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The Gold Industry of Nova Scotia in 1890.

Full returns from all the gold mines of this Province are not attainable at the hour of going to press owing to the dilatoriness of several companies in making returns, but from the figures accessible it is evident that the total yield will not much (if any) exceed 20,000 ounces for the year. The yield for 1889 was 26,000 ounces, making a *decrease* for 1890 of over 20 per cent.

This large falling off has not been unexpected by persons acquainted with the industry during the last six months, and has not been confined to one or two districts, although the three Queen's County districts of Brookfield, Malaga Barrens and Whiteburn show a shortage of about 4,000 ounces as compared with 1889. Of this amount Whiteburn alone represents one-half, and the cause is due to the closing down of the McGuire mine in December 1889; the decreased yield of the "Philadelphia" and the "Molega" companies accounts for the other half.

Among the other districts reporting decreased yields are,—*Caribou*, producing little more than one half as much as in 1889; *Renfrew*, which reports a decrease of over 500 ounces; and *Stormont*, showing a decrease of over 1,000 ounces. This decrease in Stormont is due to the enforced idleness of the Palgrave company which obtains because of the litigation in which unscrupulous speculators have involved this valuable property.

The districts which have practically maintained their yield are principally Salmon River, Oldham, Uniacke, Montagu and Rawdon, embracing both East and Central Rawdon. Rawdon has maintained its yield on account of the new property opened by Mr. Northup, and on account of the re-opening of the East Rawdon mines in the second half of the year. The older mine in Central Rawdon has practically ceased producing, for the present at any rate. It appeared like a comet in the summer of 1889, was sold in the United States, and all but disappeared, with almost equal celerity, in 1890.

The large district of Sherbrooke shows a gain of less than 100 ounces, the total being about 300. Waverley, after two years preparation and the lavish expenditure of money, reports about 500 ounces. The Egerton Co., on Fifteen Mile Stream, have the best progress to report, having doubled its production in about one-half the year owing to energetic management and improved machinery.

The districts producing 2,000 ounces or over are Oldham, Malaga and Rawdon (East and Central united).

The main cause of the large falling off, this past year has been the old familiar one of lack of development. The rich streaks being gouged out as rapidly as found, there came periodical times of poorer quartz, and in some cases total collapse, as in the Neptune mine at Chester Basin.

The outlook for the coming year is not favorable; several schemes which have been inflated during the past year will be pricked the coming season, and with probable disaster to the good name of the gold industry abroad. Several of the older districts, however, will probably show a large increase, as Salmon River and Oxford, which have been equipping their mines with new mills and improved machinery for development and extraction.

In spite of the lessened production the industry is on a better basis than last year, and out of the extinction of the recent "boom" and "boomers" will come more substantial prosperity and progress.

The Quebec Mining Bill.

If Mr. Mercier desires to convert the Quebec mining men into straight anarchists, he could hardly have devised a better means than the enactment of the new Quebec Mining Law; a measure so full of unjust and vexatious provisions as to induce a contempt for the whole system of legislation under which such annoyances are practicable. Better no law at all than such interference with individual enterprise and such violation of agreements. By reference to our summary of the Act, the main features may be readily grasped; and we will here merely allude in brief to some of the points that appear to us to be especially objectionable.

If purchasers of a mine know beforehand that a royalty of three per cent. is to be levied upon the output, they have the option of investing or leaving the industry alone. But when mines are sold outright and subsequently a royalty is imposed, there is a breach of contract committed which constitutes a moral outrage, and we should think a legal offence. If our working mines were now owned by the original purchasers at the low government prices, there would not be so much reason for complaint; but in nearly every case the operating companies have purchased their lands at such high prices that, as a rule, it is difficult for them to earn profits in excess of the interest upon capital. They paid these prices with the supposed guarantee of freedom from royalty or they never would have paid them. If the tax was levied upon profits, instead of upon the output irrespective of its cost, it would be less open to the charge of injustice and less likely to be injurious in its effects upon struggling enterprises.

The appointment of inspectors with unlimited powers will create an offensive oligarchy, whose unappealable decisions will cause a vast amount of ill feeling and vexation; and if unsuitable persons are appointed, as is certain sometimes to be the case, a great deal of injustice will be perpetrated.

The right of the owner of the soil to have the option of buying the mineral rights, after their value has been discovered by the explorer, will put a check upon research and discovery; and the power of the commissioner to advance the price of lands,, or put them up to public auction, will be a discouragement to the prospector and often work a great injustice, allowing the rich idler to appropriate the efforts of the poorer, active explorer.

The power of a single arbitrator to force the sale of a property at the price he dictates will be felt to be very oppressive, though we do not deny that it may tend to promote mining opertions while it depreciates the value of vested interests.

The confiscation of mining rights, after two years of idleness, may be a wise measure for future application upon lands yet to be sold, but its enforcement upon lands already ceded without any such proviso is of the nature of such legislation as is advocated by revolutionists. It is probable that an appeal will be made to the Dominion authorities to disallow this measure as a violation of legal rights and an unwarrantable trespass upon vested interests.

The exaction of minutely-detailed quarterly reports from mines, and monthly reports from quartz mills, will prove vexatious. Although some general report is desirable, there seems to be no reason why the Government should have "a description of all shafts, quarries, inclined galleries, working levels, plant, machinery, tramways, railways, openings, open spaces, pushed, made or constructed during the previous quarter." Perhaps the farmer may next be required to report every furrow he ploughs, every crop he sows, and every cow shed he erects. If " that government is the best which governs the least, " the present Quebec government, if it is to be judged by this bill, is a very bad one.

On phosphate properties it is customary to make a large number of surface workings. We know of one property on which there are at least 300 pits and trenches over four feet deep, some of which are of great extent. To erect fences four feet high around all these would be a herculean and expensive task. As pits are usually indicated by a rock dump there would seem to be warning enough of their existence.

The list of fines, winding up with $20 for every day of contravention of all other misdemeanors, approaches the ridiculous; but when an offer of half the fine is made to the informer we are compelled to regard the matter seriously as a most demoralizing and vicious measure. Worthless loafers may then earn a living by prowling through the bush in search of pits minus the four foot fence; and for every discovery they may secure $25 as the reward of their sneaking business. The only comfort afforded by this section of the bill is that its