

# THE COMMERCIAL

A Journal of Commerce, Industry, Finance and Insurance, devoted to the interests of Western Canada, including that portion of Ontario west of Lake Superior, the Provinces of Manitoba and British Columbia and the Territories.

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D. W. BUCHANAN,  
Publisher.

The Commercial certainly enjoys a very much larger circulation among the business community of the vast region lying between Lake Superior and the Pacific Coast, than any other paper in Canada, daily or weekly. The Commercial also reaches the leading wholesale, commission, manufacturing and financial houses of Eastern Canada.

WINNIPEG, FEBRUARY 19, 1898.

## AN INTERIOR ROUTE.

A deputation representing the Winnipeg board of trade and the Winnipeg city council is now in the east upon very important business. The object is to urge upon the government the necessity of opening the interior route to the northern gold fields and also to seek the assistance of the eastern boards of trade in furthering this object. Without discussing at the present time the decision of the government to open the Stikine route, the necessity for the opening of an interior route will not in the least be lessened by the construction of the Stikine-Teslin railway. The opening of the Stikine route may be necessary as an emergency case. The opening of an interior route is necessary as a permanent and lasting investment in the interest of all Canada.

The Stikine route will provide means of ingress, and what is perhaps of more importance, of egress to the great crowd of inexperienced persons who are endeavoring to reach the famous Klondike. What will become of many of these people it is indeed hard to say, but the best possible will have to be done for them when they find themselves stranded in the far north. The opening of an interior route from some point on the north Saskatchewan, would provide, as we have said, a permanent highway, to the great north country, and also a permanent route which would be the

first great desideratum in the development of northwestern Canada.

The great point in connection with a route via the North Saskatchewan is, that it would open up a vast territory well adapted to settlement, wide at the same time it would afford a means of speedy communication with the far north entirely within Canadian territory. It is of paramount importance that those going to the northern gold fields should pass through Canadian territory all the way. Thousands and thousands of those who go north will not remain as miners. Thousands of them will never attempt anything as miners. If they were going in and coming out by an interior route, no doubt many of them would locate permanently in the northern portions of the country which offer good inducement for permanent settlement. A railway through the great agricultural region north of the Saskatchewan would mean the early location of thousands of permanent settlers in that region. A great many who would start for the Klondike via such a route, would probably never get that far. They would become permanent settlers at some point further south. There is not only a vast area of country north of the Saskatchewan well adapted to agriculture and stock-raising, but it is also well known that gold exists over a wide area of territory this side of the Klondike. Gold washing can be made to pay in almost every stream from the Saskatchewan northward. As to the value of the country for hundreds of miles beyond the Saskatchewan for agricultural purposes, it is hardly necessary to speak in detail. For the past fifteen years or more, the Peace river region has been considered quite equal to any part of the prairie country from the Red river westward. Official reports claimed that the region north of the Saskatchewan was equal to the best, and it has been the belief of those who were familiar with the country, that when the north country was developed, Canada would have a great agricultural province in the Peace river region.

We have now the opportunity to turn a tide of settlement into that region. The fabulous discoveries of gold in the far northern regions of Canada have moved the civilized world. Half a million people will, it is believed, attempt to get into the north country this year. This is Canada's opportunity to secure within a few years such a settlement and development of our unoccupied northern agricultural districts as would not come in a lifetime under ordinary circumstances. Shall we rise equal to the occasion? Shall we let this great opportunity slip by? The immediate opening of an

interior route to the far north would give such an impetus to the development and settlement of western and northwestern Canada as we have never yet even dared to hope for. Not only would it open the north country for settlement, but it would provide a market for the produce of our farmers, in the far northern gold regions, now being largely supplied from the Pacific coast states, thus proving a great benefit to our present population.

Gold or no gold in the Klondike, the opening of the country north of the Saskatchewan would be necessary at some future time. The great discoveries in the far north have, however, created a situation which should be taken advantage of. The cost would not be great in comparison with the results to be attained. The case is as urgent as is the opening of the Stikine route. All eyes are turned this way. To miss the opportunity now, may retard our development a decade or more in comparison with what might be secured.

The Commercial has taken special pains to secure information regarding the routes to the far north via the North Saskatchewan. A representative of this journal visited Edmonton, Prince Albert, Fort Saskatchewan, St. Albert, and other Saskatchewan points, with the object of interviewing traders, trappers, missionaries and others familiar with the north country. The information gathered, which was published in our issues of October 18 and February 5, was sufficient to show the great desirability of opening a route via the North Saskatchewan. The information published in these two numbers is perhaps the most complete yet given in regard to the routes via North Saskatchewan points.

## THE PATRONS.

When the order of Patrons of Industry was first introduced into Manitoba and began to make its presence felt, there was considerable alarm among country merchants at points where the Patrons were strong. The Patrons declared their intention of purchasing their supplies "from headquarters" thus doing away with the "middle men" as they termed the country traders. The Commercial received many letters from country merchants about the Patrons, and in some of these letters The Commercial was upbraided for not pitching into the Patrons an undertaking single-handed their extermination. One merchant claimed that their trade was being destroyed by the Patrons, and yet The Commercial, which should defend them, had not even denounced the order. To such letters a private reply was usually sent to the effect