

Last winter prophetic writers declared that we should see a rush to Cobalt, the like of which had never occurred within 2,000 miles of the Atlantic sea-board. Some translated their faith into works a few weeks later, and gave the population of Cobalt town at 10,000. The mighty influx has not taken place. There has not been the crazy exaltation of prices which anxious seers predicted. There is a curious scepticism about the wealth of Cobalt camp. If it were not so, it might be unnecessary to take the trouble to discuss the story of Cobalt in an unexciting fashion, and to begin it with such brutally frank recognition of the distrust which is felt by so many who have not taken the trouble to investigate for themselves.

This is Not a Boomer.

During every hour spent on this number of the paper, I have had in mind the picture of a most honest and worthy gentleman, who came to warn me, in accents of the greatest apprehension, against the swindles in Cobalt mines that are being attempted by men who otherwise might be regarded as respectable. I do not agree with my frightened caller. But I respect the feeling which he represents. It is good sometimes to write with the feeling that there is a very critical policeman at your elbow.

New Ontario is good enough, to have the truth about it made known. There are wildcats in every mining camp, just as there are improperly obtained nickels on almost every church collection plate. I am concerned only to show the facts about the mines in Northern Ontario as they exist.

In three visits to Cobalt, I have seen a good many of the mines, and have discussed the situation with men who, though they are interested in the locality, are still capable of speaking veraciously. No man's judgment is infallible, but a journalist whose experience covers a pretty wide range, has generally acquired a certain discrimination in sizing up the reliability of stories submitted to him.

This number of "The Monetary Times" is not intended to "boom" Cobalt, any more than a guide book about Westminster Abbey is intended to "boom" that sacred fane. It is intended to enlarge interest in the most remarkable mining development which the 20th century has produced, and, in a larger sense, to increase the favour with which Canada, as a whole, is regarded by all who contribute to the translation of her commercial possibilities into achievements, which will be leading features of the extension of civilization during the next two or three decades.

When You Reach the Town.

On the road to Cobalt in winter you pass through a weariness of snow and gaunt timber. In summer you are railroaded through avenues of foliage, processions of lakes, and multitudes of butterflies. You reach a town whose solitary beauty is the outside of it—a lake and undulating wooded landscape. On the station platform there is sure to be a crowd with few women in it. Most of the men look weatherbeaten. The prospector's long, laced boot will be plentiful enough. If it is Saturday the prospectors will be in very strong force. On the sixth day of the week he comes to Cobalt for mail, soap, flour, talk, and rest.

The town is as you see it in pictures, only more so. On sight, it is a place to live away from; on closer acquaintance not a bad sort of place at all. Property is safe; company is agreeable. Cobalt is not flowing with milk and honey. Sanitation is in rather a theoretical stage. Transition is the prevailing aspect of its sewerage problem. But these are disadvantages you can overcome with the help of a little boiled water. The streets are not of boulevard surface. They are a great deal better than they were three months ago, which is much more than you can say of some boastful, long-established, cities.

The outward guise of human habitations is varied. The best structures are covered with tin; the homeliest

with tar-paper. On some wooden exteriors there is comforting paint; on most the marks of contact between rain and nails. On the open space, which is a sort of triangular square for the communion of the hopeful, there is a quick-lunch institution on wheels. About it you notice that unlike others of his profession who flourish in other down-towns, the proprietor does not belie his title.

Banks, Law Offices, Churches.

Of banks there are the Imperial, and the Canadian Bank of Commerce, the former with the more commercial site; the latter with the more imperial appearance. It was brought in sections from British Columbia. Lawyers abound and brokers put the best face on things. They do it with great ease. They seem to want to sell more than to buy. The place is as devoid of business vehicles on wheels as the island of Madeira. Wealthy mine-owners travel to and from their properties on Shank's pony. There is a church on the hill and a tent in a vale where sacred songs and solos are regularly and excellently sung. Beside and beyond the church are tents, and then a useful structure is announced to be the future jail. In the other direction is a frame hospital, from which you are thankful to be delivered in hot weather.

Right by the station is the free and open-doored establishment of the blessed association which provides reading for campmen of all kinds. It is a free library, lounge-room and school in one. It is a resort for the disappointed, and a threshold of hope for those who appreciate Lord Salisbury's belief in the utility of large maps. Nearby is a galleried opera house, used for wrestling bouts, entertainments and public meetings. In some such place as it, in the glorious republic, the notice appeared: "Don't shoot the man at the piano; he's doing his best." Such an injunction would be out of place in Cobalt opera house. There is no piano.

The excitement here is pure and undefiled. At public meetings a big dinner pail of liquor and a tin cup are placed between the chairman and the speaker. When the speaker takes a drink he throws the remains of his draught on the floor behind him, by which you may be assured that the liquid is harmless and cheap. The hotel's stoop has no railing, though it is eight feet above earth—it is further proof that you are in a community of steady-footed, law-loving gentlemen.

Talk of the Market Place.

Conversation outdoors, and in is only profane in the sense that it is not apt to run on strictly spiritual lines. It is occupied with the silver present, rather than with the empyrean future. References to another world are rather casual, and frequently of a downward tendency, and very warm. There is no outward and visible sign of deep-feeling and high expectations. Men in the neighborhood of vast fortunes always talk as mysteriously as though they were on the verge of the tomb. There is a passionless reserve about much Cobalt talk.

Who's who in the camp is a subject of daily importance. The man next you is as likely to be the emissary of some New York trillionaire as he is to be the barber from across the road. You see a fly-bitten fellow laboriously writing at the hotel table, and know he may be writing to his parents for a remittance or ordering an automobile to be purchased for his temporary sojourn at home. And then, perhaps, you find yourself looking at the collection of ores in the Bank of Commerce, which is the epitome, the proof and the sure promise of the camp.

There are men in Cobalt absolutely independent of Cobalt. They represent institutions which are there for the same reason as they are in a hundred towns—business is being done by their customers and they are there to facilitate it. If a seismic disturbance shook all the mineral out of the rocks and left Cobalt a aggregation of deserted shacks, they would be as well off as they are to-day. They have seen pretty nearly every-

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