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## Truth vs. Exaggeration.

We are continually coming across instances amongst our exchanges of the grossest misconception of the actual state of the mining business in British Columbia, and more particularly in the Rossland Camp. One example, taken from a paper of such high standing as the *Journal of the Imperial Institute*, will serve as a text;—"That its output will surpass even that of the Rand is, in the opinion of those well qualified to judge, also most probable, \* \* \* \* more than \$1,750,000 worth of Kootenay ore has been smelted and the product shipped in three months. The Rossland camp may alone be expected to produce between 350,000 and 400,000 tons of ore per annum, the gross products being estimated at between seven and eight million dollars, nearly one half of which is profit, \* \* \* \* The value of the mining industry of Southern British Columbia should reach a total of thirty to forty millions of dollars per annum within the next five years."

Now such representation as this is gross *misrepresentation*, and cannot but work injury to the mines of British Columbia, as it is calculated to lead investors to expect a production which every informed person knows to be not five, but many years hence.

For the information of our readers interested in British Columbia, we propose to take up our quotations and offer a few figures and facts as a commentary.

The statement that the gold fields of British Columbia will surpass those of the Rand is one oftenest met with in the prospectus of some Rossland property. So far as we are aware, every engineer of repute who has examined the Trail district has a very different opinion.

The output of the Rand for the year 1895, as given by the Johannesburg Chamber of Mines was 2,080,013 ounces fine gold, worth \$42,993,869. Unfortunately we have no reliable official figures of the value of the output of British Columbia, the official Report of the Minister of Mines for that province being sadly deficient in this respect, and being more remarkable for the information it omits than for that which it contains.

The Report, however, estimates the total value of gold, silver and lead produced at \$2,811,545, of which \$2,175,000 is credited to Kootenay proper. This includes the product of the Silver Lead mines of the Slocan country estimated at \$1,000,000, leaving \$1,175,000 for the rest of Kootenay. Mr. Carlyle, the Provincial Mineralogist, states the total value of the output of Rossland from 1891 to July 1st, 1896, as compiled from the smelter returns to be \$1,007,007 from 27,085 tons of ore, an average value of \$37.18 per ton. The largest month's production the camp has yet had was in the month of October, 1896, when 5,037 tons were reported to have yielded \$175,000, an average of about \$35.00 per ton. Supposing this production to be kept up for a year we get a total of only \$2,100,000 for the year.

When the Rand started, with a production of 23,155 ounces for the year 1887, it started *not* as a refractory ore-field, but as a free-milling gold field in which progress is naturally more rapid than in any other. Yet it took the Witwatersrand seven years to reach to the \$40,000,000 mark, with a climate in which prospecting and all surface operations can be carried on the whole year round, whereas, practically the whole of the Kootenay field is under snow for five months out of the twelve. The inevitable result must be a much slower opening up of the mines of British Columbia than of those countries more favorably situated climatically.

From the rational point of view there is no reason to suppose that British Columbia has any larger contents of the precious metals than other territories situated on the same Cordilleran Belt, and a few figures of the two chief producers to the south may be of interest:—

MONTANA—Enjoying a climate less severe than that of British Columbia, had a gold production 1895 of \$3,677,586, and a silver production of \$9,825,305, a total of \$13,502,891, without counting its enormous production of copper.

Colorado, whose latest camp Cripple Creek is as young an infant as Rossland, had in 1895 a gold production of \$13,559,954, and a silver production of \$11,687,150, or a total of \$25,247,104.

In the face of these figures, we would ask our foreign and native investors to look askance upon such extravagant statements and require proof before admitting them true. We do not imagine that any intelligent person knowing the conditions that exist in British Columbia will expect a value of "thirty to forty millions of dollars per annum" to be reached in any such period of time as the *Journal* names, if it is ever reached.

The statement that "1¼ million dollars' worth of Kootenay ore" was smelted and the products shipped in *three* months is an unqualified mis-statement and cannot be at all substantiated.

The statement that Rossland alone may be expected to produce 350,000 to 400,000 tons a year of a value of seven to eight millions, and giving one half of this as a profit is, to say the least, very questionable. It supposes the production of 1,200 to 1,500 tons a day of \$20 ore, mined, shipped and smelted at a cost of \$10 per ton. Unless some new and large ore-bodies are found the one-half of this production will not be realized, and no one who is familiar with the hard nature of Rossland diorite, the costs of smelting siliceous pyrrhotites, and the price of labor in British Columbia will believe the statement that \$10 per ton will come near paying the charges mentioned. At the present day costs vary from \$14 to \$20 per ton, and nothing is in sight at present which will lead to a very material reduction of these charges.

We have every faith, and much reason, to believe that British Columbia has an enormous wealth of mineral both precious and base within her boundaries, and we believe that investments in her mines if made judiciously, will be satisfactorily remunerative. We are not