

The Commercial

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DEVELOPING BRITISH COLUMBIA.

The railway mileage at present in operation in the Pacific Province consists of the main line of the C. P. R., from the Rocky Mountains to Vancouver, 520 miles; and the Esquimalt and Nanaimo railway, on Vancouver Island, connecting Victoria and Esquimalt naval station with the coal mines of the Nanaimo district, length about 75 miles. There is also the Westminster branch of the C. P. R., which is about eight miles long, from Westminster to the junction with the main line.

Some new railway work is likely to be done in British Columbia this year. A railway to connect Westminster with the cities of Puget Sound and United States railways, will probably be pushed through this year. Westminster has voted a large bonus to this road, and is to secure the workshops, etc. The trains will be carried across the river by a railway ferry steamer, though it is ultimately intended to bridge the river. Some preliminary work has been done on this road, from New Westminster southward. It is also probable that the C. P. R. Co. will build a road from its main line east of Vancouver, southward to connect with the Pacific coast railway system of the United States.

On Vancouver Island there is a probability that the Island railway may be extended northward at no distant date, as far as Comox, a distance of about 70 miles. Very extensive coal mines are being opened at Comox, and a railway about 12 miles long has been built from the mines to the harbor. This railway has been completed since the first of the present year. Docks and works at the Comox mines are being established on a scale large enough to handle 2,000 tons per day. It is also proposed to extend the Island railway southward from Victoria to Beecher Bay, the extreme southern point of Vancouver Island, with the object of connecting by ferry, with a railway in Washington Territory.

Regarding the proposed railway from the main line of the C. P. R. southward into the United States, it is now practically an established fact that this connection will be built. Within the last few days, the C. P. R. Company has called for

tenders for the construction of a bridge across the Frazer river, near St. Mary's Mission. This bridge will form an important portion of the work of building the road. St. Mary's Mission is a point on the main line of the C. P. R., about 42 miles east of Vancouver. The road will leave the main line near this point, and run southward to the United States boundary, a distance of about 15 miles. At the boundary connection will be made with the Seattle, Lake Shore, and Eastern Railway, which road is being constructed northward from Puget Sound, toward the boundary. It is understood that the C. P. R. Co. has an agreement with the Seattle and Lake Shore, providing for the completion of the road by August next. This road will give the C. P. R. direct connection with the railway system of the Pacific coast states, and with the cities on Puget Sound. The Seattle and Lake Shore will simply form a branch of the C. P. R., and it is further hinted that C. P. R. capital will build not only the Canadian, but also mainly the portion of the road in the United States.

It has been recently reported in what seems a reliable way, that the Northern Pacific Company has secured the franchise of the proposed road to run southward from New Westminster, and that the N. P. Co. will build this road, not only to Westminster but on to Vancouver. The proposed southern connection of the C. P. R. will bring the latter road into direct connection and competition with the Northern Pacific at its terminal points on Puget Sound. It is therefore quite probable that the Northern Pacific will endeavor to get even, by gaining an entrance into the two western termini (Vancouver and Westminster) of the C. P. R. The report that the Northern Pacific has secured control of the Westminster Southern and connection seems very probable. At any rate, it is pretty certain that British Columbia will have connection with the railway system of the United States, by two different roads, before a great while.

There are several other railway enterprises talked of in British Columbia, in the interest of which charters have been procured or applied for, but no very definite announcements have been made concerning these schemes. The lower Kootenay country contains some good agricultural and pastoral lands, and is also claimed to be very rich in minerals, and several of the railway schemes are

projected to reach this region. It is also reported that the C. P. R. will run a branch southward through the Kootenay country, but this may be only report.

There are a number of fine navigable water stretches in this portion of British Columbia, on the Columbia and Kootenay rivers and lakes. The value of these waters could be very greatly increased by some outlay in connecting the different waters, so as to provide a more continuous system of navigation. Some Government grants have been made to improve the navigation of these inland waters, but a good deal yet remains to be done. The reports as to the mineral wealth of the Kootenay country are almost fabulous in their nature, and if the region approaches to any extent its reported value as a mineral and agricultural country, the expenditure of a little money in opening up the region would be advisable.

In connection with navigation, however, the most important work in the province is the improvement of the Fraser river. Here is a splendid river, navigable for ocean ships, but requiring some improvements at its mouth. The Dominion Government has acted niggardly in regard to the improvement of the mouth of the Fraser river, and year after year has been allowed to pass away, with the accomplishment of very little. This year a paltry \$10,000 has been placed in the estimates for Fraser river improvements. The importance of the trade interests on the Fraser demand that no time should be lost in rendering the river safely navigable at its mouth for ocean-going ships, and it is hoped the Government will bring down an estimate in keeping with the importance of the work.

Another important feature in the development of British Columbia, is the establishment of the first smelter in the province. This smelter is located at Vancouver, and it was completed and put in operation last week. The establishment of the smelter is largely due to the enterprise of the people of Vancouver, who voted a large sum of money to assist the enterprise. It will mark a new era in the mineral development of the country. As British Columbia is largely a mineral country, the establishment of this first smelter is a very important matter. Heretofore there has been no encouragement to develop quartz mines, especially of the lower grade ores, owing to the cost of getting the ores to smelters in the United States. Now, with a smelter at hand