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The Peace River Country and Its Future

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Description of the Mighty Peace—The Opportunity for Agricultural Development and Conditions to Be Met in Entering the District.

Having lived some years in the great Peace River country and travelled its waterways and almost endless trails before the march of civilization brought this Empire of the North into closer touch with the outside world, naturally I feel interested in its development and the prominent part this country will play in the future building up of the cities of the Pacific Coast.

To those who have not given this country any study or attention, I might say that the term "Peace River" generally implies that portion of the Mackenzie Basin drained by the Peace River and its tributaries, or approximately the vast area lying between latitudes 55 to 60 and longitudes 115 to 123, comprising about 100,000,000 acres. Of this area about 60,000,000 acres are adapted to agriculture. If the reader looks at the map he will see that only a portion of this area described is in the Province of British Columbia; but while the product is grown in the Province of Alberta, the natural outlet to the markets of the world is through British Columbia to the Coast cities. And now that the Panama Canal is open, the markets of the Occident are as easily reached as those of the Orient.

It is entirely beyond comprehension the wealth enclosed in the natural resources of this great tract of land, for, besides its great agricultural possibilities, its wealth in mineral and timber is marvelous.

At the present time there are about twelve thousand people engaged in agriculture, and this past season the estimated crop yielded about ten million bushels of grain, a large part being No. 1 wheat. The greater part of this grain is stored now, awaiting transportation.

With, we shall suppose, one million settlers, each raising only one thousand bushels of grain per year, with an average price for all grains of 50c per bushel, one year's crop would amount to five hundred million dollars.

A great many people are still of the opinion that owing to the distance north, the climate is too severe. Of course, it is not a banana belt, but, compared with Manitoba or Dakota, it is certainly very much milder. Some of the most

eminent scientists for the Canadian Government have given the climate of the Peace River country a thorough study, and I think they will bear me out in the fact that the natural plants or common flora of this region require a high summer temperature. Winter temperature has practically nothing to do with cereal crops, which depend entirely on high summer temperature.

To sum up the situation, I might say the winter frosts pulverize the ground; the summer rains, with almost constant sunlight, produce quick and vigorous growth; hence early maturity.

The rainfall during the year is distributed so as to promote vegetation in the growing season. It generally comes just when wanted, and ceases when vegetation no longer requires it and when its condition would be detrimental to the harvesting of the crops.

Now that we have proved the productiveness of the country, the next question confronting us is the transportation problem.

As I have mentioned, the Pacific Coast is the natural outlet for this product, and no effort should be spared in order to give the settlers a market for their product. There is no doubt about the fact that the three great railway companies of Canada—the Canadian Pacific Railway, Grand Trunk Pacific, and Canadian Northern Railways—all have their eyes set on the opening of this wonderful belt of country; and although the C. P. R. has not done any grading north of the Saskatchewan River, the very fact of their spending the immense sum of money in entering the city of Edmonton, and

their immense purchases in the city, would indicate that they do not intend to take a back seat altogether in opening up the last and best West.

The first line to open up this country, however, will be the Pacific Great Eastern from the West, having Vancouver for its terminal, and the Edmonton, Dunvegan and British Columbia from the East; the former being built by Foley, Welsh and Stewart, under bond guarantee from the British Columbia Legislature, and the latter being built by J. D. MacArthur of Winnipeg, under Alberta Government guarantee. These lines join on the provincial boundary, so that when completed the settlers and imports may come in from the East, but the product will go out by the West.

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