

At last the river did fall, so that those that had staked out claims could work them. The Indians too, had been driven back, and thirty-three belonging to a friendly tribe surprised and massacred, and their huts and winter provisions destroyed. They were Indians, and that was enough ; so the thing was done just to teach them better manners, and inspire more confidence among the hostile tribes. The bed of the river, however, did not appear to get richer, and many who had reckoned on finding valuable claims, and had lost their time waiting for them, were sadly disappointed. Besides there were twice too many miners for the ground occupied, since all the claims lay on the river. Moreover many of these claims, which were only 20 feet square, could be worked out in a week, and there was no elbow room to take up others. So those who had none were obliged to remove higher up towards the Forks, where the mule trail was about being opened, and run the chance of getting a good claim there while it was still time, and before the end of the season, or of returning to Victoria,

This latter course was most congenial to the tastes of the greater number, whom nothing could satisfy, and who, if they were to work, must make 12 or 16 dollars per day. There was an exception however, to this general rule. Watcom had now entirely caved in, and a number of rowdies and gamblers who had remained there to the last, had just come up, having made up their minds to turn over a new leaf and begin mining. They were naturally joined by a number of birds of the same feather, and as none of them much liked the idea of mining they adjourned to Fort Yale, where gambling houses prospered for some time in spite of the law. Indeed the police could not have closed them without bloodshed ; for these men, though ever obedient to law and order when it suited their tastes or their interest, would in this instance have set all authority at defiance, and the thing was well known. They had got up a curious theory for the case of resistance, invented probably by some lawyer and publicly broached on several occasions, namely : that the Boundary Commission not having yet laid down the 49th parallel, there might exist a reasonable doubt as to Fort Yale being really British ! The distance north is well known to be full 20 miles, yet many miners believed or pretended to believe this