

men what is now beginning to take place—a boom in mining. We have hitherto done absolutely *nothing* to teach the lesson of self-help and reliance in developing our own resources by the method proposed.

The Omineca District.

WITH the revival of gold mining in the Cariboo placer district, consequent upon the introduction of modern hydraulic machinery within the last few years, the attention of both British and American mining men is being directed to the Omineca placer district. The Omineca, though known as a gold producing and a wealthy district since the days of "Old Cariboo" in 1858, when the first general rush to the Cariboo gold fields took place, has always remained more or less of a *terra incognita*, save to an adventurous few who each year have found their way in there and generally returned with a very fair reward for the long, toilsome journey, and the hardships and exposure incident upon it. Such work as was done there, which mainly centered about the Germenson Creek diggings, was, however, sufficient to demonstrate the richness of the country. The difficulty of access, the uncertainty of food supplies and the great expense of transportation, have, in spite of its richness, almost totally prevented all attempts at operation on anything like an extensive scale.

The Omineca River, from which the district takes its name, is a tributary of Peace River, and is situated a little south of the 56th parallel of north latitude and for the main part of its course west to east, lies between 124 and 126 degrees longitude west from Greenwich. Rising in a small lake in the Omineca Mountains, a little north of the 56th parallel, it flows south-east, then east along the southern base of the Cariboo range, which at this point trends to the north-west, then flowing almost due north through the same course it joins the Peace River on the northeastern flank.

From Ashcroft, the nearest railway point on the line of the Canadian Pacific Railway, the Germenson Creek diggings are distant by road and trail, *via* Quesnelle, about 570 miles. The Cariboo wagon road—the old "tote road" as it is known to British Columbians—furnishes fairly good travelling through the Cariboo district from Ashcroft to Quesnelle from which point the route is by trail through a thickly wooded and mountainous country, broken with open prairie at infrequent intervals, *via* Fort St. James, a Hudson's Bay post, and Stuart Lake. The disadvantage of the route lies in the fact that much water has to be crossed. The alternative route, and one which is recommended, is by steamer from Victoria on Vancouver Island, to the mouth of the Naas River, 500 miles, thence by trail to Hazelton on the Skeena above Port Essington, thence across the Babine Mountains, Tatla Lake and the Omineca Mountains to the diggings. The distance from the Naas to Hazelton by trail is 200 miles, and thence to Germenson Creek 200 miles more, making a total distance from Victoria of about 900 miles.

The Omineca Prospecting and Development Company with head offices in Victoria, which has acquired extensive claims and water rights, sent a representative, Captain Black, to the Omineca last March. Leaving Victoria on March 2nd last he arrived at the Naas River five days later. From

the Naas to Hazelton the journey on snow shoes occupied ten days, and from Hazelton to the diggings ten days more, a total of about twenty-five days. To quote the *Province*, of Victoria: Capt. Black spent several days in the district making surveys and doing what prospecting he could, and then started back for the coast. Leaving the diggings he took a straight line across the Omineca Mountains, avoiding the river altogether, thus saving three days. The snow was rapidly becoming soft and walking was extremely difficult. At Tom's Creek there was very little sign of spring, but after crossing the divide the change was apparent, and the snow shoes would break through at every step.

Arriving at Hazelton, Capt. Black secured a canoe and came down the river to Port Essington, waiting here a couple of weeks for the steamer, arriving at Victoria on the 22nd of May. He brought back some excellent specimens, nuggets and dust, also native copper, silver, and galena, which latter assayed ninety ounces of silver to the ton. During the return trip several miners were met going in. The Omineca is no place for a poor man, but no better place exists for men with capital. A trail is badly needed, and the distance could be greatly lessened and access to and from rendered comparatively easy. Navigation to Hazelton *via* the Skeena is fairly safe, and a trifling expenditure on the river would vastly improve it. From Hazelton a trail could be selected which would place the diggings within less than 200 miles from navigation. An Ottawa company with large capital is already on the way, while many prospectors from Seattle and other places are bound in.

Presuming that the coast route by the Skeena River and Hazelton is opened up, the Omineca will then be comparatively easy of access, and in that case there would be open for operation a mining district of which the prediction has often been made, and it would some day when access should be rendered reasonably convenient, fully rival and perhaps even surpass, the famed Cariboo fields in richness.—*Mine, Quarry and Metallurgical News, Chicago, Ill.*

The British Columbia Smelting and Refining Co.

THE officers of this smelter, which is located on Trail Creek, B.C., are: President, F. A. Heinze; commercial manager, J. F. Lansing; superintendent, E. H. Wedekind; general superintendent of Mr. Heinze's smelters at Butte and Trail, H. C. Bellinger. On securing the large contracts for ore from the Le Roi mines, Mr. Heinze secured the present excellent smelter site, on the bluff overlooking the Columbia, at the mouth of Trail Creek, where has sprung up the town of Trail. This smelter has been erected with great rapidity in spite of the inclement winter weather and great difficulties in securing supplies of building material and importing the plant and machinery; but although work was begun October 10th, 1895, the first furnace was fired up in February, 1896, and now five furnaces are in full operation, with further extensive and important additions being rapidly pushed to completion, additions that should greatly improve present conditions and treble the capacity of the works. Besides that with the Le Roi, contracts have been made with the War Eagle, Iron Mask and Crown Point. Mr. Heinze and his associates are proving their ability for