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A PROPOSED PROVINCIAL MINING ASSOCIATION.

IT is impossible to overestimate the far-reaching importance of the results that may be expected to follow from the inauguration during the past month, of a movement to organize an association on lines so broad and comprehensive as those suggested by the promoters of the plan. The objects for which this association is to be formed are, in brief, the promotion of the welfare of the mining industry, and invitations have been issued to practically every resident of the Province, on the assumption that he must necessarily be either directly or indirectly interested in the development and prosperity of this our principal industry, to become a member of the association and assist in sending delegates to a convention that is to be held in Victoria on the 25th of February next. So far the project has met with a most enthusiastic reception, and the only criticism that has appeared has been on a matter of minor detail and not directed against the principle or general aim of the movement. These are that by the co-operation of all classes an improvement in conditions may be brought

about. It will be for the convention to adopt a line of action and decide upon a plan by which the organization may be made to serve a really useful purpose. But it is clear enough that the opportunities in the direction indicated are boundless. The opening sentence in the circular issued by the provisional executive committee of the new association states that the "conditions surrounding the mining industry of the Province have become so burdensome that capital has ceased to flow into this country."

This statement expresses, we fear, something very like the truth. It is strictly true that capital is not being invested in the mines of the country, except in very limited amounts, and that British capital, at least, has ceased to flow into the country; it is true that the silver-lead mining industry of the Slokan and East Kootenay is in a terribly depressed condition, that the copper mines of the Boundary are operated on a very slender margin of profit; that hydraulic and placer mining effort is badly handicapped, and that in the whole country there is not a single mine on a regular dividend-paying footing. If these are facts, we must either admit that the mineral resources of the country have been grossly over-valued, or that they have not been exploited to the best advantage. But there is not a mine manager or mining engineer in British Columbia to-day who would express the opinion that the present unsatisfactory state of affairs was attributable to any but removable causes, or refuse to share the belief of the late Dr. Dawson and other eminent scientific men who have made a special study of our mineral deposits, as to the wonderful opportunities for mining operation in so vast and rich a territory. Some months ago we attempted to investigate the causes responsible for the depression that then existed, and which still continues to overshadow the industry, and the following hypothetical reasons were offered: Exaggerated anticipation on the part of investors; extravagance and incompetence on the part of representatives of investors; bad mining laws; unstable relations between labour and capital; over-taxation and injurious incidence of taxation; extensive swindling on the part of company promoters; and abnormally high cost of production from inefficiency of labour. To these may now be added the low price of metals, inadequate marketing advantages and high costs of transport. Of the causes suggested some are merely imaginary and some are real; some have exerted a slight and some a strenuous influence in retarding development and discouraging the further investment of capital; but if the real