

THE COLUMBIA-KOOTENAY VALLEY.



THE Columbia-Kootenay Valley includes the most extensive area of agricultural and pastoral land in the Kootenay District. It lies between the Rocky Mountains on the east and the Selkirks, which form its western boundary, and extends from the Big Bend of the Columbia River, at its junction with the Canoe River in latitude 52 degrees north, to the International Boundary at Tobacco Plains, a distance of about 280 miles.

The northern portion of the valley is narrow, but widens at Golden, where the Kicking Horse River joins the Columbia, and from there to its southern extremity maintains a width varying from six to twelve miles. The valley is drained by the Columbia and Kootenay Rivers, the former flowing northward from its source (Windermere and Columbia Lakes), while the latter flows southward, the two streams almost uniting at Canal Flats, where only a narrow strip of level land separates them. These two main arteries are fed by many smaller rivers and creeks flowing into them from east and west, and providing ample water for irrigation and power purposes. These creeks have their sources in glacier-fed basins, which lie in the heart of the mountains at an altitude of 5,000 to 8,000 feet. The bottom lands of the Columbia River Valley are quite flat, and in consequence subject to flood in the early spring and summer. The soil of these flats is alluvial and produces a luxuriant growth of wild hay, vetch, and peavine—good provender for cattle. The reclamation of these flats by dyking, in conjunction with a similar project on the Kootenay River near Creston, would add many thousands of acres of exceptionally fertile land to the agricultural area of the district.

From the flats the land rises in a series of benches, which finally merge into the foot-hills and mountains. Many of these benches present the appearance of rolling prairie, while others are covered with a fine growth of timber, free from underbrush as a well-kept park. Then benches, foot-hills, and mountain-slopes are covered with grasses, which provide good pasturage for cattle, horses, and sheep.

AGRICULTURAL LANDS.

The area of the valley proper is roughly about 1,000,000 acres, and at a best estimate from 20 to 30 per cent. of this is available for crops of hay, grain, vegetables, and the hardier fruits, while nearly all the rest is good pasture. Practically all the benches require irrigation to produce the best results, and it remains to be proved if dry-farming can be practised with success. It has been satisfactorily demonstrated that with irrigation all the ordinary field crops—hay, cereals, roots, vegetables, and fruits—can be grown in quantity. Two and three crops of alfalfa in a season are usual, while timothy and other fodder-crops yield large returns.

The area under cultivation, however, is inconsiderable, and, with few exceptions, little has been done in the way of systematic farming, and the population is small and scattered. Many settlers derive the bulk of their income from herds of cattle and horses, which require little care.

The section of the valley for twenty miles north and twenty miles south of Golden is included in the Dominion Railway Belt and is under the jurisdiction of the Department of the Interior, Ottawa, which regulates the homesteading, pre-emption, and purchase of lands within the Belt. South of the Railway Belt a very considerable part of the land is owned by the Columbia Valley Irrigated Fruit Lands Company, Limited. Other large areas are held under timber licence and the most available agricultural portions have been alienated from the Crown by rough purchase and pre-emption. There is therefore very little cultivable land of immediate value remaining in control of the Provincial Government, so that the new settler must,