

FRASER VALLEY DYKES.

The Great Area They Make Safe for the
Operations of the Farmer.

How Government Aid Has Made a Success
Where Private Effort Failed.

The problem of converting the 100,000 acres odd in the Fraser valley, which are more or less influenced by overflow and the action of tidal waters, into cultivable land, has been one confronting the settlers of New Westminster district ever since settlement was first effected. Perhaps in no part of Canada and certainly not in British Columbia can there be found more fertile lands than exist in this delta valley, and it would be difficult otherwise to find anywhere conditions more favorable to agricultural success. The fruitfulness of the soil under good cultivation has been remarkable and wherever the products of the Fraser valley have been exhibited they have invariably elicited admiration and surprise. It was therefore a matter of moment to the Westminster district and to the province as a whole that a system should be devised whereby these lands could be conserved to the uses of settlement and add to the wealth of the province.

Many partial efforts have been made in the past, but owing to the uncertainty of the seasons and the flooding of the Fraser river, these have been more or less a failure as a private enterprise.

After the floods of 1894 the government turned its attention to dyking matters and devised a scheme of reclamation and protection by sections including in each a certain tract of land, the dyking of which was placed in the hands of commissioners. Unfortunately for the experiment the depression which had set in became very marked, and it

was decided after a good deal of consideration that the best and cheapest method was to perform the work under the direct control of the government, and legislation was introduced and passed in 1897 and extended in 1898 which consolidated the dyking enterprises in the Fraser river valley, bringing the whole under one control and subject to a uniform charge in the matter of expenditure.

In order to indicate the progress of dyking matters in Westminster district, it will be necessary to give a review of the original condition of the lands and the various stages which have led up to the present completion of the enterprises.

ORIGINAL CONDITION OF LANDS.

The lowlands were of great agricultural and pastoral value, but were rendered valueless from overflow except as pasture during certain seasons. The lower or more frequently flooded areas being grass lands, and the higher or less frequently flooded areas being covered with brush. The soil is in places peaty, but for the most part of a rich, loamy character. All this land, its value being evident, was taken up by settlers and others early in the history of the province and has been held practically in an unimproved state and not capable of systematic cultivation until an effective system of dyking could be inaugurated. Thus for years, except in favored spots, the valley of the Fraser has lain dormant and yielding not one-hundredth part of what it was capable of under more favorable conditions.