

The Awakening of Western Canada

Following the Hudson's Bay Company, with its centuries-old story of a land of ice and snow, came the ranchers, who for years stood as a barrier to the settlement of Southern Alberta. With their stock knee-deep in the luxuriant grasses of its plains and undulating hills, they told the intending settler that nothing could be grown but grass, and that in certain years not even grass could withstand the prolonged drouth and heat frequently recurring in this province. In the majority of cases these reports had the desired effect, and those who had come to farm either left the province or turned to other lines of work. However, there were a few who required further assurance than the mere statements of those whose interest was opposed to the cultivation and the fencing of the ranges, and as a result small areas were taken up and sown to cereals. The results were astonishing. But in such widely separated and isolated districts were these few successful experimentalists located that their successes were heard of very rarely. However, they were occasionally brought to the light of day and there would then follow a few more successful experiments. Each one had its effect on a friend or acquaintance in the East or across the border, until 1897, when the tide of immigration began to flow in earnest. And like a great tidal wave it has swept everything before it, driving the rancher and his stock back to the foothills, and away from the railroads. Where for years his cattle and horses roamed at will, to-day the country is cut up into farms which are fenced and are producing annually fine crops.

The United States is now practically settled. Its agricultural lands are more than spoken for, and its citizens are looking to Western Canada as the one spot where good land can still be bought cheaply. The question now being asked by those who wish to avail themselves of the present opportunity is, "How long will these lands be open for settlement at the present prices?" The answer is that it cannot be for long, as the world's available supply of land is rapidly decreasing while values are steadily increasing.

Southern Alberta

None but those who have lived in a new country can realize what is really taking place at this time in the way of settlement in Southern Alberta. There has been nothing in the world to equal it. Immigration to the United States was considered phenomenal, but it started very slowly and it took

years for the immigration figures of Canada to jump from 5,000 to 200,000 a year. In the settlement of the United States there was the Eastern Hemisphere to draw from. Canada has that and the United States, too, from which to draw, and this means a much more rapid settlement here than the latter ever knew.

With the extermination of the buffalo, the country was claimed by the rancher with his cattle that fed and fattened for market in this great pasture. Like the buffalo and the Indian, the rancher has had his day, and the farmer with his plow and reaper has come to his own, and he is going to hold it. Where in the past, buffalo and cattle ranged throughout the entire year, to-day the valley is dotted with happy homes, surrounded by rich acres that are advancing in value yearly.

Bow Valley Reservation Open for Settlement

In the year 1894, the Dominion Government withdrew from sale and homestead entry a tract of land containing some millions of acres located east of the City of Calgary, along the main line of the Canadian Pacific Railway. The object of this reservation was to provide for the construction, ultimately, of an irrigation system to cover the fertile Bow River Valley. It was realized that such a project could only be successfully accomplished by so administering the lands embraced within the tract in question, that the promoters would not be hampered by any vested interests created by the alienation from the Crown of any of these lands. The project, the greatest on the American Continent, is now being pushed to its completion.

While subsequent events have amply justified the reservation of this enormous area of land, so fertile and so favorably situated, immediately adjoining the largest city in Alberta, and traversed by the main line of Canada's transcontinental railway, a hardship was, perhaps, inflicted upon the early settlers, who were thus compelled to go further back for locations. What was their loss, is, however, the gain of those who are at this time looking for new homes and appreciate the opportunities presented in this block of land.

The Canadian Pacific Railway Company undertook to construct the gigantic irrigation system above referred to, and selected as part of its land grant a block comprising three million acres of the best agricultural lands, which has now been opened for colonization.