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**N**O more important or responsible duty devolves upon a mining engineer than that of examining and reporting on mines or mining properties for prospective purchasers, who must perforce trust entirely to his skill, experience, care and honesty for guidance and protection. Before therefore a mining engineer is engaged to undertake work of this nature it is needless

to say that the greatest caution should be exercised in ascertaining that he is a man of not only high professional standing, but also has special knowledge and acquaintance of the particular class of mining enterprise which is to be examined and considered. That this very obvious and necessary precaution is frequently disregarded there can be little doubt; for, speaking generally, many of the disappointing and in some cases disastrous mistakes that have been made by English mining companies operating in British Columbia may unquestionably be traced to the fact that engineers have been selected who, although possibly well versed in the conditions of mining in other countries, have no special knowledge or experience of the gold-copper and silver-lead smelting ores or of the hydraulic gravel mines of British Columbia. Many instances in point, such, for example, as the unfortunate fiasco of the Galena Farm, could without difficulty be cited.

Meanwhile a case, it is true, of somewhat dissimilar character, yet bearing directly on the subject under discussion has lately been brought to our notice in connection with a recent report upon certain hydraulic mining properties in the Omenica District made by Mr. Edgar P. Rathbone, M. Inst. M.M., A.M. Inst. C.E., M.I., Mech.E., late Inspector of Mines to the Transvaal Government in the Witwatersrand Goldfields.

It may be remarked in passing that this same Mr. Rathbone, as the result of a "flying trip" through

Canada during the summer of 1897 delivered at the Royal Colonial Institute a lecture upon "The Gold-fields of Ontario and British Columbia," which, although commended by some of the English newspapers, was justly and severely criticized for its inaccuracy by the Canadian press.

It appears that in the month of November, 1897, a London syndicate, promoted by Sir Ellis Ashmead-Bartlett, M.P., and others, and called the North Western Pioneers, Limited, acquired options upon certain properties in British Columbia, including those of the Omenica Consolidated Hydraulic Mining Company, Limited, consisting of seventeen partially developed hydraulic gold mining claims, each of eighty acres in Omenica District. This option was granted by the vendor company without cash payment upon the sole condition that within a period of eight months from date the London company should have the properties examined by a competent engineer, and if his report proved favourable, should purchase the ground at a price thereupon agreed. In the following spring the North Western Pioneers, Limited, to carry out this agreement engaged the services in England of Mr. Rathbone, who undertook to report on these hydraulic, as well as copper-gold and silver-lead, properties in British Columbia. Mr. Rathbone arrived in Omenica on the 12th June and less than ten days sufficed him to examine and test the ground (some 1,360 acres in extent) he had come so far to see. On the 24th June the return journey was commenced, and cabling from Ashcroft to the London Board of Directors that he could not recommend the purchase of the properties, Mr. Rathbone advised them to await his "detailed" report, then in course of preparation. It is with this so-called "detailed" report we now propose to deal, and we are free to confess that as a report by a properly qualified engineer upon a hydraulic gravel mining property it is truly a most remarkable production.

The report comprises some fourteen pages of type-written foolscap, ten of which at least are devoted to such matters as Mr. Rathbone's adventures en route; a geological description of the country between Quesnelle and Manson, which might very easily have been taken bodily from the Dominion Geological Survey Report—a by no means accurate history of the Omenica District, and a very misleading statement of the conditions affecting transportation and labour in that district. With regard to the question of transportation Mr. Rathbone makes the astounding statement that from Ashcroft to Quesnelle "goods can only be transported during the summer months; that is, the season commences somewhere about May and ends in October."

It is hardly necessary for us to point out that the most favourable period of the year for the transport of supplies over this route is during the winter season, when advantage is taken of the snow for sleighing.

Further, Mr. Rathbone proceeds to state that "as there is no means of communicating with the outside