

The Merit System Winning in Ottawa.

The appointment of Mr. R. G. McConnell as Deputy Minister of Mines is most commendable in the interests both of Civil Service administration and of the Department of Mines. Not only is it a recognition of the principle of promotion to the highest ranks of the service from within, a principle dear to the hearts of all Civil Servants, but Mr. McConnell, who is one of the senior geologists of the department, is admirably qualified, by reason of his wide experience and services, to supervise and direct the scientific work of this growing and important department.

Joining the Geological Survey in 1879, he was sent out as assistant with Dr. George Dawson, and accompanied the latter on his exploration from Port Simpson, on the Pacific Coast, to Edmonton. "The immediate object of the exploration," to quote from Dawson, "was to obtain all possible information as to the physical features and economic importance of the country, for the purpose of determining to what extent it offered advantages for the passage of the line of the Canadian Pacific Railway."

With the exception of a short period during 1880, spent in the Province of Quebec, Mr. McConnell has been continuously engaged in a study of the geology and economic mineral resources of Western Canada, from Winnipeg to the Pacific Coast, and from the international boundary to the Yukon.

Having specialized in the study of mountain structure, he was called upon, in 1903, to report upon the condition of Turtle Mountain after the disastrous rock slide at Frank, Alberta.

In his earlier investigations in what is now Northern Alberta, he was one of the first to draw attention to the enormous deposits of tar sands in that region, and the possibilities of finding oil and natural gas in that western area. But probably the work which has brought him chief renown has been his investigations on the auriferous gravels of the Klondike, and on the copper and other metal resources of the Yukon district, which continued for ten years, from 1898 to 1907. Since 1908 he has devoted his attention mainly to reporting on the geology and mineral resources of the islands and west coast of British Columbia.

Retiring in disposition almost to a fault, Mr. McConnell possesses a high sense of personal honour, and has never sought after preferment, though this is not the first occasion in which an executive position has been offered him. In 1898 he declined the offer of an appointment as Provincial Mineralogist of British Columbia, preferring at the time to pursue the more active duties of field work untrammelled by executive responsibility. In his new position he carries with him the assurance of the good will and hearty support and co-operation of the whole staff of the department.