

NEW RAILROADS IN THE NORTHWEST.

NEVER since the era of railroads began in this region, not even during the boom years of 1882 and 1883, have there been so many railroad projects on foot as at the present time, and many of them present greater assurances of being constructed than did the majority of similar enterprises at that time. Then everything was speculative; now railroad projects are based largely on the present needs of the country. Then companies were organized to bolster up the sale of town lots; now for the purpose of constructing much-needed lines if capital can be secured. A summary of these projects, with a statement of routes and condition of work, will be interesting to those who desire to keep informed on the development of the Northwest.

Northern Montana has been calling for a railroad for several years, and the Northern Pacific has promised a line to Fort Benton, either from Helena, Livingston or Billings. Last year Sir A. T. Galt organized a company and surveyed a route from the Canadian Pacific southward to Benton, and made preparations for its construction as soon as a charter was granted by the Canadian parliament. It was thought this invasion of its territory would compell the Northern Pacific to construct its Benton branch at once; but it now transpires that Mr. Galt is unable to obtain a charter, since for a term of years the Canadian Pacific has been granted a monopoly of the territory south of its line, and refuses its assent. This holds the Galt scheme in abeyance indefinitely. Another railroad looking to Northern Montana is the Minneapolis & Manitoba, of which J. J. Hill is president. This road has a branch as far west as Devil's lake, in Northern Dakota, and proposes an extension by way of Fort Benton to Helena. In pursuance of this intention Mr. Hill united with others two years ago and laid out the town of Great Falls, on the Missouri, at one of the falls of that great stream. The first step in this scheme was taken early this spring, by the organization of the Montana Central, in Helena, and the surveying of routes from that city to Great Falls and also to Rimini. Contracts have been let, and these lines are now under active construction. Reduction works, flour mills and other industries that can utilize the enormous water power of the falls and the excellent coal of the adjacent Sand Coulee mines are contemplated features of the new manufacturing town. Work has also been commenced on the Devil's lake branch, which will this season be extended west to Turtle mountains, and no doubt will be continued westward to Benton and Great Falls. This activity on the part of the Manitoba road has brought out the Northern Pacific, which is now surveying a line from Helena to Benton, and announces the intention to build a branch line to Rimini. On the north side of the Missouri, and seven miles below Great Falls City, another town of the same name has been laid out, through which the Northern Pacific line to Benton will pass. Thus the rival systems will each possess a town at the falls of the Missouri, which supply the greatest

amount of practicable water power to be found on any stream in the United States. These lines will render Helena one of the most important railroad centers west of St. Paul and Omaha, and will give Fort Benton the transportation facilities she has long needed. The Northern Pacific has other projects in Montana, one of which is a branch from Drummond to Phillipsburg, to tap the celebrated mines of Granite mountain, and another a line from Missoula to run up the Bitter Root valley. These lines are practically determined upon and will no doubt be constructed as soon as the company sees its way clear to do so. The Montana Western R. R. Co. was recently organized at Missoula for the purpose of building a line from Drummond to Phillipsburg, with an eventual extension to the Utah & Northern, near Butte City. A preliminary survey is now in progress. This may be simply the initial step of the Northern Pacific branch just alluded to.

The Utah & Northern is credited with a decided purpose of pushing a branch into the National Park, and the question of a branch from some point in Beaverhead county to Helena has been much discussed. All this practically requires that the road be converted to a standard gauge, so that the Union Pacific, to which it belongs, can use it advantageously in connection with its other lines. The road has accumulated enough standard gauge ties at Eagle Rock, Idaho, to construct one hundred miles of track, and it is the general belief that they are to be used in changing the line from Pocatello to Garrison from narrow gauge to standard. Two routes and two companies are in the field to reach the rich Clarke's Fork mines from points on the Northern Pacific. The Cinnibar & Clarke's Fork company has been trying for more than a year to secure the right of way through the National Park for a line running from Livingston to Cooke City, the principal mining camp, but has not yet succeeded. A few months ago the Billings, Clarke's Fork & Cooke City R. R. Co. was organized, and a route is being surveyed from Billings to tap those mines from the other side of the mountains. One of these rival lines will probably be built, and will be an important feeder to the Northern Pacific. Another project is that of the Montana & Idaho company, recently organized. It proposes to build up the Bitter Root valley, from Missoula, sending one branch to Salmon City, Idaho, one to a connection with the Utah & Northern, in Beaverhead county, and a third up the Lo Lo Fork to a connection with the O. R. & N. Co., when the latter shall have extended its Moscow branch through Lewiston and up the Clearwater to Camas prairie. Some of the most wealthy and enterprising citizens of Montana are incorporators of this company.

In Washington Territory the Northern Pacific is making the fur fly. Work is progressing rapidly at both ends of the great Cascades tunnel. The line from Pasco has been completed to Ellensburg, and the contract for the remaining seventy-five miles from that point to the mouth of the tunnel will be let on the fifteenth of May. Five engineering parties are at work on