

hands that fortune favoured us last year in the matter of attracting the universally prized capitalistic attention to our potentialities as a field for profitable investment, and the then unforeseen diversion of much of this same to Aurora Borealis & Co. will doubtless account in a measure for the present inertness, but we must not allow ourselves to be deluded into the belief that this is the only or indeed the main factor, because it is not; at the best it is only of a temporary nature unless returns are shown. I may be wrong, but I think we are justified in saying that the introduction of foreign capital into the Slocan last year increased to only a limited extent the ultimate value of production which was recorded, and more than that, it matters not how much or how little outside influence is brought to bear upon the district this year, it is tolerably certain that the forces now at work are sufficient to enhance considerably the value of the output for '98 as compared with that of the preceding year.

We must look then elsewhere for reasons to explain this seeming paradox, and in the very nature of things we shall be forced to the inevitable conclusion that the chief cause of the country's backwardness is to be found in the fact that the minimum amount of benefit from the produc-

tion of the mineral, accrues to the district in which it is mined. Improvements in mining conditions leave the wage-earner relatively in precisely the same predicament as formerly, while enabling the mine-owner to raise twice the amount of ore for the same figure.

So long as the bare costs of mining alone remain in the country we cannot reasonably look for better times than exist at present. But how long—ah, how long—is this to continue? The precious heritage of the Canadian people is being permitted to leave the country to the tune of ten thousand dollars daily from the Slocan alone, while Uncle Sam's treasury waxes fat on the four hundred dollars which he extracts from every car load of galena entering his domain. The fact that those principally interested in our mines live at ease in Spokane or elsewhere in the States, on the proceeds of our labour is in all conscience degrading enough to self-respecting citizens, but this we cannot by any possibility avoid or indeed complain of, if their enterprise and business foresight rises superior to our own, but we can at least see to it that we obtain the maximum working benefit from the circumstance of the mines being located in Canadian territory. The heart of the true Briton swells with pride when he contemplates the vastness and extent of our glorious empire, on which the sun has never been known to set, while our cousins across the line say nothing, but—well, just help themselves with our permission and co-operation to everything in sight.

THE COAL INDUSTRY OF VANCOUVER ISLAND.

THE MINES OF THE NEW VANCOUVER COAL COMPANY.

[Concluded from Last Month.]

THE pit horns had given a long sounding blast at 9 a.m., signifying that there would be "work all round" next day, and early, very early, at 4:30 a.m., the first "miners' call" of three unearthly and long drawn soundings of the pit horn disturbed me from a

THE CALL
TO WORK.

blissful slumber. At five two more blasts, and after despatching a bowl of porridge, I hurry off. I arrive at the works, just as the half-past five

single toot rings out, to see a mob of workmen get on their train and leave for No. 5 pit. The men on the morning shift for No. 1 come trooping along and soon the pit-head is crowded with sinewy men equipped with lunch buckets, tea cans, and powder cans, and these with a lamp crowned cap, complete the miner's outfit, his sharpened tools—picks and auger drills—having been sent previously to the pit's bottom. Mule drivers have their stout whips around their necks. All have white faces and clean clothes for the nonce, by the way. At six o'clock precisely, Mr. Archibald McGregor, the weigh-master, arrives, and signals are sounded by the gongs, from top to bottom, and to the engine room, when, all being well and ready, the cables move and down plunges the topmost cage. In about thirty seconds a cage of men of the night shift emerges from the depths. As they come off a foreman with thirteen or fourteen men file in behind, filling the cage, and, holding by a bar overhead, down they go and another cageful of humanity arrive with blackened faces and bespattered clothes and lamps still alight—the descending shift have no lights, owing to the powder carried down. Boxes of tools are despatched and in about ten minutes the shift has changed. The conduct of the men is characterized by perfect discipline and order—there is a total absence of jostling or noisy talk. At the invitation of the manager, Mr. William McGregor, and provided with a lamp and necessary etceteras, we take our places on a cage (there being but one deck we are able to stand upright), and holding the bar above us we drop

DOWN
NO. 1 PIT.

through the darkness for 650 feet, reaching the bottom before we have really realized our position. The landing round about the place blazes with electric incandescent lamps—a veritable magician's cave. But if ever there was a place of business it is at the foot as well as in the workings of a coal pit. The hours of life below are short—in all eight hours, out of which the lunch time is taken, and in many cases it occupies quite an hour to go to and return from the working places, leaving only some six hours and a half of work. Men who are paid merely for the actual coal mined and filled by them into cars, cannot waste a minute of the precious time, so limited, at their disposal, and their results press on the heels of the pushers, haulers, brattice men and those working by the shift, so that all must be going at a lively pace or a deadlock will soon ensue. There is, therefore, no opportunity for gossip, and, as, once away from the electric light, all is black as Walpurgis night, although I follow my guide with implicit confidence, yet there is nothing to see, and only when attention is directed to some point of difficulty that had been met with in the development of the mine, such as an up-throw, or down-throw, or a pinch out, or horse back, etc., and an explanation is given of how it was overcome or got round, is the monotony varied. Whoever proposes to go down a coal pit for the fun of the thing may save themselves much unnecessary toil and do the thing at home, for if they happen to have a damp, low-roofed coal cellar, they can evolve as much "fun" by groping about, over their own coal, as it is possible to find in an exploratory tour of a coal pit. A knock on the head every now