

THE PROVINCE OF BRITISH COLUMBIA.

BRITISH Columbia is one of the provinces of the Dominion of Canada, and is destined to occupy the same position with reference to her sister provinces on the Atlantic slope that Oregon, Washington and California will to the states east of the Rocky mountains. Its great area, mild and equable climate, and vast wealth of natural resources, more varied and more valuable than those of any other portion of the dominion, will in future years render it the richest and most populous of all the provinces embraced in the confederation. These things being true—and there is no disputing the evidences which point to them by one who has given the question even a superficial examination—what an invitation she extends to young men to employ their capital, brain and physical energy in building up the great empire which must surely be developed on this western coast! A generation hence, the youth of the land will not have this grand opportunity now offered their fathers, to begin life for themselves in a new country teeming with the natural wealth that has lain dormant since the foundation of the world. Through years of toil and privation the pioneers of this region have prepared the way, and the man who now comes to the western slope will find ample scope for his best conceptions and his greatest efforts.

The province embraces all that portion of North America lying north of the United States and west of the Rocky mountains, except the Alaskan peninsula and the small strip of Alaska lying along the coast as far south as latitude fifty-four degrees and forty minutes, an empire seven hundred miles long and five hundred wide, containing about three hundred and forty-one thousand square miles of territory. It consists of two distinct divisions, the coast region and the interior, each having characteristics peculiar to itself. The former comprises the fringe of small islands lying along the coast, embracing a large area in the aggregate, and that portion of the main land west of the Coast mountains. In this region the rainfall is large and the climate is mild, equable and inexpressibly lovely. The great Japan current, which so modifies the temperature even on the far northern shores of Alaska, here exerts its benign influence to its fullest, and the result is a climate where the mercury seldom falls below the freezing point in winter or rises above ninety degrees in summer, while the warm and gentle rains promote the growth of vegetation. In the interior the influence of this ocean river is not so great, and the winter climate is somewhat more rigorous, but even there the temperature does not get so low, nor does the winter season last so long, as in the eastern provinces of the dominion.

The snowfall there is not so great as on the Atlantic slope and the spring opens much earlier. In fact, cattle graze on the open ranges all winter, subsisting on the dried bunch grass, which is as nutritious as the best cured hay.

The coast region, owing to its greater humidity, is densely covered with timber of giant proportions, chief of which are the Douglas fir and red cedar. Here is a mine of natural wealth that will not be exhausted for a great many years. Lumbering enterprises are carried on quite extensively, and have been for many years, but the greater development of this business is one of the brightest outlooks of the future. Heretofore the market has been chiefly a foreign one, but the development of the province is steadily increasing the importance of the home market. Certainly British Columbia offers unrivaled inducements to the lumber manufacturer. The interior, from the Coast mountains to the Gold mountains, contains but little timber, but on the Gold, Selkirk and Rocky mountains there are great ranges of splendid forests, which, owing to the unsettled condition of the region, are still practically untouched, though a few mills have been nibbling at them for several years.

The agricultural interests of the province are destined to become very extensive, though they are but slightly developed, except in a very limited area. In certain districts on Vancouver island, along Fraser river from its mouth some distance into the interior, and in Nicola, Spallumsheen, Okanogan and a few other valleys in the interior, much progress has been made, and many as fine ranches as one would care to see can be found in any of those localities. There are, however, vast areas of most excellent agricultural land, where the sod has never been turned by the plow, which will, in the not distant future, support large farming communities and send out their products to the markets of the world. There are also many choice locations to be had in the districts where agriculture is already considerably advanced. As in the better known region to the south of the international line, there is much fertile land which requires irrigation to render it productive, but which is very fruitful when touched by the magic hand of water. There is also much land which is so situated that the natural rainfall is sufficient to bring to perfection most marvelous crops of cereals. The slow development of the agricultural industry has not been caused by any lack of arable land, but more because of the absence of adequate facilities for reaching market with the products of the farm. By the construction of the Canadian Pacific this drawback has been partially removed, and agriculture has largely increased in the arable districts immediately tributary to that line. Both the provincial and dominion governments