

A RETROSPECT.

(By James Moore.)

IN March, 1885, a prospecting party, of which I was a member, ascended the Fraser River, and camped for a meal on a bar a short distance below Fort Yale. Our gastronomic wants satisfied, we proceeded to prospect this bar, and that was practically the beginning of gold mining on the mainland of British Columbia, or New Caledonia as it was then called; for we found excellent prospects. We christened our find Hill's Bar, and set to work with axe and saw on the heavy logs, constructing rough rockers and with these rude appliances (in startling contrast to the high-class and elaborate machinery of to-day) we succeeded in making on the average \$100 to the man a day. Among the difficulties against which we were obliged then to contend was the scarcity of provisions, but some of our party went down the river to old Fort Langley, then a Hudson's Bay post, and succeeded in getting a few groceries and a little black flour on which we managed to subsist. We were not, however, long left in undisputed possession of our Bar. The Yale tribe of Indians soon tumbled to our game and also took a "hand in the pot." They numbered about three hundred, while our party numbered thirty or so. Soon after the return of our colleagues from Langley, a boat belonging to a Capt. Taylor, from Puget Sound, hove in sight. At first, believing that the vessel was laden with provisions and tools we were highly delighted at the prospect of supplying our somewhat pressing necessities, and our disappointment may be imagined when we learnt that the vessel's cargo was composed entirely of spirits. The whiskey-seller is always among the first to follow a mining rush, but this particular vendor was not allowed to ply his dubious trade at our bar—the perpetration of a joke, if there is one, is not intended—for any considerable length of time, although it was no doubt profitable enough while it lasted. The Indians, whom I have already mentioned, had invaded our bar, being well supplied with gold-dust, the value of which they were, however, pretty ignorant, willingly parted with the nuggets for whiskey, the inevitable result being that they one and all were soon in a state of jubilant intoxication. But the situation was far from pleasant so far as we were concerned, and we were not slow to realize that if we did not at once devise some plan for terminating the orgy the consequences might prove serious—for a drunken Indian is a wild beast and ten to one are big odds. Desperate ailments demand desperate remedies and after holding a council of war, early the following morning we marched down in a body to the water-edge and boarding the little vessel as she rode at her moorings, seized the cargo. The heads of the whiskey kegs were speedily knocked in and the contents dumped overboard. After committing our lawless act we gave the commander of the craft ten minutes in which to "clear out," and he did not hesitate long in availing himself of the opportunity. The incident seemed to cause the Indians with whom previously we had been on fairly friendly terms annoyance. They became quarrelsome and a row appeared imminent. The tribe foregathered, every man defiantly exhibiting his musket, while a chief mounted a stump and harangued the assembled braves. The speech-making proved a fortunate circumstance for us, for just as the dusky orator had worked himself, and no doubt his audience to a criti-

cal state of excitement, a boat manned by bluejackets and in which was seated the best friend British Columbia has known, Governor Sir James Douglas, was rowed rapidly towards us. After firing a salute in the Governor's honour we informed him of the position of affairs. Now the Indians had a great respect for Sir James Douglas and he soon induced them to leave the bar for Fort Steele where their ruffled feelings were gently smoothed by a grand "blow out" of molasses and hard tack. Thereafter the Indians gave us no further trouble.

Other adventurers now began to arrive, and among others one "Billy" Balue, a Californian, who inaugurated the Pioneer express service of British Columbia. To this man we showed our prospects and gave him also letters and samples of gold dust for transmission to San Francisco and the outside world generally. And that was how the great Fraser River gold rush of the fifties came about. Prospectors simply swarmed into the country and it was estimated that no less than thirty thousand men camped that year at Fort Yale. Many rich bars and benches below Yale were then located, but hoping to discover still more profitable diggings farther inland many prospectors availed themselves of the route to the Upper Fraser opened up by Sir James Douglas by way of Harrison River to Lillooet, while others, waiting till the freshet subsided, pushed their way up the narrow defile of the big canyon through which the Fraser gains a passage from the Cascades to the sea. The more venturesome of the adventurers forced a passage into the interior of the province despite the overt hostility of the native tribes. In due course Boston Bar, Lytton, the Thompson River, Lillooet and the mouth of the Quesnel River placers were discovered and prospected, and the latter locality in particular gave great promise. The news of these finds were bruited abroad and the main body of pioneers, abandoning the valley of the Fraser, crossed the spur of the Rockies known as Bald Mountain, and commenced locating claims on the bars of the Quesnel River. Some of these bars were very rich and the first locators at the mouth of the river, "Charley" Snider and two others, took out with a rocker \$1,700 the same day they located the ground. Hicks, McDonald's and a number of other bars in this vicinity paid equally well. The party of which I was a member and others started overland from Soda Creek in 1859, discovering rich diggings, known as the blue lead, at Horsefly, from which we won gold to the value of several thousand dollars that year. This deposit of auriferous gravel is now, by the way, covered by the Harper lease which was sold in 1895 to the Horsefly Gold Mining Co., of which Mr. R. T. Ward, of San Francisco, is manager. I visited this mine last year and was piloted by the foreman to a spot where some rich gravel prospecting several ounces to the pan, was in sight; but what struck me most forcibly was the extraordinary difference between the modern methods employed in the operation of this property and the crude mining of forty years ago when on this very ground, which is now worked with hydraulic elevators and the workings illuminated with electric light, I and my companions had toiled with a rocker. Nevertheless our rocker had given us six ounces a day per man and that was not so bad a showing after all.

But to return. After the main Quesnel River had been prospected the bars and branches of the north and south forks of this stream were accorded attention with satisfactory results. In 1860 Keithley, Har-