

DEVELOPING OUR COAL MEASURES.

A GREAT INDUSTRY GROWING IN THE WEST.

An abundant fuel supply is a necessity in a northern country, and this Western Canada possesses, notwithstanding the large area of prairie land. Formerly the fuel question was considered the greatest problem in the settlement of the country. To the north-west and east it was well known vast areas of timber country existed, but wood became a costly fuel when it had to be transported a considerable distance by rail. It is also a costly matter to haul wood to the railway after the supply in the immediate vicinity of the yards becomes exhausted. To undertake to supply a large population in the great central prairie region with wood fuel from the great forests of the north and east and the Rocky mountain country to the west, would be a difficult and costly undertaking. In most parts of Manitoba, and in portions of the territories there exists more or less of a wood supply of timber, suitable for wood fuel, but it was always recognized that these local supplies of wood

fuel in the inland prairie and timber districts would in time become exhausted. Besides, there were large areas of prairie country, remote from the great forest regions, which were without any local supply of wood sufficient to last for even a few years.

It was evident that in the course of years, as settlement increased, and local supplies of wood became exhausted, some other sort of fuel would have to be supplied. This is now known to exist in the many discoveries of coal which have been made during recent years.

It was known to the early travelers that coal existed in various parts of Western Canada, as it had frequently been observed cropping out along the cut banks of streams. With the extending settlement of the country, new coal discoveries are being constantly made, until it now appears that our coal supply is practically unlimited. Vast areas of country appear to be undeveloped, with beds of coal, and mines are now being worked at points hundreds of miles apart. The first important development of the native coal industry was at and near Medicine Hat. This is a town on the main line of the Canadian Pacific railway, 600 miles west of Winnipeg, where the railway crosses the South Saskatchewan river. The coal was observed here showing out in the deep cut banks of the river. Mines were opened in this district and worked to some extent, quantities of coal having been shipped as far east as Winnipeg. The

mines are not actively operated at present, beyond taking out coal for local requirements. The Medicine Hat coal is not of as high a quality as that obtained at some other points, and as the demand is limited, yet to the requirements of our small population and the supply increased by the opening of new ones, these mines are not worked as extensively as when first opened.

Later a company was formed and opened mines about 110 miles west of Medicine Hat, where the town of Lethbridge has since grown up. A railway was built connecting these mines with the main line of the Canadian Pacific. These mines have been worked almost continuously and on a steadily increasing scale ever since they were first opened. The coal is an excellent quality of soft coal, and it has a large sale as far east as Winnipeg. In 1890 a railway was built from Lethbridge southward into the state of Montana, to connect with the railway system of that state and to permit of the export of Lethbridge coal to the neighboring states. The traffic is now carried on on quite an extensive scale.

With the continuation of the Canadian Pacific railway westward, coal was discovered and mined at a number of points along the line between Calgary and the summit of the Rocky mountains, particularly at Tanmore and Anthracite. Some of these coals are of a very superior quality, being of an anthracite or semi-anthracite character. They are consumed largely by the Canadian Pacific railway, and also shipped east and west for general use.

A limited quantity has been shipped as far east as Winnipeg, and westward coast to San Francisco, California. There is no hard coal on the Pacific coast, and it is expected that a large trade will eventually be done in shipping these coals to the Pacific coast, and thence by water to points along the coast. These anthracite and semi-anthracite deposits exist in the eastern slope of the Rocky Mountains over 200 miles west of Winnipeg, and about 250 miles from the water of the Pacific. The quantity of the coal consumed by the Canadian Pacific railway alone is sufficient to produce considerable activity in mining. Discoveries of coal of high quality have been made at other points in and near the Rocky Mountains, and also farther west at Interior points in British Columbia. Near Kamloops in the latter province, some development work has been done. Other districts are awaiting shipping facilities to begin development. On the completion of the Calgary and Edmonton road to the North Saskatchewan in the year 1891, led to the ex-

tension of coal mining in that region. There is abundant coal along the North Saskatchewan, in the Edmonton district, and mining on a small scale has been carried on for years, for local consumption. Since the opening of the district to railway communication, some shipping has been done to Calgary.

It is now come to speak of the most recent move in the development of our coal mining interests. Coal has been known to exist in the Souris district of south-eastern Assiniboia, for many years, but it was not until the past season that the district was opened to other points in the prairie country, the coal could be observed cropping out of the deep banks of the Souris river. It has been used by settlers in the vicinity for years, but without railway communication, the coal could not of course be transported any distance. During last summer a branch line of the Canadian Pacific railway was extended into the territory, and the development of the mines on a large scale at once began. Though it was not until autumn that the road was completed, coal is being turned out at the rate of over 100 tons per day at one mine. A town has grown up which has been named Estevan, and the coal is becoming known as Estevan coal. It is a lignite in character, and is not as high quality as some of the coals procured farther west, but its proximity to the most closely settled portion of the country, gives it particular value. Estevan is located a short distance beyond the western boundary of Manitoba, in south-western Assiniboia. It is 290 miles from Winnipeg, by way of the South-western railway. The great bulk of our population is settled between Winnipeg and this coal district, the centre of population being not far from this way. The fine trunk line of railway running east and west across Manitoba, has easy connection with the mines by a cross road, so that the coal can be supplied by a short route to about all parts of the province. The coal is now being delivered in Winnipeg, in car lots of 21 per ton, and no doubt prices will be reduced when development has proceeded further, as the district has been so recently opened that the best results have not been attained yet.

With our vast coal deposits, extending over such a wide area of country, the future fuel supply of the west is assured. Coal has been discovered at so many different points that the more remote sections will not be far from a source of supply. The quality of these coal deposits, it will be observed, includes lignite, bituminous and anthracite coals. The demand