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IRRIGATION.

The subject of the redemption of arid land by irrigation is engaging the attention of the leaders among those devoted to agricultural pursuits in southern Alberta. In the south and southeastern parts of that province there are many thousands of acres of beautiful land lying idle, almost barren, but lacking only moisture to make it as productive as any in the wide world. There are a number of streams in the stretch of country referred to which would easily furnish all the water required if only they could be brought into service. The Milk River which flows for some distance in the extreme south of the province before crossing into Assiniboia is one of these, and the St. Mary's River, which takes its rise on the American side of the line and follows a winding course northward till it reaches the Belly River into which it empties is another. These two, if good facilities for distributing the water could be secured, might be made to supply a large tract of country. Some very serious engineering difficulties would have to be overcome though before they could be made to give full supplies of water. One of these is that the height of their banks, or rather the depth of their beds below the surface of the tributary country, would necessitate a proportionate depth of ditch at a greater cost than the generality of irrigation ditches entail. But the engineering difficulties in the way are only a small part of those which present themselves to the minds engaged in studying the question. The others will however, have to be dealt with in another paragraph.

The cry has been raised and not without reason that the Government is wholly responsible for the carrying out of the necessary plans and work. They, it is claimed, raised the artificial difficulties

which are in the way and should therefore undertake the task of overcoming them. These obstacles are in the shape of corporate land holdings. The Government in carrying out its liberal railway policy of the past few years has granted to the Canadian Pacific, the Calgary and Edmonton and the Alberta Railway & Coal companies large tracts of the land to be affected. The question now arises, will they be willing to bear their share of the expense? Their holdings would be fully trebled in value were the irrigation system in operation, and the A. R. & C. Company realizing this have already evidenced their willingness to help, but so far as we can learn the other two companies have not.

There were at the time of writing two petitions before the Dominion Parliament from private companies asking for charters of incorporation, which companies have for their objects the construction of irrigation works in the sections we have been speaking of. One of these is promoted largely by the Alberta Railway & Coal Company, and proposes to utilize both the Milk and St. Mary's rivers, the other is composed of a party of Calgary capitalists, who will work with the waters of High River and Sheep Creek.

Speaking on the subject under discussion and after urging strongly in favor of some action being taken by the Government the Lethbridge News made this rather striking and practical statement: "In districts like ours an irrigation ditch is more needed and would be of far more benefit than a railway." That may seem somewhat out of sympathy with the accepted theory of Western Canadians that "nothing is so indispensable to a new district as a railway," but it is, nevertheless, in this case, true.

With our cousins across the line it has been found that irrigation companies and private corporations can very often establish and operate irrigation systems to better advantage than the Government, but the different conditions call for different methods in our country and we think it will be found that greater success will follow the work if the Government undertake it. It is to be hoped that they will in the near future.

INDIAN ENFRANCHISEMENT.

The enfranchisement of the Indians of British Columbia is a distinct step, and the final as far as the Government is concerned, towards placing the red men on a level with their white brethren. The

Indians of that province are said to be the finest of the North American tribes. They are certainly in a great many respects superior to those living to the eastward of the Rocky Mountains. It is but right then, that they should be the first to have conferred on them the dignity of full citizenship.

The new privileges entitle all adult individuals of either sex after sworn proof of their sobriety, good moral character and intelligence has been given by the clergyman of their band or by a stipendary magistrate or two justices of the peace, to all the rights of enfranchisement. The Act also provides that an Indian who becomes a barrister, solicitor, attorney or notary public or takes a medical or other degree or becomes a clergyman or duly licensed minister of the gospel shall *ipso facto* become enfranchised.

The moral effect of this new privilege cannot help but be good and we may now look for the completion of the transformation of these people from a semi-barbaric state to one of civilization and refinement.

THE CROW'S NEST PASS ROUTE.

It is said that the C.P.R. intends laying a track from a convenient point on their present line east of the Rocky Mountains through the Crow's Nest Pass and on to the Pacific coast. Such a line would certainly greatly increase their facilities for handling both freight and passenger traffic. The distance from Montreal to Vancouver would be about 300 miles less by it than it is by the present line and the time consumed in making the run could be reduced to about 72 hours. It would open up a splendid country on both sides of the mountains; the famous Kootenay and Okanagan on the British Columbia side. It would also render available the immense beds of coal which are said to exist in the country adjacent to the Pass. Both the Dominion Government and the C. P. R. have surveyed the Pass and have pronounced it a favorable one for railroad purposes. The highest altitude reached by a line through it would be about 4,275 feet. There would be very little rock-cutting to do in constructing, the grade would never exceed one per cent., and when the road was completed there could be no danger of mud or snow slides. With all these advantages it would seem that a line over the mountains via the