

the British Columbia Copper Company, which has 20 per cent. to its credit.

It is most encouraging to be able to record largely increased mine outputs for the current year.

THE SKEENA RIVER DISTRICT.

Northern British Columbia is a country of vast distances and of rich promise. Of both the mineral and

the agricultural possibilities of a great part of the immense region drained by the Skeena River, but little is known. What scant knowledge we have, however, indicates that there is room here for a whole generation of prospectors and settlers.

Mr. J. C. Gwillim's article, which appears in this issue of the Canadian Mining Journal, we commend to that restless brotherhood whose members are now and always searching for pastures new.

SKEENA RIVER DISTRICT.

By J. C. Gwillim.

The journey from Vancouver to Port Essington, or Prince Rupert, takes from forty to fifty hours. The trip is made on any of the many boats now calling in on their way to more northern ports. It is a voyage without a parallel in the world—so sheltered from the main Pacific ocean that there is seldom any seasickness. For half the way the eastern shores of Vancouver Island are followed quite closely, a scene of mountains, green islands and glittering seas, or arms of the sea, in every direction. Even now this passage presents an almost continuous succession of steamboats, far apart, but in the days to come, when this desirable land is peopled, and the fisheries, timber, farming lands, and mines are fully developed, there will be a sea-going traffic through these waters which may be greater than that of the Great Lakes at the present time.

Nearly all this traffic at present passes through Seymour Narrows, a channel that may some time be bridged. Through this passage go all the Alaskan boats and fishing boats, also the new traffic between Prince Rupert and Vancouver.

After passing Vancouver Island the land and sea features change considerably. There is the same intermixture of land and water, but the land is more precipitous, and is clothed with a less generous tree growth. There is a general absence of soil; the nakedness of the hilly islands seems only clothed with moss and smaller trees; the beach is a water-mark on the rock which dips steeply into the sea, or a ragged reef-ribbed shallow.

Port Essington and Prince Rupert are both built on uneven, rocky lowlands. Everywhere there seems to be an absence of alluvium or soil; rain, rock, moss and wet beach impress one in the region round the mouth of the Skeena.

The Skeena, like the Fraser, drains a great district from the interior of British Columbia and descends swiftly through the Coast Ranges, but unlike the Fraser has practically no delta. The valley, even at tide water, is comparatively abrupt and narrow. The only flats are narrow, marginal strips, or island bars, covered with great conifers and cotton woods.

Until the present time of Grand Trunk Pacific construction, the Skeena has been the highway only of Indians, Hudson Bay Company boats, and placer miners.

Although the Hudson Bay Company has for years operated steamboats on this river for a distance of 170 miles, from Essington to Hazelton, it is no light undertaking to make the trip.

In Volume III. of the Canadian Mining Institute there is a paper by E. C. Musgrave upon "A Prospecting Trip in Northern America." Mr. Musgrave went to

Hazelton by the old steamer Caledonia (now on the bars of the lower river). The trip up the river, 170 miles, took about three weeks. One week was spent tied up to the bank waiting for the water to rise, the rest of the time in fighting the swift water, with much warping in the worst places.

Midway between Essington and Hazelton is Kitsalas Canyon, a narrow, crooked and short little jagged pair of passages, through a low rock obstruction. A water gauge at this place indicates when it is safe to make the passage, and often boats await the proper conditions of water level for many days.

Our own trip up the Skeena in August last was a lively one. We were hardly over three days from Essington to Hazelton. Construction of the railway is proceeding at many points along the lower portion of the river. The railway follows the narrow marginal flat, or cuts through bold rock promontories which are a part of the steeply rising ranges on that side of the river.

Much of the work of this first 100 miles out of Prince Rupert will be heavy and costly, with little local support after building.

Further up the river there are raised benches of greater extent and less rainfall. Much of this valley is said to belong to a wood pulp concession, and a considerable amount of the most desirable bench lands is occupied by Indians. Nowhere in Canada, perhaps, is there a main highway and its traffic so largely influenced by its Indian population—a somewhat jealous people, also, who do not regard the changing order with much satisfaction.

Arrived at Hazelton, one finds it is a point of dispersion for other more remote places. Although it has been for so long the starting point, and finishing point, of overland journeys to the interior, there seems to be no organized transportation.

The chief means of travel is with pack-horses. These may be hired from the many Indians who traffic in horses and freight throughout the district.

Hazelton is hardly the centre of a productive district; it is more like the funnel entry to the Pacific coast from a great interior region full of possibilities in the agricultural and mining industries.

From Hazelton one can go northwards up the Kispox and Skeent Valleys and into that little known land towards the Yukon; eastwards one hundred miles to the placer camps of Omenica; and beyond it, to the north, are the new Ingenica placers. South-eastwards is the Bulkeley Valley, on the route of the railway, and further south and east the wide belts of agriculture land in the Nechaco and other districts.

Concerning the agricultural possibilities of this region,