

PLAIN TALK ON ORE-TESTING.

There are men in every line of business who differ greatly upon the principles underlying their special branch and the methods under which it should be conducted. Some are honest in their differences, while others are willing to sacrifice their real opinions to any matter of expediency which promises more ready and full returns of cash to their coffers. There are assayers who believe that the prospector should be "encouraged" by overstating the value of his ore, and who habitually give small returns, from a "trace" to a few dollars per ton, on ore which they know to be totally barren, thinking by this fraud to keep the miner at work for days, or perhaps months, upon a prospect which will yield nothing, spending valuable time and money to no purpose, save that of giving a few dollars' worth of work to the assayer. Perhaps the prospector sends samples to two different assayers, and one returns him "no trace," while the other gives him a value of a few dollars per ton. The biggest return is almost invariably accepted as correct, and the "no trace" man is charged with a failure. Some assayers say it makes no difference whether they return "no trace" or a dollar or two a ton, because in neither case is the ore of any value. I claim the contrary, and assert that the accuracy of an assay of ore of very low grade is much more important than that of an ore carrying a hundred dollars per ton, for the reason that in the first case a difference between "no trace" and a dollar or two may decide the expenditure of hundreds or perhaps thousands of dollars in development; while in the latter, the ore will be shipped anyway; and we have all learned that the smelters will pay for nothing but the actual contents of the ore. Then, too, these returns of value from valueless ore are often the result of accident or carelessness in the hands of an assayer who has every intention of being honest. A particle of rich ore in the grinder left from the last sample, a salted crucible, a loaded cleaning brush, a dirty mixing cloth, flukes containing a little precious metal—these and other matters of carelessness, uncleanness or disorder about the laboratory are continually making the difference between reliability and worthlessness in the result of assaying. The general public is not competent to judge of the qualifications of an assayer any more than those of a physician. Any man can buy an outfit for a hundred dollars and stick out his shingle "Chemist and Assayer," when in reality he knows no more about the correct application of the principles underlying the trade he professes than the man in the moon. Such instances are more common than many would believe; and sometimes people of intelligence, who could at once realize the foolishness of putting out the cheapest lawyer or doctor, will give their patronage to such an assayer, just because they can get

his services a little cheaper than those of a man who is competent in his profession and who realizes the importance of taking pains.

A good assayer is often charged with failure because his customer is ignorant of the first principles of sampling ore. Sometimes a piece of rock is broken in two, the halves sent to different assayers, widely varying results are obtained, and one of the operators is charged with an error, when in fact both are correct, and the results are chargeable to the fact that the metal was unevenly disseminated through the sample. It is well to remember that like results can only be reasonably expected when the sample is finely crushed, thoroughly mixed and carefully divided. The careful miner will treat his sample in this way, grinding as fine as his circumstances will permit, mixing and dividing carefully, and in every case reserving a portion of the sample, so that a check assay can be made if desired. As the best men are liable to an occasional mistake, no conservative miner will expend any large amount of labor or money upon the result of a single assay, but will base his future work upon the concurring results of two or more reliable assayers.

The best practical test of the qualifications of an assayer is his ability to check with the smelters on their shipment pulps; and if you are in doubt with whom to trust your work, go to your friends who are ore shippers and get them to tell you whom they patronize. No man can be honest in this business without making many enemies among those customers who have had higher assays elsewhere than he can give them and who had rather believe their assayer dishonest or incompetent than that their ore is less valuable than they hoped. Remember that good men as a rule can get a good price for their work. I have in mind an assayer in Colorado who probably does more business than any man in the West and who charges two dollars for a gold and silver assay while others in the same town charge fifty cents, and the chances are, that, considering the real value of the work turned out, the two-dollar man comes the nearer to earning his fee. If there is any trade in which "cheap and nasty" work is utterly valueless it is in that of the assayer.—Ex.

We are informed upon very reliable authority that a *bona fide* cash offer of a handsome amount has been made for the capital stock of the Dominion Development Co., by a syndicate of capitalists. We endeavored to secure from the directorate confirmation of this rumor before going to press, but we regret to say that they were very reticent, hence we shall be unable to furnish our readers with the details until next week. Much strength is given the report owing to the fact that the price of Dominion Development shares has advanced sharply and there are few sellers.

THE ORPHAN BOY.

Must be Investigated.

We are pleased to learn that there is to be an investigation into the affairs of the Deer Park Mining Company of Rossland. This is as it should be. An investigation may result in eliciting facts which will hold the managers blameless, or otherwise. Already we have had occasion to refer to a few transactions which have happened in connection with mining affairs which savor largely of rank dishonesty, and concerning which we hope the attorney-general, as head of the administration of justice in this province, will give that attention which the peculiar nature of the transactions demand. From facts coming to our knowledge, we are decidedly of the opinion that there is at least one mining transaction in this province whose affairs, if not cleared up, and those connected with it exposed and punished, as they deserve to be if found to be guilty of irregular business methods, an impression will go abroad that the carrying out of the law in British Columbia is a travesty upon justice. The Orphan Boy mining affair has done more to give the mining industry a set-back than anything which has ever happened to that promising industry. So far as this proposition is concerned, those who feel that their estate was grossly mismanaged are determined, we understand, to sift the whole matter to the bottom.—World.

Mayor Templeton and Mr. C. N. Davidson left yesterday [Tuesday] for Revelstoke, to let a contract for some work on the Orphan Boy mine, in the Big Bend country, about the sale of which so much has been heard of late. —News-Advertiser.

Through a mutual acquaintance our managing editor offered Mr. J. W. Haskins the use of our columns for the purpose of replying to his alleged detractors. We offered to publish his production *verbatim et literatim*. The offer was declined.

AN ENGLISHMAN'S VIEWS.

That the Province of British Columbia possesses vast mineral resources has been proved by recently published official statistics; but all the same we think the following warning thrown out by a London paper recently introduced to safeguard the interests of English investors in "B.C." properties is apropos:

"Locally registered mining stock has found little favor in England up to the present, and in view of the scandals which reach these shores from time to time of the unloading of promoter stock, the sale of forged certificates, etc., there is little room for surprise. An excellent suggestion has been made, which, if acted upon, might minimise risk—viz that all treasury shares have the word treasury printed across the certificate."