

THE BIG STONE GAP COAL-FIELD.

*Compliments of*

BY JAMES M. HODGE, BIG STONE GAP, VA.

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THE Cumberland Gap extension of the Louisville and Nashville railroad, recently completed from Cumberland Gap to Norton, 71 miles, connects at the latter point with the Norfolk and Western, making a direct through line from Louisville to Norfolk.

The whole of this connecting link skirts the southern boundary of the southwest Virginia coal region, but for the first 57 miles of its course it is separated from the coal by a mountain range (Cumberland mountain and its extension, Stone mountain), which bars entrance to the field from that direction, excepting at Pennington Gap, where access may be had to a small area only, which has not yet developed any very satisfactory coal.

The railroad passes through the range at Big Stone Gap, and for the last 14 miles of its course to Norton is in direct contact with that part of the coal region known as the Big Stone Gap coal-field.

By this road a western and southwestern outlet from the field is secured; the Clinch valley extension of the Norfolk and Western railroad gives exit eastward from Norton, and the South Atlantic and Ohio railroad, built through Big Stone Gap simultaneously with the L. & N. R. R., delivers the coal to points south and southeast.

Besides these lines already built, an early connection with the East Tennessee, Virginia and Georgia railroad, *via* its Rogersville branch, is probable, and connections with the railroads of eastern Kentucky are projected. The Charleston, Cincinnati and Chicago railroad has already done some grading on one of the latter, but the rugged country intervening will prevent its construction till the demand for it becomes urgent.

The coal-field embraces in Virginia about 120 square miles, to which should be added some 30 square miles in Kentucky, also tributary to Big Stone Gap, the whole of it underlaid by coal, probably of workable thickness, and much of it by two or more such beds. The determination of the boundaries of the field, however (except on the south, where Stone mountain forms a natural limit beyond which only a small, isolated tract of coal is found), is involved in much