

BIRMINGHAM AND VICINITY

A GLANCE AT THE MINERAL WEALTH OF ALABAMA.

The Region Where Iron and Coal and Limestone May Be Found in the Same Neighborhood—Why Iron Is Produced at Birmingham at a Cost Less Than at Any Other Point.

LOCATED in the northern portion of the state of Alabama, is the richest mineral district in the South, and with the various mineral products, in America, if not in the world. This mineral section comprises twenty-eight counties, with an area of 20,000 square miles, or two-fifths of the state, and a population of 850,000, or about 50,000 less than one-half of the state's population. What gives this section special prominence from a commercial and industrial standpoint, are its vast beds of coal, iron ore, and limestone—almost inexhaustible. The coal fields are divided by geologists into three districts: the "Warrior" has 7,500 square miles, with fifty seams of coal; the "Saba" has 400 square miles, with twenty seams of coal, and the "Coosa" fields have 150 square miles. These three fields contain in round numbers 110,000,000,000 tons of available coal—a sufficient amount, mining at the rate of 10,000 tons a day, to last 11,550 years, before exhausting its supply—a sufficient amount to supply the world's consumption at present for generations to come. These estimates are given for the purpose of impressing the possibilities of coal supply from the coal fields of Alabama. This coal is superior for steam and domestic purposes, and for the manufacture of gas and coke.

THE BIRMINGHAM DISTRICT. Located in the central southern part of this mineral section, is what is known as the Birmingham district, embracing an area of 2,500 square miles, with a population of 225,000 people. The city of Birmingham is its financial center and distributing point. The bituminous fields, already in working, cover 4,000 square miles and contain over 50,000,000,000 tons, embracing all the bituminous varieties. In close proximity to the coal are iron mines and limestone beds of limestone, the iron ore yielding from forty to forty-five per cent. of pig iron.

The ore supply of this district is principally derived from the red fossiliferous ores of "Red Mountain," northeast of the city—the veins measuring some twenty feet thick at the outcrop, extending at an angle of twenty degrees to an unknown depth. Some of these slopes have been driven down a thousand feet, with no deterioration in quality or diminution in the size of the ore, and no indication of either. Nature has laid up here in this Red Mountain, alone, a supply for generations.

This mountain, we are told, carries this vein of like good and thickness, for a distance of ten miles northeast, and fifteen miles southeast of Birmingham. A rough calculation shows that this one magnificent vein, if mined to a depth of only 4,000 feet, would supply all the present furnaces of Alabama for a period of 50 years. The ores of this district are classified as "hard" and "soft"—the former subdivided into two grades known as "hard" and "soft." Limestone and dolomite in vast strata are still more bounteously bestowed than coal and iron ore. In the northern states of Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana and Wisconsin are found marvelous deposits of coal and iron ore, which comprise the basis of the iron industry at Pittsburgh, Homestead, etc., but at Birmingham and vicinity there exists not only inexhaustible deposits of both coal and iron ore, but also vast beds of limestone, all within a stone's throw of each other.

A remarkable feature to relate is that a visitor can stand in certain localities upon a twenty foot vein of iron ore, and from the open mouth of iron mines, cast a stone by hand into that of a coal mine and without moving from his tracks, toss another pebble into a quarry of limestone, lying near at hand, while in the valleys around is limestone enough to flux the ore of the world and above all can see corn and cotton growing on top of the coal, iron, and limestone measures. We are told that one great Red Mountain iron ore vein runs parallel with the Alabama Southern railroad for 164 miles, averaging in thickness over twenty feet, by two miles wide, with an average analysis of fifty per cent. of metallic iron. It is this close proximity of these, as one says, "Three Graces," which makes it possible to produce iron at Birmingham at a less cost than at any other point known to man on the surface of the earth.

It is confidently asserted by the "Commercial Club" of this city, and those in position to know, that pig iron can be put on the cars at Birmingham at a net cost of (\$6.00) six dollars per ton, and steel at eleven dollars when quotations have been elsewhere nearly doubled. It is thus seen that Birmingham's present position in the commercial world as a producer of coal, coke, pig iron, and steel, and as a railroad center of much importance, is directly attributable to the limitless deposits of coal, iron ore, and limestone of the district. She is sending ore to Tennessee, pig iron to cultured Boston, to the granite hills of New Hampshire, to frigid Maine, to torrid Mexico and to the Pacific coast. The claim is made that the Birmingham district furnishes over three-fourths of the pig iron that is yearly exported from the United States; altogether 228,000 tons of pig iron of which 170,000 tons are sent from this district. It takes less than one ton of Alabama pig iron on deck at Liverpool, Genoa, Amsterdam, Trieste, Marseilles and Hamburg, Copenhagen, where it now goes in larger quantities than it does to New York. The rail rate to the Gulf per ton (\$1.50) is cheap and the cotton vessels need Alabama steel and iron for ballast. Alabama steel is now invading the markets of Pittsburgh and other northern producers just as its iron has found its way into the world's markets for the last six years.

THE CITY'S GROWTH. Birmingham, from the very beginning of the present industrial life of Alabama, has taken the lead and maintained it. Her growth, as if by magic, during the past decade, has been the wonder of the times, and to day the leading city of Alabama, a great industrial bee-hive, and one of the chief centers of the industrial South. This American Birmingham, like Birmingham in England, is in the midst of both iron and coal fields inexhaustible. The Northern visitor on a bright-



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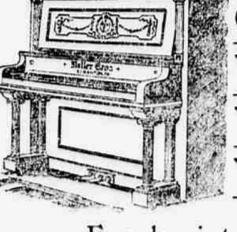
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