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"I am Nothing, if Not Critical."—Shakespeare.

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EDITORIAL.

THE PROVINCIAL MINING REPORT.

The annual report of the Provincial Ministry of Mines for 1897 reflects the greatest credit upon its indefatigable compiler, Mr. Wm. A. Carlyle, the Provincial Mineralogist. Mr. Carlyle's report is notable in many respects, but especially remarkable for its studied moderation, which at one and the same time evidences the compiler's scrupulous care to ensure all attainable accuracy, and shows that our Provincial mineralogist—who vacates office early in April—has a thorough mastery of his subject. Hence it will continually be noted that he pays no heed to merely boom reports spread about various districts included in the report, and discredits very considerably by the clearest inference, if not always by direct words, certain superficial tests and other indications of ore values, when such tests and indications, as often happens, are by no means conclusive as to the average value of a precious-metal deposit. Thus Mr. Carlyle, for example, does his utmost to discredit a

very common and delusive practice of owners and promoters interested in free-milling gold properties, who too usually make much of a series of assays of carefully selected ore specimens, although they sometimes seek to make their test more apparently conclusive by striking an average of a number of such assays. As Mr. Carlyle, however, says, "to everyone familiar with such gold quartz ores it is known that fire assays on this class of material are almost valueless, in that a series of assays made of the same sample is very likely to give most variant results, and it is very difficult thus to determine the average values of the ore in such a lead. It is very easy to get wonderful returns from picked samples so as to astonish the inexperienced public, who do not know that any assay may not always be true but misleading, and such assays are many times paraded to tempt purchasers.

"The system of averaging a lot of assays which may run from zero to high values is both erroneous in principle and pernicious, as, while zero assays may be near the value of the ore, the chanced high returns from picked or exceptionally good samples will be sure to give high but utterly fictitious results. This method of taking the average of the assays' values from a number of samples from a vein is often pursued, but not by men experienced in valuing gold quartz, and it is an old story that mill returns are so many times disappointingly lower than those so-called average assays.

"Hence assays of quartz with free gold should be accepted with very great caution, it being kept in mind that such assays may only serve to demonstrate the presence of gold in the rock, but not what values the mill