

speculations and consequently brought out a large amount in drafts and gold dust. One party alone, headed by Dr. Van Sant, of Peoria, and consisting of eight men, brought \$80,000, so that the aggregate amount brought by the forty men must be very large. Provisions in Dawson are not just so plentiful as might be, but there is no immediate fear of famine, although before spring some will have to go on short rations. There has been a considerable exodus, which with shortness of food and candles will greatly lessen the output. Some recently discovered gulches which are expected to turn out well will not be worked this winter on this account. Considerable money taken in has been invested in claims and in many cases the purchasers are coming to the coast to endeavor to sell these claims, most of them hardly developed, at an advance.

A fire at Dawson City on November 18 destroyed a church and a lodging house over it, the lodgers losing all their provisions and outfits. On the 25th another fire destroyed Macdonald's and Machulay's and the Dominion saloons, a meat shop and another building. Loss by the two fires is estimated at \$200,000.

The trip out was made very hard by reason of the extreme cold, the thermometer ranging from 30 to 70 below and at Lake Thagish several parties were caught in a snow storm and had to make their way through soft snow to the coast. The ice along the river is piled up as high as fifteen feet and only the best dog teams can get over it. Many outfits which started down in boats were met along the river, being frozen in and where they have to remain until the ice goes out. A party of police with sixteen horses and twenty tons of provisions were met at Bennett Lake on the way down to Big Salmon, where Major Walsh is waiting for them. The men coming out say the police cannot get through with horses and provisions.

All the men on the Corona are more or less frost bitten and others who started with them could not continue the trip and left at the stations along the route. There will not be many more men out now until after the wash-up. Claims on Bonanza and Eldorado creeks are being worked for all they are worth but on the other gulches many claims will not be touched.

Men are refraining from recording their claims hoping in this way to escape the royalty.

Port Townsend, Wn., Jan 3.—There was \$627,500 in gold dust and nuggets on the steamer Corona, which arrived from Alaska. One of the nuggets weighed as high as 15 ounces. From a careful estimate it is safe to say that in drafts and gold dust, there was about \$1,200,000 wealth aboard the Corona.

Prince Albert Route.

The latest issue of the Prince Albert Times has the following letter from Wm. Spencer, one of Dr. Rae's party of searchers for Sir John Franklin:

Prince Albert, Dec. 17, 1897. The President of the Board of Trade. Dear Sir,—In reply to your enquiries regarding the Prince Albert, Green Lake, Fort McMurray and river route to the north and as a means of entering the Yukon country, I will start by saying that I was for thirty-five years in the employ of the Hudson's Bay Company,

of which time I was twelve years in the Isle la Crosse district, which post is situated on this route and is the headquarters post of the district. Out of this time I was for twelve years in charge of Portage la Loche transport for the Athabasca and Mackenzie river supplies, which passed through my hands in transit for the north and also the packs of furs returning. Each season eight boat-loads, of 75 pieces of goods each weighing 92 pounds for the Mackenzie river district, and from six to seven boat loads carrying a similar amount for the Athabasca district, or roughly, 1,125 pieces, total weight of 103,500 pounds passed yearly over the Portage la Loche on their way inward to supply the posts of the north. Besides this about 300 packs of furs weighing 82 pounds each, amounting to 24,600 pounds were carried over the portage on their way to Canada and the European markets making a yearly total across Portage la Loche of 128,100 lbs. This portage is on the direct, and for over one hundred and seventy-five years, used route between Prince Albert and Fort McMurray and the rivers to the north, a route which is at present much used and would be entirely so were it not for railway communication to Edmonton inducing the company to experiment with the Athabasca Landing and Edmonton route for Fort McMurray, but which is in my opinion proving like many experiments of the company a failure and will be abandoned notwithstanding the large amount of money they have already expended in trying to force an artificial route against what as His Lordship Bishop Pascal describes as "the way nature intended." The number of valuable lives already lost on the dangerous passage of the Athabasca between Athabasca Landing and Fort McMurray and loss and damage of boats, to say nothing of time and expense, must compel this wealthy company for their own interests to abandon a theory and accept the inevitable and convey as heretofore their goods and furs over the old established route via Prince Albert, Green Lake, Portage la Loche and Fort McMurray.

And now as to boats. The company in my time used thirty-two foot keel boats, with a crew of eight men, and carrying 175 pieces. A medium size of twenty-two feet, with a crew of five men, would, in my estimation, be preferable, carrying 40 pieces, that is, 4,000 pounds, or 800 pounds per man. Still, I am of the opinion that for small parties going out the Peterborough canoe of large size is preferable to any class of boat, as the entire distance is down stream to Fort Simpson. If the Laird route is adopted, or Fort Macpherson if the Northern and Porcupine route is used. The weight of boats, with the exception of portages at Portage la Loche, which is quite easy of transit, and a long portage at Fort Smith, is a matter of small consequence, but in ascending the Laird to its source and across to the head waters of the Yukon—or ascending the Rat River East (Husky river) from near Fort Macpherson and down the Porcupine, boats of light draught will be found not only convenient, but absolutely necessary.

I thoroughly agree with Mr. Thos. Scott, an old and experienced officer of the company, in relegating to the past the birch bark canoes. Doubtless this native production has been serviceable, and in the hands of Indians or those accustomed to their use, and

with infinite care and almost constant patching or smearing with gum, can still be utilized, but the Peterborough canoe is in every way preferable. They can be carried across portage with almost the same ease as the birch bark and are stronger and more enduring.

And now, Sir, I cannot see what more I can say. The subject is not open for discussion as to the possibility or adaptability of the route. It is no new scheme for the first time brought before the public, but as I have previously stated is and has been for over 125 years the highway to and from the north of the Hudson's Bay company. In conclusion I have no hesitation in recommending this, the poor man's route to all intending miners anxious to reach the Yukon cheaply, safely and expeditiously. And as any quantity of fish of many varieties and of the best quality can be caught in the streams and lakes traversed and water fowl and game abounds along the line of travel, the amount of provisions should be principally confined to flour and such canned vegetables and fruits as may be considered advisable, thus saving a large amount of provisions and consequent labor and permitting of a longer time spent on the road if desired and the arrival at the destination with a large surplus of provisions. I would certainly, after a careful consideration, give this route the preference to any other.

I have the honor to be, Sir, your obedient servant,

WILLIAM SPENCER.

C.P.R. Traffic Receipts.

Montreal, Jan. 3.—Canadian Pacific Railway company's traffic receipts for the week ending December 31 were \$797,000; for the same week of last year they were \$691,000.

Gold Production.

Washington, Dec. 31.—The director of the mint from information now at hand, says that there is substantial evidence that the world's product of gold for the calendar year 1897 will approximate if not exceed \$240,000,000, an increase of nearly 20 per cent over 1897. The gold product of the United States for 1896 was \$53,000,000; for 1897 it was approximately \$61,500,000, an increase of \$8,500,000. The product of Africa for 1896 was \$44,400,000; returns received up to December 1, 1897, indicate that the gold product of that country for the year will be \$58,000,000, an increase of \$13,600,000. Australia for 1896 was \$45,200,000; for 1897 the indications are that it will be not less than \$51,000,000, an increase of \$5,800,000. Mexico for 1896, \$8,330,000; for 1897 it is estimated that it will be \$10,000,000, increase of \$1,670,000. The Dominion of Canada for 1896, \$2,800,000; it is estimated for 1897 at \$7,500,000, or an increase of \$4,700,000. India's product for 1897 is estimated at \$7,500,000, an increase of \$1,400,000 over 1896. Russia's gold product for 1896 was \$21,550,000; for 1897 estimated to approximate \$25,000,000, an increase of \$3,450,000.

An English syndicate has been formed to erect palatial hotels at various points in Canada under one management. The syndicate will erect hotels at Halifax, Montreal, Ottawa, Toronto and Niagara Falls.