

The Commercial

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PROGRESS OF BRITISH COLUMBIA.

During the past year THE COMMERCIAL has devoted considerable space each week to our Pacific Province of British Columbia. Previous to the opening of the O. P. Ry. to the Pacific coast, British Columbia had but little intercourse, either commercial or social, with the country to the east of the Rocky Mountains. The bulk of her people were located on the coast, and their intercourse was largely with the neighboring States of the Pacific coast, and with Great Britain, via Cape Horn. Now this is considerably changed. Since the opening of the national highway, thousands of Canadians from all parts of the country east of the mountains, have visited the coast, and have made themselves acquainted with the province, while many have taken up their residence permanently in the province. To-day, there is hardly a leading business man in Winnipeg who has not been as far west as Victoria, and this is probably true, in a less degree, of our eastern tradecentres. A few years ago British Columbia was to the rest of Canada practically a foreign land. Now it can be looked upon as in reality a portion of the Dominion.

Geographically, Canada can be divided into two great parts. Eastern, or Old Canada—that portion east of the great lakes—and Western, or New Canada—the portion west of the lakes. A glance at the map will show that by far the greater portion of habitable country belongs to the western division, though the population of this division is but a small fraction of the Dominion. This gives some indication of the future possibilities of Western Canada. Western Canada can again be divided into the two great parts of the Prairie and Pacific divisions, the latter including British Columbia.

With the great prairie region east of the mountains, British Columbia is now becoming closely identified, and during the past year THE COMMERCIAL has endeavored to extend this acquaintanceship, by devoting considerable space weekly, to the Pacific Province. It is, therefore, pleasing to note that the Pacific Province has during the past year, made great advancement in the development of its resources. The provincial papers have lately been teeming with statistics showing the progress made during 1888.

The Pacific division of Western Canada is quite unlike the Prairie section, in physical features, climate, resources, etc., and this is favorable to commercial intercourse between the two divisions. British Columbia may be said to possess three great natural resources, namely; mineral, timber and fishery wealth. In the development of all these three great industries, great progress has been made during 1888, and it would seem as if the province had entered upon a new era of development during the past year.

In the fishing industry the year 1888 is said to have exceeded any previous year in the value of the catch. The salmon canning industry, which is the most largely developed in the fishery line, was not as successful as in some years past, owing to the poor run of fish on some streams. The value of the pack for the season, however, amounted to over \$1,000,000. Twenty-one canneries were in operation, and packed 187,403 cases of salmon. The Dominion Government has fish hatcheries established, which will assist in keeping up the supply of salmon.

Seal fishing is another industry which has been prosecuted for some years, but owing to the action of the United States in interfering with the rights of the sealing vessels, the industry was not as extensively prosecuted during 1888 as in some former years. The total catch for the year was 24,790 seal, valued at \$173,530. The value of the catch for 1887 was \$236,600. A number of new vessels will engage in this industry during the present year.

The past year has been noted principally for the development of the black cod fishing industry, and there is undoubtedly a great source of wealth in this industry. The total value of the catch of all fish, canned, salt, smoked, fresh, fish oil, etc., for the year, is placed at \$1,373,879. This is exclusive of the seal catch. There is yet great room for development in the fishing industry, and in a few years it will doubtless be worth millions annually to the province.

New life appears to have been infused into the mining industry during the year. Heretofore there has been no encouragement to quartz mining in the province, and attention has been given mostly to placer mining. Since 1858 over \$51,000,000 worth of gold has been produced in the province, but the annual production has been steadily declining. Last year the value of gold exported was

\$472,442, against \$578,924, for 1887. The decline in gold production is no doubt due to the washing out of the placer diggings, but for last year it may also be attributed to the increased attention given to prospecting for quartz claims. Gold mining in the province is entering upon a new era, and certainly one of far greater development than the palmiest days of placer mining ever witnessed. On the first of January of the present year, a large smelter, the first in the province, was completed at Vancouver. With the opening up of the country to railway and steamboat communication, and the establishment of smelters, the vast mineral wealth of the province will receive increasing attention from year to year. The mineral wealth of British Columbia alone, if largely developed, is sufficient to make it a wealthy province indeed. The exports of products of the mines for the fiscal year ended June 30th, 1887, were \$1,832,827, or an increase of about \$100,000 over the previous year. Only two years since 1871 show larger exports, namely: 1875 and 1876, which were slightly in excess of the last fiscal year. Coal is the principal item in the export of products of the mines. The output of coal for the year 1888 is the largest on record, and amounted to about 487,000 tons. Exports of coal to the United States for 1888 were valued at \$1,751,185. The total value of all exports of coal and gold for 1888 is placed at \$2,872,000, thus making the mines the most important source of wealth to the province. New coal districts are being developed, and the output for 1889 will be in excess of the past year in all probability. Iron ore is also exported to the United States.

Third on the list of industries stands lumber. Exports of lumber for 1888 were 40,000,000, valued at \$350,000, this would include only shipments in vessels to foreign countries, principally to Australia, South America, China and the United States. Exports from the coast and interior mills to Manitoba, the Territories and east, would not be counted in the figures given. The lumber production of 1888 is the largest in the history of the province, the total cut for the year being placed at 140,000,000 feet or 40,000,000 in excess of 1887. Several new mills have lately been completed; others are in course of erection, and others are projected, so that there is every probability that the returns for