ANOTHER MINERAL FIELD

THE IMMENSE DEPOSITS BETWEEN NIPISSING AND HUDSON BAY.

A Summary of Dr. Bell's Exploration in the New Land—Ontario Vitally Interested in the Construction of the Hudson Bay Road—Gold, Silver, Iron, Asbestos, Mica.

In connection with the projected Nipissing and James Bay Railway, a few notes may be interesting on what is already known of the varied mineral resources of the country between Lake Nipissing and the salt water of it, and also as to the great mineral wealth of Hudson's Bay itself.

It is well known to geologists that the Huronian rocks constitute the great metalliferous system of Canada, as well as of the states of Michigan, Wisconsin and Minnesota. Their equivalents in other countries likewise produce a variety of metallic ores. On the other hand, the Laurentian rocks on the Hudson's Bay side of the watershed, at all events, have not yet afforded any indications of useful minerals. So that the Huronian areas of a geological map are those in which alone we may look for mineral wealth in the region in question.

With the exception of one interruption, the Huronian rocks extend all along the north shore of Lake Huron from the St. Mary's River to Killarney, and it was from their extensive development in this region that they derived the name Huronian. From this shore line, as a base, Dr. Bell, Assistant Director of the Geological Survey, has traced these rocks continuously to the north-eastward as far as Lake Temiscaming and thence, beyond the watershed to the country lying northeast of Grand Lake on the Upper Ottawa, whence they are continued in the wide belt of similar rocks which reaches to the south end of Lake Mistassini. A great area of igneous rocks belonging to this system lies to the south of Lake Abitibi. The late Mr. Walter McOnat of the Geological corps showed that the Huronian rocks also extended to the northward of this lake and in 1877, Mr. A. S. Cochrane, assistant to Dr. Bell, traced the same rocks for a long distance down the Abitibi River.

Starting from Lake Nipissing, the line of the projected railway would run for a short distance on the Laurentian rocks, but it would enter on the great Huronian area before reaching Lake Temagami. Thence it would continue upon these rocks past Lakes Temiscaming and Abitibi and to a point midway to the south extremity of James Bay, or for nearly two thirds of the entire distance. The last few miles would be upon the level Devonian rocks near the commencement of the extensive basin of this formation which occupies a vast tract of the westward of James Bay.

The gold-bearing rocks of the Township of Denison constitute a belt of the Huronian system, and as these rocks have a uniform northeast strike in this region they pass about Lake Temagami, where gold and silver are also known to occur, and they no doubt cross the Montreal River and run far to the north-east. A very large deposit of argentiferous galena is now being worked on Lake Temiscaming. Between Lake Temagrami and Montreal River is a lake, about twenty-five miles long, which Dr. Bell surveyed last summer, and to which he gave the name of Lady Evelyn Lake. Here a vein of argentiferous galena, and veins of copper with more or less gold and silver, were discovered. Asbestos was also found in the same neighborhood. Iron ore was reported by Mr. McOnat at the Quinze Rapids, and although the quality at this place was not very good its occurrence there is interesting, as showing that the Huronian rocks maintain their iron-bearing character in that direction, and richer deposits may be confidently looked for. Roofing slates of fair quality are found in abundance on the Matabetchewan River and Lake Temagami.

The copper strata of Sudbury begins at the old Wallace mine on Lake Huron and after passing through Sudbury and Lake Temagami, reaches the Montreal River, where deposits of richer ore have lately been found on Bay Lake. It has been met with again on the Blanche and is known to exist near the height of land, east of the canoe route between Lakes Temiscaming and Abitibi. Further to the northeast, it was found, still rich in copper, by the late Mr. Richardson of the Geological Survey, a short distance southwest of Lake Mistassini. Among the minerals most in demand at the present time is the fine silky asbestos, such as that of Coleraine and Thetford in the Province of Quebec. Last year this valuable substance was discovered near the head waters of the Montreal River.

If Moose Factory were the objective point on James' Bay, the line would pass near the large iron ore deposits of the Mattagami River and not far from the lignite and gypsum beds of the Mistaubi and the main Moose River. In any case it would be easy, in this level country, to construct a short branch line to the iron deposits.

When the line once taps the salt water, the shores of a vast sea, which Dr. Bell has happily styled the Mediterranean of the New World, are at once rendered accessible. The east and west shores of this sea each measure about 1000 miles in length. Those of Roe's Welcome, Fox Basin and the Southampton group of islands, would make at least 2000 miles, and the two sides of Hudson's Straits another 1000, or a total of upwards of 5000 miles of coast line. It is impossible to imagine that the varied resources of this great length of seashore would not afford a considerable traffic. Confining our attention, however, for the present to the mineral resources, Dr. Bell has already pointed out the existence of undoubted wealth of that character in these regions. He has found gold and silver at two places on the east main coast and upon what he named the Ottawa Islands off Mosquito Bay, a thick band of lead-bearing limestone at Richmond Gulf and inexhaustible deposits of fine manganiferous iron ore on a number of the islands near the coast beyond Whale River. Indications were also found of copper, zinc, molybdenum, asbestos and other useful minerals. Anthracite is also known to exist, but Dr. Bell does not think it is in large quantities.

On the northwest side of the bay the Huronian rocks are very extensively developed all the way from Eskimo Point to Chesterfield Inlet, and Dr. Bell has enumerated a long list of the various rocks to be met with in that region. Large veins of auriferous iron pyrites and deposits of copper ore, of which, however, little is known, have been found nearly opposite to Marble Island, and free gold in quartz has been discovered at Repulse Bay. Sheet mica is said to exist in great quantities at Chesterfield Inlet, and it was reported some years ago that an American vessel carried a cargo of it to New York. Indications of fine clay ironstone have been noticed by Dr. Bell in many places as derived from the rocks of the immense Devonian basin west of James Bay, which is more extensive than the whole western peninsula of Ontario.

In Hudson's Straits, the geologist whom we have so often quoted has found traces of gold in quantity on the south side, and on the north shore large quantities of a very fine variety of mica in wide sheets, plumbago and pyrites; and she Eskimos report the existence of iron ore in several places in that region.

With such an array of facts it is evident that the projected line of railway has the prospect of a large traffic in minerals. Indeed we know of no line which, in proportion to length, at all equals it in this respect. And it must be borne in mind that the discoveries we have enum[illegible] been made after only a [illegible]nt of exploration. [illegible] to be expected [illegible] have been made.

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