacific Railway passes out of the great wheat field in the center of which is Regina, the aspect of the vast plain that seems slowly to revolve about him changes considerably. From the busy market town of Moose Jaw to the point where the locomotive charges the seemingly impregnable rampart of the Rockies, grain fields are small, and few and far between, but everywhere horses and cattle and sheep are abundant. In the region of the Chaplin Lakes, which begins a hundred miles or so from Regina, the high prairies are everywhere scored and scarred with buffalo trails and wallows. Over this ancient and many-wrinkled face of earth wander bands of antelope; here and there from a little hill the lean-visaged coyote contemplates the passing of the train. Thence up to Calgary, all the land is pasturage—pasturage which cannot be overstocked until the number of its cattle exceeds that of the vanished northern herd of buffalo.

But the old adventurous rancher's life—the lonesome life of an Ishmael—is passing away. The conditions of ranching have greatly changed during the past few years. The man with the plow is invading the ranges, and cattlemen with large herds are being crowded out of the game, or compelled to curtail their undertakings. Then, the encroachment of the sheepman must be taken into account. Sheep eat the natural pastures of Western Canada to the bone, and cattle would not, if they could, feed after them. They have been called "hoofed locusts," from the cattleman's point of view.

The ranching district of the Canadian Northwest may roughly be said to extend from the third meridian to the mountains, the greater part of it lying between the International boundary and the South Saskatchewan and Red Deer Rivers. The western and more favorable part of this stretch of country is already filling up, and cattlemen with large herds are beginning to find both their range and hay supply inconveniently curtailed. Those portions which are capable of irrigation are also capable of supporting a larger population than parts where the water supply is unattainable, and the ranges adjoining such localities will first be overcrowded. In these places the ranches will be gradually modified into stock farms. In my opinion, a great part of the West will never be capable of irrigation, and in such parts the cultivation of crops within the above-mentioned boundaries must always be something of a lottery. I am not speaking of Northern Alberta, where climatic conditions are different, and where the plow-team already predominates over the saddle horse. Southern Alberta, with the Medicine Hat and Maple Creek districts, with their more moderate temperatures and lighter snowfalls, are the objective point of seventy-five per cent. of the would-be ranchers now moving into the country, and in certain of these localities the supply of natural hay is already unequal to the demand. East, west and south, the boundaries of the rancher's operations are plainly marked. Northward, with limitations and decreased herds, he may still extend his sphere of influence. Nearly all the cattlemen are now alive to the fact that at least some portion of their herds will require feeding in winter, and large quantities of hay are put up every summer. At present the supply comes from natural sloughs and benches; but as the benches will not bear cutting during successive years, in the case of a crowded locality great areas must be gone over, necessitating long hauls to the corrals, and adding to the expense of the work. Where irrigation is practiced a much

larger bulk of feed may be procured from a much smaller acreage, which is generally close at hand.

It is clear from the foregoing that the Albertan ranch of the future will be a stock-farm. Whence it follows that the old methods of handling cattle will become obsolete, since the man with a small herd must send his steers to market in good condition. Already the Albertan rancher understands the market value of mercy to his beasts. There are ranches where the cowboy who asks for a stock-whip asks for his summary discharge. The use of the lariat is also being discouraged. . . . The Albertan rancher of the future will, I think, conduct his business in this wise: He will own an irrigation ditch, and a thousand head of cattle, more or less. He will grow feed on his irrigated lands, and ship stall-fed steers, which will come into the British market about midsummer, when prices reach the climax of the year's curve. He will not grumble at the exclusion from British pastures of Canadian cattle, for his steers—beasts with the white faces of the Hereford—will be a filled and finished product, so that what was formerly money in the pockets of Scottish graziers will be money in his own. His cattle will be mild-mannered—even gentler than the range cattle which I saw in the Winnipeg stockyards. . . . As for the cowboy—a little more of the romantic gilding will be rubbed off his life. "The beggar will have to hoe potatoes," says one who has studied the matter. In conclusion, it may be said that there is room for hundreds of these twentieth century ranchers in Western Assiniboia and Southern Alberta.

On my return from British Columbia I had the opportunity of visiting Macleod and Lethbridge. . . . Macleod is a typical ranching town, where a cowboy of the old style feels at home, and the side-saddle is not regarded as a departmental necessity for a pretty girl. But Lethbridge has a destiny of wider scope. Much of the territory adjoining is irrigated by means of the Galt Canal, the best and cheapest irrigation system on the continent; there is a well-equipped coal mine in the neighborhood, and the construction of the Crow's Nest Pass Railway makes it the natural supply point for mining camps of British Columbia, which are forced at present to import agricultural produce from the State of Washington, despite the high duties levied on farm products entering Canada.

The success of the Galt Canal, whereby the waters of the St. Mary River are distributed over an area, hitherto unsuitable for the raising of cereals, of close on one thousand square miles, shows how profitable will be the establishment of a "Canadian Colorado" in this remote corner of the Northwest Territories. . . . While the artificial application of water to growing crops in-

creases the original cost of farming, and adds to the farmer's labor, it enhances the quantity and quality of the product, and, above all, assures against loss by lack of rainfall or the ill distribution thereof through the season of growth. The admirable crop reports issued by the United States Government show conclusively that the average production of wheat per acre on the irrigated areas of Montana and Colorado is fifty per cent. more than in the States of Illinois, Iowa and Indiana—three of the best natural wheat producers in the Union. And the judges at the shows in the Western States find it necessary to place samples of wheat grown on irrigated land in a separate class, because in nine cases out of ten the grain grown under natural conditions would have no chance whatever in open competition. Furthermore, irrigation provides a fertilizing agent. The alluvial matter carried in suspension by the waters of the western rivers during spring and early summer are deposited on the soil, so that its grain-producing power is annually renewed. So it happens that in countries such as Colorado, where irrigation has been practiced for many years, wheat crop after wheat crop has been taken off the same field without any material reduction in the yield. . . . Finally, it should be remembered that the glacier-fed streams of the Albertan foothills afford an inexhaustible water supply for the irrigation systems of the future, and that since both the land and the water rights are owned by the Federal authority, the working out of comprehensive schemes will be greatly facilitated.

London, Eng., Comments.

Since the publication of the names of the gentlemen composing the Chamberlain Tariff Commission, general surprise is expressed by butchers that no one directly interested in the live or dead meat business has been appointed. Of course, I know there is a commission on food supplies now sitting, but I do not think it has powers to investigate and report upon the advisability of taxing imported foodstuffs. The vital importance of the subject is well worthy of a special commission to itself, and no doubt our National Federation of Meat Traders will see to it that the matter is fairly dealt with.

The subject of imported foodstuffs naturally leads to the consideration of Canada's relation to us as a source of continuous supplies, and how changes in our fiscal policy would affect her. Canada's geographical position is such that if a decided preference were given to her produce, as against that of the United States, for five winter months of the year she would be open to severe retaliatory impositions by the Americans. A very large percentage of Canada's exports come here via the United States. To obtain the full benefit of



King Holt (15673).

Imported Shire stallion. Third at London, Eng., Shire Horse Show, 1899. First at Peterboro, 1901. Property of Truman's Pioneer Stud Farm, Bushnell, Ill.