

lies in irrigation. These same vast mountain ranges which rob the plains of moisture, store up in the winter vast masses of snow and ice, which by the aid of man can be sent flowing over the plains during the summer, bringing fruitfulness and plenty to the tiller of the soil. We have already stated that a large number of streams issue from the mountains and flow in a general course eastward through the district. These streams provide the moisture required for the plains, and by means of irrigation these streams will in time be turned out upon the land. A great interest in the question of irrigation has been developed of late. Irrigation conventions were held during the past year and the question was thoroughly discussed. The matter was pressed upon the attention of the Dominion Government with the result that a bill has been introduced into Parliament, providing for a general survey of the country, with the object of deciding the best plans for a comprehensive system of irrigation. Once a start is made we may expect to find a rapid extension of the work of irrigation throughout Southern Alberta, and when this is done the district will assume a position of importance as an agricultural country second to none. The COMMERCIAL was perhaps the first journal to call attention to the question of irrigation for our western sub-arid regions, and it is gratifying to note that interest in the matter has now reached Parliament and a commencement made in the direction of the practical prosecution of the work. Alberta as a whole is but thinly populated, and Southern Alberta is no exception to the balance of the territory. The towns are therefore few. There are only two towns in Southern Alberta and those are Macleod and Lethbridge. Lethbridge we have briefly referred to as a coal town. Macleod is an older place and was at one time perhaps the most important point in the territories.

Macleod is located on the banks of the Old Man River, about twenty-five miles west of Lethbridge, and 105 miles south of Calgary. The old town of Macleod is situated near the southern terminus of the Calgary and Macleod branch of the C. P. R. A new town has been started at the terminus of the railway, but the old town still holds its own. It is expected that the railway will eventually be extended from Lethbridge to Macleod and thence on westerly through the Crow's Nest Pass of the Rocky Mountains. This is looked upon as a certainty in the very near future. The C. P. R. has already made surveys for such a railway.

Macleod is one of the oldest trading posts of the territories, it was the headquarters for J. G. Baker & Co., the largest trading concern in the territories in the early days, with the single exception of the Hudson's Bay Co. The latter company also has a branch at Macleod. It is now the centre of the ranching industry of Southern Alberta, and has been so since the inception of ranching in the western country. Here the cowboy could be seen in his native glory, and when they came to town in force to celebrate they made things lively for a while. Of late the "wild and woolly west" nature of the town has been considerably toned down, and to-day the visitor would not notice any particular difference between Macleod and any other territorial town. Since the Galt mines were opened, the railway built and the town of Lethbridge called into existence, Macleod has lost some of its importance. Formerly it stood alone as the only town for a hundred miles or more around, but now Lethbridge has grown up and disputed the honor with Macleod of being the principal

town of Southern Alberta. The fact that the new rival had railway communication for years before Macleod, tended to the disadvantage of the latter place in its struggle to maintain commercial supremacy.

Macleod was known in its early days as Fort Macleod, from being a Mounted Police station. It has always been an important Police point, as there were strong tribes of Indians in the vicinity, and an interesting point on the trail to the boundary. The town has now a population of about 100, and about forty business institutions, including the Macleod Gazette, one of the most readable and enterprising papers published anywhere in the territories.

Lethbridge has a population placed at over 2,000. As it is an industrial town, its population is much larger than Macleod in proportion to its trading institutions. There are about sixty business institutions of one kind and another, including a chartered bank and the News newspaper, a very creditable publication. With the splendid quality of coal mined there, in abundant quantity, the future of Lethbridge is assured. As the population of the country increases, Lethbridge may be expected to become an important manufacturing town, and industrially it has perhaps about as good prospects as any town in the entire territories. With Lethbridge's special feature, coal mining, we will deal in a separate article.

#### COAL MINING AT LETHBRIDGE.

VERY few of the thousands of people who use "Galt" coal have any idea of the magnitude of the operations of the Lethbridge colliery, which is now the largest one in Canada, being only exceeded in output by the Spring Hill colliery in Nova Scotia. To-day Galt coal is the principal coal used in the cities towns and villages of Manitoba and the Territories.

"Galt" coal is named after Sir A. T. Galt, as the Company owes its existence largely to him. The existence of coal on the Belly river was learned of by his son, Elliott T. Galt, some ten years ago, and in 1881, before the main line of the Canadian Pacific Railway had reached Brandon, steps were taken for its development. Early in that year application was made to the Dominion Government for the lease of five mining locations on the Bow and Belly Rivers, in different parts of Alberta. Explorations were made on those locations during that year and in 1882, with the result that the promoters became satisfied that the deposits on the Belly river were superior to those on the Bow. A company was formed, the chief promoters being W. Lethbridge, W. Ford, Q. C., W. Burdett Coutts, M. P., Peter Redpath, and Edward Crabb, of England, and Sir A. T. Galt, and W. M. Ramsay, of Montreal, to whose effect the present magnitude of the Company's operations is attributable. It was decided to commence mining on the Belly river, where Lethbridge is now situated, and to build a steamer and fleet of barges to convey 3,000 tons of coal from the mines to Medicine Hat, which the Canadian Pacific Railway Company had agreed to take from the Company at a good price in order to encourage the enterprise and ensure cheap fuel for the prairie country which its railway would open up for settlement. The difficulties to be overcome in the building of these boats were immense, as the