

## PROGRESS OF MINING IN BRITISH COLUMBIA.

EXTRACT FROM REPORT OF MR. WILLIAM FLEET ROBERTSON, B.A.P.S., PROVINCIAL MINERALOGIST.

The Province of British Columbia, although as yet only in its early stages of mineral development, has entered into the company of the great mineral producing countries of the world, with no uncertain step. Confidence in her future is based upon the rich promises of the many partly developed mines, which as yet predominate; promises that to a large extent are guaranteed by the results now being obtained from the comparatively few mines, which have as yet been sufficiently developed to become producers. Attention is directed to the comparatively recent growth of lode mining, and to the greatly increased production of recent years, such production being now eight or nine times what it was in 1894, or over twenty times as great as in 1893.

Increased production during the last year, is to be noted in gold—both placer and lode; also in copper; while the output of coal, from the Vancouver Island collieries alone, has broken all previous records, to which must still be added the output of the Crow's Nest Pass Colliery, which only commenced shipping in November.

While the total mineral production of the province shows an increase, even over last year, the increase is not as marked as it would have been but for the serious dropping off in the output of silver-lead ores.

The reason for this decrease seems to be the unusually low price of silver during the latter part of 1897 and beginning of 1898, together with the uncertainty as to the future price of the metal. For the time being this paralyzed many existing ventures and prevented new ones being started to work properties of this nature. The drop in price, coming as it did, shortly after a rise in the duty on lead imported into the United States, then our only market, deterred many of our mines from starting work this season. When the price of silver increased again, in the latter half of the year, it was then too late to begin operations for this season.

Again, the certainty of the completion this year of the Canadian Pacific Railway's branch through the Crow's Nest Pass, bringing with it cheaper fuel and transportation, and so enabling our native smelters to compete for ores, has induced many large producers to confine their attention to development and blocking out of their ore bodies, holding back shipments until such time as the new conditions should take effect, and higher net values might be obtained for the products of the mines.

Decrease from this cause is a healthy sign, and next year should show a very materially increased output of this class of ore.

The increased production of copper during the past year has been marked, while the present market price of the metal, should it be maintained, will have the effect of bringing into the list of producers a number of new properties, and next year may be looked forward to for a greatly increased production.

While it is unlikely that 18-cent copper

has come to stay any length of time, still we have it from an acknowledged authority on the American copper market that 16 cents will probably be the average price for 1899.

The very greatly increased tonnage of the year from the lode mines is to be noted, and coming as it does from mines of low grade, needs that a considerable amount of attention is being attracted to the large low grade propositions which until recently have been untouched.

### CAPITAL.

The importance, and often the absolute necessity, of capital, to bring a prospect through the development to the producing stage is well recognized by our prospecting class, but at the same time they fail to recognize the risk capital runs in putting money into a prospect on which little or no conclusive development has been done. In consequence, the prices asked for properties of this description have been so high that the holders of money were not justified in so risking it.

That there is in the country ample capital, ready and more than willing to invest in any property showing values from definite development, is beyond question, but the money necessary to bring a property up to the requisite point has often been found hard to obtain.

The moneyed men or their agents are usually willing, working on a bond, to guarantee to spend in development work definite amounts within a fixed time, and so develop the property in question.

The great trouble seems to be in the demand for cash payments, to be made so soon that it is impossible that sufficient development should be done in time.

Thus the terms, rather than the amount of the bond, are what have prevented the development hoped for, and the country is tied up, inactive, through what appears to be the unreasonableness of the prospector.

There is, however, another side to the question, which I think it might be well to bring before the capitalist.

The prospector, enduring privations and running dangers innumerable, spends his whole time scouring the most remote parts of the mountains for prospects; he has no other means of livelihood, and must have money enough to buy food and supplies, so that when he comes to tie up a prospect in a bond, though perfectly willing to "stand in with the capitulist on the gamble," still he must have enough cash to enable him to get out into the mountains again to discover new properties. The demand for a small cash payment is thus not as unreasonable as it at first seems.

I am glad to say, however, that there seems to be a decidedly better mutual understanding coming about, the effect of which should be shortly felt.

### ATLIN GOLD FIELDS.

Public attention has recently been so much drawn to the placer discoveries in Northern Cassiar, in the neighborhood of Atlin Lake, that the best available information has been collected with reference to this little-known district.

A sketch map has been prepared by the Lands and Works Department from data thus collected, showing that portion of the country.

The information as to the actual amount of gold brought out in 1898 is somewhat

uncertain, but, by collecting this data regarding amounts of which actual figures have been obtained, it is estimated that the output was about \$75,000.

The placer discoveries at Atlin, while in themselves important, have still greater importance, in drawing public attention to the existence—well known locally—of the great placer gold belt, extending the whole length of the Province, from Wild Horse Creek, in East Kootenay, near the United States boundary (which is credited with a total output of some \$20,000,000), in a northwesterly direction along the western slope of the Rockies, through the famous Cariboo and adjoining gold fields, and still further on through Atlin to the Yukon gold fields in the Northwest Territories.

Between Atlin and Cariboo there is still a vast extent of territory which has as yet been little prospected, and which may eventually prove as rich as its neighbors on either side.

As already foreshadowed in last year's report, there is strong evidence to show that the gold of Atlin is not confined to placer workings. Samples of very rich gold-bearing quartz from prospects there have already been brought down, and upon these prospects some development will be made this coming year. Whether this district will eventually prove rich in lode mines, it is too early to predict, as little attention has as yet been given to anything but placer gold. Samples of cinnabar have been received from there for assay by this department and found to contain 26 per cent. mercury.

Output from the mines of British Columbia for the year ending December, 1898:

Metals.....	\$6,172,766
Coal.....	3,407,575
Coke.....	175,000
Other material.....	151,500
Total.....	\$10,906,861

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