

be furnaced profitably by retorting. It is, however, added that there must be an improvement of past methods at the mine to insure success and dividends. Apropos of the talk of the threatened shortage of the quicksilver supply, our contemporary, the Mining Reporter, of Denver, Colo., suggests, is really preparatory to an advance in the market price of that metal in obedience to manipulations in New York, London and Paris. For many years past, the price has been controlled by the quotation asked for the product of the Almaden mines in Spain, which are the largest producers of the metal in the world, and have been largely under the control of the French Rothschilds, who have held them as security for money loaned to Spain. When this arrangement was made, mercury was in very active demand on account of its extensive employment in the metallurgy of silver, as well as of gold, and was worth from 90c. to \$1.15 per pound; but with the growth of concentration and smelting industries, and the abandonment of silver amalgamation, coupled with the extensive resources of California in mercury, has kept the metal for many years at about 50 cents per pound, with only a moderate profit to anybody in its production. When the South African gold mines began to produce heavily, there was an attempt to advance the price, but it was unsuccessful, because the California mines were at any time able to and did increase their production heavily and at short notice. Finally as the gold production all over the world began to grow, the demand for mercury has advanced gradually to an amount which equals the supply, so that at the present date there is a real cause for an increase of the price. And the immediate cause of the threatened increase is the impending reopening of the South Africa mines, where, of course, a large amount of the metal is consumed.

The quicksilver mines of the world are producing at present about 4,000 tons of metal annually, of which, in round numbers, 1,700 tons comes from Spain, 1,200 from California, 600 from Austria and 400 from Russia. There is a small production in Italy, Mexico and Australia. They are very extensive but at present unworked deposits in China and Peru, and the Australian deposits are supposed to be susceptible of a greatly increased yield if developed. As the price, which is now about 62 cents per pound, is certain to advance, there is every reason for the American miner to give attention to the metal. It is known to exist in Nevada, Utah, Arizona and Texas, and there are good grounds for expecting its existence at several other places, notably north-eastern New Mexico. There will be good money in quicksilver, at least until the Chinese and Peruvian mines are reopened, and possibly for some time thereafter.

Although the first payments on the bond on the Britannia group, Howe Sound, are small by comparison with the big value involved in the provisional purchase, the fact that the bond will be taken up is pretty well assured. That is, of course, provided the report of a noted and trustworthy expert, who has already an extensive acquaintance with this Province, who is shortly to arrive and make a thorough examination of the property, is satisfactory. Should this expectation be realized, we shall shortly learn more definitely and accurately than now the possibilities of the group and immediately surrounding district. Meanwhile other properties adjoining the Britannia group have been secured by Sir Hibbert Tupper and Messrs. Dunn & Armstrong, a fact which sug-

gests the generally high opinion held in and about Vancouver of this locality.

If as is quite likely Consul Shimizu's investigations and subsequent tests made in Japan bear out the adaptability of the Crow's Nest coal to naval uses or compared with the product of the South Wales collieries, there may in the early future be a considerable demand for East Kootenay coal from Japan. Despite the long railroad haul to the Coast, the considerably short ocean voyage and other circumstances will enable Crow's Nest coal to be sold in Japan at less cost than the product of South Wales, which is at present used to a large extent in the Japanese navy.

The American iron furnaces are buying Lake Superior iron ore at Cleveland for \$5.75 a ton, and transporting it thence by rail to Pittsburg. The Dominion Iron & Steel Company is mining, transporting and delivering iron ore from Belle Island to Sydney, Cape Breton, at a total cost of \$1 per ton. Once in Sydney the ore is smelted with coke produced from coal mines on the spot and fluxed with limestone found in the immediate vicinity. When smelted the products of the furnace can be marketed at a minimum of cost in any part of the habitable globe. Sydney, Cape Breton, is not merely the Pittsburg of Canada; it is the Pittsburg of the world. It is destined to become the world centre of the iron trade. Two years ago Sydney was a moribund country hamlet. To-day it has a population of over 12,000 people. It is beginning to become conscious of its destiny. An interesting conundrum might be presented to the ironmasters of Great Britain. If the manufacturers of Pittsburg, U. S. A., can lay down steel rails in China \$4 a ton cheaper than the manufacturers of Great Britain, how much cheaper than the manufacturers of Pittsburg can the Dominion Iron & Steel Company lay down steel rails in China?

Mr. W. Pellet Harvey, Provincial assayer at Vancouver, has lately made a valuable suggestion through the daily press. It is that the Dominion Government should, in conjunction with the authorities of the Imperial mint, establish a state assay office for gold at some point in British Columbia. Then miners from all parts of the Province as also from the North, would have local opportunities for the sale of gold dust, instead of being obliged, as at present, of going to Seattle, where a government assay office purchases gold on behalf of the United States mint.

As things are, there being no Dominion assay office connected with the Imperial mint and no mint in Canada, the Provincial assay offices have but a limited scope, since reassays are required by the authorities of the Imperial and United States mints, the largest purchasers of gold.

It is unfortunate that an inrush of water should have marred the apparently excellent prospect of a respectable gold yield this season from the Miocene mine in Cariboo, and the necessary new pumping equipment can hardly be installed in time for operation this year. Meanwhile expectations of further substantial gold returns from the Cariboo Consolidated hydraulic properties and prospects of a possible first dividend have likely caused a considerable advance in the market quotations for the company's stock. We shall learn very shortly now if the management's forecast of a total gold yield of \$300,000 for the season is to be realized.