

and agriculture. The agricultural portion, namely, that within the basin of the Peace and Athabasca rivers, has been widely advertised as "The Last West," and is being gradually settled up. This portion of the Mackenzie basin, together with that immediately to the north of it as far as the Liard river, contains the greatest area of unoccupied agricultural country in Canada, and it is the direction in which Canadian expansion in agricultural pursuits is bound to take place.

The northern and eastern portion, however, is still largely unexplored and, while it is never likely to support a large agricultural population, offers a vast field of possibly great value to the prospector and the mining man.

To develop the Mackenzie basin, railway companies are building lines into it from the south, one going north-westward from Edmonton into the Peace river, and another down the Athabasca river, and still others are asking for charters to cross it from Hudson bay to the Pacific. Its magnificent system of waterways, with thousands of miles of river and lake navigation, combined with the transportation that will be afforded by the proposed railway lines, will make the development of the more accessible parts a quick and easy matter.

Although it is more than 100 years since the first explorer descended the Mackenzie river to its mouth, yet at the present time practically all we know of most of the region north of Athabasca lake is confined to the valleys of the main streams and the shores of the Great Lakes, and that knowledge is very imperfect. The vast extent of country lying between the river courses is still virtually unknown, except to the Indians. What those portions of the country contain in the way of mineral resources it is impossible to say and unsafe to hazard a guess, in view of the surprises we have already received in opening up similar country in northern Ontario.

Twenty-five years ago the basin of the Mackenzie was the subject of an investigation by a select committee of the Senate of Canada. The report of that committee summarizes the information that was available at that time on its climate, inhabitants and natural resources. That information is valuable to-day, but little new information has since been obtained on a great part of the region. The time is at hand, therefore, when we should endeavour to learn more about this region.

PHYSICAL FEATURES.

The Mackenzie river is on the Arctic watershed, draining an area of 682,000 square miles, a territory covering about one-fifth of the total area of Canada.