

THE KOOTENAY LAKE DISTRICT.

More than twenty five years ago, an immense body of argentiferous galena was discovered on the eastern bank of Kootenay Lake, and from time to time efforts were made to work it by different parties. Its distance, however, writes J. M. Kellie, M. P. P., in the Western World, from the settled portions of the Pacific territories to the south, and its inaccessibility from the remaining part of British Columbia rendered abortive all trials to work this ore successfully. About six years ago an American company located the ledge, and constructed a wagon road from the Northern Pacific Railroad to the territory of Idaho, U. S. A., to the navigable waters of the Kootenay River, and put on steamers to navigate that stream. Since then they have run tunnels and sunk shafts on the mine, which is called the Blue Bell, and have established the fact that it is a large and valuable mine.

Upon the western side of the lake other mines have been found in what is known as the Hot Springs Camp, and these prove much richer in silver than that of the Blue Bell. The ore is generally galena, carrying silver in quantities, varying from twenty ounces per ton up to ten thousand, and the camp bids fair to become one of the richest and most extensive of any in the long belt of mineral ranges from Mexico to Alaska. The mountain seems to be thickly seamed with ledges, some only a few inches, others several feet in width, all of them containing a greater or less amount of galena, and all of them rich in silver. Over three hundred claims have been located in this camp, each being 1,500 feet long by 600 feet wide, containing about 20 acres of surface ground. Shafts have been sunk in these mines, following the ore vein in whichever direction it runs, until usually an influx of water has stopped further progress. Some of the mining companies have imported pumps and hoists to be worked by steam power, and are continuing their progress towards the bowels of the earth, aided by this artificial assistance. The summer of 1891 will witness a vast amount of development work.

Thirty miles west of the Hot Springs Camp is the Toad Mountain district, in which a few very rich mines have been found. The ore in this region carries a little galena, but generally more copper, and in some of the claims it is equally as rich in silver as at the Hot Springs. The Hall Bros.' mines are the leading ones in the Toad Mountain, from which considerable quantities of ore have been shipped to Montana and Colorado, which has given returns of over three hundred ounces of silver per ton. Some gold mines have been found and are being successfully worked a little west of Toad Mountain, and probably will soon attract the attention of capitalists. About one one hundred and fifty claims have now been located in the district.

The great difficulty in this region is at present the lack of cheap transportation facilities. Every ton of ore which has hitherto been shipped for reduction has been packed upon mule's backs, and carried by wagons over a very rough road at an expense exceeding \$30 a ton before it was delivered at the smelting works. Add

to this the cost of reduction, say generally \$12 to \$15 per ton, and it will be seen that only the high grade ores will bear the great expense. Therefore while a comparatively small proportion of the ore extracted has left the mine, there are thousands of tons remaining upon the ore dumps, awaiting the advent of railways. There are now three railway companies aiming for this country. The Canadian Pacific are constructing a short line connecting the waters of Kootenay Lake with the navigable portion of the Columbia River. When this road is finished, which will be in March or April of this year, it will give an outlet for the products of the mine to the north via the Columbia River, striking the Canadian Pacific at Revelstoke, or to the southward, connecting with the United States system of railroads through the Spokane & Northern railroad, and uniting with the Northern Pacific at Spokane Falls.

The second railroad in the field will probably be a branch line from the Northern Pacific on the banks of the Pend-o-Reille Lake, northward to Bonner's Ferry on the Kootenay River. This line is already surveyed and located, and it is expected that construction will be commenced in the spring. The distance to be built is about 35 miles. The third line that will bid for the Kootenay Lake trade is the Great Northern. About 500 miles of this new transcontinental road will be under construction this year, and the surveys of the route which are settled upon bring the road down the valley of the Kootenay River as far as Bonner's Ferry, where it will connect with the steamers which ply upon the lake.

Thus it is likely that there will be no monopoly of freights by any one line, and rates are likely to be very fair to the miner, a thing greatly to be desired in a mountainous country, and upon which depends greatly the probable success of the mines.

Kootenay Lake is a beautiful sheet of water, 80 miles long and from one to three miles in width. It is hemmed in by mountains, which in a northeasterly direction rise to a height of 8,000 and 10,000 feet, and are plentifully sprinkled with living glaciers and banks of omnipresent snow. No scenery can be conceived more grand than the serrated range called the Selkirk. From their snowy summits numless streams, called here creeks, but which might at times be dignified by the name of rivers, come leaping down their sides through impassable canyons, abounding in magnificent waterfalls of hundreds of feet in height, and marking the deep green of the pine forests with lines that sparkle in the sunlight like silver. These creeks abound in trout, from the small speckled fish which are esteemed such delicate eating in the Green mountains of Vermont, up to five and six pounders with the pink marked sides of the western lakes. In the lake itself are caught by the trawl trout of larger dimensions, ten, fifteen and twenty pounds in weight.

The climate of Kootenay Lake is delightful. No hot days in summer, and in winter the thermometer very rarely reaching zero. There seems to be a mild belt of southern climate straying off towards this northern region, evidently undecided whether it is in the temperate or tropical zone.

The two towns on Kootenay Lake in which at present all the business of the

district is done are Ainsworth, at the Hot Springs Camp, and Nelson at the western outlet of the lake. The former is the point at which all the ores of that camp are brought to the lake and shipped upon steamers on their way to the various reduction works. This town is beautifully situated on a series of terraces, rising above each other, and affording to each successive row of houses a splendid view of the lake and the mountains beyond. In the limits of the town are the Hot Springs, containing a mineralized water—120 degrees Fahrenheit—and said to be very efficacious in cases of rheumatism and neuralgia. A hundred feet from these springs a small mountain stream comes roaring down, whose waters are ice cold in the warmest summer days. It is proposed to erect a sanitarium at this spot, where invalids can indulge in the luxury of the baths and inhale the pure and bracing air of the mountains.

The town of Nelson is the outlet for the products of the Toad mountain mines. It is also the present terminus of the Columbia & Kootenay Railway, and is destined to be a shipping point of considerable importance in the future.

The following mines are the principal ones at present opened at Hot Springs:—

Skyline, shipped 100 tons ore, averaging \$100 per ton.

United, sacked 600 tons ore, averaging \$100 per ton.

No. 1 took out 500 tons ore, averaging \$200 to \$400.

Krao, shipped 50 tons ore, averaging \$100 to \$150 per ton.

Neosho took out 100 tons ore, averaging \$500 to \$1000 per ton.

Blue Bell took out 100 tons ore, averaging \$80 per ton.

Early Bird took out 200 tons ore, averaging \$50 to \$30 per ton.

At Toad Mountain the principal mines are:—

Silver King shipped 120 tons ore, averaging \$300 per ton.

Dandy took out 100 tons ore, averaging \$100 per ton.

Tough Nut took out 50 tons ore, averaging \$150 per ton.

Poor Man worked 500 tons gold ore. Returns not known but very rich.

Besides these two camps there has been discovered a very strong lode of galena at Goat River, about eight miles north of the boundary line. Late in the autumn some gold placer mines were found on Salem River, about 15 or 20 miles south of Nelson, and there will be a miners' rush there in the spring. Upon the Columbia River, 18 miles below Sproat's Landing, a number of large veins were found on Trail Creek, and a very prosperous camp seems to be assured. Taken altogether, the Kootenay Lake region is destined to take its place as one of the wonderful ore producing camps of the western world.

The Davies-Sayward company's saw-mill at Pilot bay, is, at last, ready for continuous business. There are about half a million feet of logs in the mill pond, and more in Crawford's bay. While the company is now able to fill small orders, there being about 200,000 feet of lumber in the yard, the manager expects to be able to fill any sized order by the time navigation opens.