

# The Okanagan Valley



IN the "early days"—the "days of '49"—the great rush to the gold-diggings in California brought a motley crowd to the western slopes. Men of almost every nationality, class and creed, fought their way through difficulties and dangers in their eagerness to get rich quickly; much in the way that they do today, only, perhaps, with less method. Shortly after this, in 1858, gold was discovered in the alluvial sands of the Fraser and Thompson rivers, and again in 1863 the same excited, feverish rush into Cariboo was repeated. This, so far, is a matter of history, but it is a history full of import to those who travel over the same ground today. Then it meant scant rations long eked out over a footwearying trail, with not even a hut to shield the traveller from the weather; railroads were unknown, stage lines undreamed of, hotels, of a kind, few and far apart. Nothing but hard work lay ahead of those intrepid men—few of whom remain today—hard work, and, perhaps, gold. Some became rich, and acquired large tracts of land, which formed the nucleus of some of British Columbia's most valuable agricultural districts. But gradually the gold became more difficult to find, as it grew less year by year, and men were forced to return to the soil for solid support. From those times to the present, agriculture, that great civilizing influence, has been of paramount importance with all the other industries as they have succeeded each other. One might almost trace these in their successive stages. First gold-mining, then cattle-ranching and crude farming, next lumbering and salmon fishery, and coeval with these quartz-mining; and now—perhaps the most important—at all events the surest—fruit-culture.

Such, then, is the history of the more thickly populated districts of British Columbia today; excepting, of course, those of the far North. At the present time the insatiable demand for fruit is in direct ratio to the rapid increase of Canada's population and the call of the foreign markets; so that we come to judge the importance of a district from its productive capabilities along these lines.

The achievements of British Columbia, both in fruit and horticulture, during recent years, have been little short of marvellous. Amongst her many victories we find her carrying off in 1908 the Gold Medal at Bath and the Silver-gilt Medal at London (Eng.) Again, the fact stands out boldly that, for the past four years in succession, she has gained the Gold Medal—the highest award—of the Royal Horticultural Society, at London (Eng.) Towards these distinctions the Okanagan has contributed handsomely as every new success attests. Hence we may readily understand the great popularity of the Okanagan Valley. A short history of it may not be amiss.

The name "Okanagan" means stormy (or treacherous) waters, and was applied by the Indians to the lake, which is seventy miles long, from