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MINING IN THE BOUNDARY DISTRICT.

A SOMEWHAT remarkable circumstance in connection with the opening up of the Boundary mines, and one which appears to have failed, heretofore, to elicit remark, is that the district has so far escaped the experience common to most Western mining camps of what is generally understood by a "boom." It is true that just before and immediately after the completion of the Columbia & Western railway, there was some considerable speculation in mineral prospects and town property, while also the trade possibilities were much over-estimated, with in some cases, unfortunate results; but such as it was the movement was of briefest duration and even at its height bore no resemblance to a "boom" in the sense in which the term is usually applied. The reason of this probably was that actual operations in the Boundary were commenced at a time when confidence in the mines of the province had been rudely shaken by the many failures in other districts of wild-cat undertakings conceived during the Rossland excitement

of 1896-98, while the low-grade character of the ore deposits may also have had some deterrent effect upon capital. But whatever the reason, the fact that the Boundary has not passed through a "boom" period is by no means altogether to be regretted, for it is attributable to this that with very few exceptions mining has been carried on in the district, on the lines of legitimate effort rather than as an excuse for stock market manipulation. It is, meanwhile, impossible to regard the progress that has been made in the short time since this field became productive without satisfaction, or possible to doubt that the district has before it a great and prosperous future. We have already published the favourable conclusions arrived at by Dr. Ledoux, and it is gratifying to know that the opinions of this eminent authority are in the main shared by many other prominent mining engineers and metallurgists. After spending some days at the Knob Hill mine recently, a mining engineer of exceptional professional standing estimated that there were now "in sight" at the property upwards of seventy million tons, which at the present rate of production would require nearly a hundred and forty years to mine, and still more recently the president of one of the largest metal refining concerns in the world, after visiting the district, expressed astonishment at the magnitude of the ore deposits and approval of the skilful manner in which operations are being conducted.

Economic handling of the ores has now indeed been reduced to a very fine point, and we believe we are correct in stating that nowhere else in America is copper ore mined and smelted at so low a cost as in the Boundary. Only three or four years ago Mr. Hedley, of Nelson, was ridiculed in certain quarters for what was then considered to be his absurdly optimistic ideas concerning the possible costs of smelting in the district; but Mr. Hedley's estimate has since in actual practice been cut in half and the ores are now being reduced to a copper matte of between 40 and 50 per cent. at a cost of considerably under two dollars per ton, and by the quarrying system mining costs are also exceptionally low, the ore being placed on railway trucks at a cost of between 35 and 50 cents per ton. These achievements are both remarkable and gratifying, but it would be imprudent to say that costs have now been reduced to the lowest pos-