

The Commercial

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THE WESTERN RANCHING INDUSTRY.

Volume I, No. I. of the *Alberta Live Stock Journal* has made its appearance from Calgary. The salutatory says:—"Alberta being the grazing district of Canada, its greatest industry is the raising of live stock, and with the largely increasing growth of that industry, it is time that it had an advocate in the shape of a journal devoted entirely to its interests." The establishment of a journal devoted exclusively to the stock raising interests of the western ranching country, would denote the rapid development which this industry has made within the past few years. It is but a short time since ranching was attempted in Alberta, and a still shorter time since the country was connected with the outside world by railway communication, but already it is estimated that there are 100,000 head of cattle, 8,000 horses and 25,000 sheep in that territory. The industry has grown rapidly since the completion of the C. P. Ry., and last season breeding stock were being brought in not only from the United States and Eastern Canada, but also from British Columbia. From the latter province about 11,000 head of cattle and 1,000 head of horses were imported during the season of 1886.

The past year has been one of special activity in the ranching country, and the industry has made greater strides than in any previous season. Sheep ranching in Alberta is of more recent date than cattle-ranching, and it was not until a year or two ago that sheep were taken into the territory. The country seems admirably adapted to sheep-ranching, and in a few years it is expected that a very large number of sheep will be in the country. Some trouble has been experienced from wolves in districts near the mountains. A wool-growers' association was formed at Calgary a few months ago. There are also three stock associations in the territory. Heretofore the raising of horses has not received much attention, but the visit of British army officers to the country last summer, for the purpose of purchasing horses to be used in the service, will probably act as a stimulus to this particular branch of the ranching industry.

Although the total figures of stock now in the western country show a considerable expansion within a brief period of time, yet it is but a drop in the bucket as to what may be expected in the future. The vast territory as a whole is almost uninhabited, and will yet support millions, instead of thousands of animals. A country which gave subsistence to the immense herds of cattle which a few years ago roamed over its prairies and fed upon its grass, should be a natural home for the domestic animals. The vast numbers of buffalo which once inhabited the west can be but dimly surmised from the innumerable paths which line the prairies everywhere, at the space of a few yards apart, beaten by the animals in their wanderings. The great quantity of bones which whiten the prairie also serve as an index to the number of these animals which at one time inhabited the country. Tons upon tons of the bones have been gathered up and exported, to be ground up for fertilizers, and used for other purposes. From one station alone on the C. P. Ry., it is estimated that the bones of 50,000 buffalo have been exported, all gathered up from the prairie within a few miles of the station. Already in some parts of the far west, the domestic cattle have taken up and renewed the old trails lately deserted by the buffalo, and in a few years these buffalo walks all over the country will have given place to the newly-beaten paths of the modern cattle.

THE COMING NEW ROUTE.

There seems to be no doubt about the determination of the Grand Trunk Railway to secure an entrance into the Northwest, and share in the great carrying trade to and from the illimitable prairies. Already in the states to the immediate south of Manitoba, the grain-carrying trade has assumed immense proportions, and during the past season the railways have been taxed to their utmost capacity to handle the products of the country. The *Montreal Gazette* in a late issue published the substance of an interview with leading railway officials, which would go to show that a vigorous push will be made by the Grand Trunk Co. to form the contemplated connections during the coming season, which will bring that road into competition for the Northwestern trade. The route to be used by the Grand Trunk will be that of the Ontario and Sault Ste. Marie Railway, for which

a charter has been granted by the Ontario Legislature. This route has been surveyed and the line located over a great portion of the distance. The Sault Ste. Marie road will commence at a point on the Midland branch of the Grand Trunk, near Orillia, and skirt the shores of Georgian Bay to the Sault Ste. Marie river. The length of this part of the road will be about 350 miles.

An independent line is to be built by New York capitalists from Duluth to Sault Ste. Marie, to connect with the Grand Trunk at the latter place. On this part of the road portions of railways already built will be utilized, and it is expected the work will be completed during the present year. The distance from Duluth to the Sault is about the same as the Grand Trunk portion yet to be built, namely 350 miles. The New York syndicate hold a charter from the United States Government to build a bridge across the Ste. Marie river, and parties hold a similar charter from the Canadian Government, in the interest of the Grand Trunk. In this connection it is worthy of note that these are the only charters yet granted for the construction of a bridge at Sault Ste. Marie, notwithstanding that other roads are approaching in that direction. Plans for the bridge have already been prepared and the nature of the structure has been decided upon.

At Duluth these railways would connect with the Northern Pacific, and thus a new through route from the Pacific to the Atlantic would be established, passing through a portion of the great wheat belt of the North American continent, and ensuring an abundant traffic in grain, stock, minerals, etc. The policy of the Northern Pacific, pushed with such energy of late, in building branches through the wheat country to the north of its main line, will add enormously to the traffic already enjoyed, and will undoubtedly make Duluth and the Sault the great grain route for many years. It is also sure, in the words of one of the railway officials interviewed, "that the construction of a railway from Duluth into the Canadian Northwest is as certain as that the sun will rise to-morrow." Even though a direct line of railway between Winnipeg and Duluth should not be established for a few years, connection between the city and the Northern Pacific branch now at East Grand Forks (which latter will be extended to the Manitoba boundary near Emerson) would