

The Mining Record.

VOL. VIII.

MAY, 1901.

NO. 5.

BRITISH COLUMBIA MINING RECORD

Devoted to the Mining Interests of The Pacific Northwest.

PUBLISHED BY

THE BRITISH COLUMBIA RECORD, LIMITED

Advertising Rates on Application.

H. MORTIMER LAUREN, Managing Editor.

Victoria, B. C., Office: Bank of Montreal Chambers.
London Office: 24 Coleman Street, E. C.
Montreal: Gray's Agency.
Denver, Col.: National Advertising Co.
San Francisco: Duke's Agency
Travelling Representative, E. L. Terry.

SUBSCRIPTION TERMS:

Canada and the United States, one year - - \$2.00
Great Britain and Foreign, one year - - - 2.50

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All communications relating to the business department of the British Columbia MINING RECORD to be addressed to the

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THE MONTH.

AMID the greatest buoyancy of production the mining industry of the province presents features which require the most careful and delicate consideration. The output of ore from Rossland is now over a thousand tons a day, and the output from the Boundary country is now over one thousand

tons a day also. It is only by a comparison with the output of last year that the significance of these figures is realized. The total output of gold-copper ore from both these districts during 1900 was in the neighborhood of 325,000 tons. If the present rate of output during the present year is maintained the total output should be not less than 750,000 tons, or 200,000 tons more than the total tonnage of ore mined in the Province of British Columbia during the year 1900. The other districts of the province would not be required to increase their tonnage much over last year to bring the total for the province up to 1,100,000 tons an increase in tonnage of 100 per cent. following an increase for the previous year of 93 per cent. In other words a

tonnage of 287,343 tons in 1890 should be increased to a tonnage of 1,100,000 tons in 1901 provided conditions remain normal. This is a rate of progress of a most remarkable character. It guarantees prosperity to the mining industry and if to the mining industry then to all the diversified interests of the province which are all dependent upon mining as upon their base.

The proviso, however, that conditions shall remain normal is a proviso which cannot be accepted as certain of fulfilment. The silver-lead and the gold-copper mines of British Columbia are confronted by conditions which, although different in their nature, present a problem similar in its bearings in both cases, a problem by no means certain of solution in the best interests of British Columbia's prosperity.

The silver-lead mines have to solve the problem of mining at a profit in the face of difficult conditions and in competition with other sources of supply in a market glutted with lead. The gold-copper mines, on the other hand, while they have a fairly steady market for copper and an absolutely steady market for gold, are nevertheless obliged, in order to make a profit, to handle a very large tonnage of ore and in order to handle a very large tonnage of ore they must cut the margin above the limit of bare cost of treatment as fine as possible. Both branches of our mining industry are face to face with the problem of economy of production in a tolerably acute form.

It is a noticeable fact that upon a rising market for the material produced, or where there is a wide margin between value and cost of production, the risk of disturbance in the relations between capital and labour is very slight. Labour finds comparatively little difficulty in diverting a larger proportion of the value produced into the wages fund, so long as there is still an extra margin of profit for capital. But the percentage of value diverted into the wages fund during good times is seldom or never restored to the necessity of maintaining an industry during bad times without a severe industrial struggle. The reason for this is, not that workingmen do not realize as much as anyone else that hard times sometimes most seriously injure the legitimate returns of capital, but because their added gains have been applied, and very rightly applied, to increase the standard of comfort in which they live and they will not submit to any curtailment without knowing the reason why. Not only so but the continual pressure of the wages fund upon the value produced in the industry is apt to be maintained at a time when the condition of the market or the resources of the pro-