The Market and The Mines

No more interesting subject for gossip is available this week than the proposed new smelter in Tooele county, unless it be the Tintic performers, and the latter can be gossipped about any time. Persons whose business it is to know about such things declare with emphasis that the Tooele plant is not a bluff, to intimidate the American Smelting & Refining company, but a bona fide smelting enterprise. The Utah mine operator who does not hope that the statement is true is, indeed, a grouch. Bad as is the reputation of the Standard Oil company in other states, it can put its shoes under Utah's bed whenever it is so inclined. In other words, the miners of this state are eager to fly from present ills to ills they know not of. If the Standard Oil, alias the Amalgamated, alias John D. Ryan and Thomas F. Cole, really builds a huge custom plant a few miles from the Garfield smelter, it means a fight for business, and a fight between well-matched competitors is exactly what Utah has been waiting for. Not that the direct charges for smelting are so onerous! They cause little discontent. It is the tax in the guise of penalties, undervaluations, etc., that wears upon the nerves and exhausts the patience of the mine operator. He thinks, rightly or wrongly, that strong competition with the Guggenheim concern would cause the modification of the big and little annoyances.

It is acknowledged that a conflict between the Standard interests and the Guggenheims would soon be over, settled either by compromise, consolidation, or absolute surrender, and after that, what? Why, the victor would proceed to put on the screws and make the miners pay the cost of the war! Even so, the day of reckoning is far enough away to permit the interposition of many things; something is always likely to turn up; therefore let the battle proceed. The copper producer, a few weeks ago, and, perhaps, even today, was in a mood to welcome a beneficent despotism such as is exercised by the Standard Oil company over the oil producer. A monopoly confined to the transportation, treatment and sale of copper—a monopoly that would maintain an open market for the big and the little shipper; a monopoly that would maintain the price of the red metal at a satisfactory level—has much to recommend it.

Like the work of woman, as described in the old rhyme, the work of the Utah Copper company "is never done." A year ago the management looked forward to a period of well-earned rest when the Garfield mill should be completed and the Bingham mine stripped of its overburden. But, Alas! now that the last unit in the mill has been touched off and the cap torn from the Bingham porphyries, the servants of the stockholders are confronted by the demand for a railroad from mine to mill and for a larger mill. It is the story over again of the lamp that called for the new wall paper, the wall paper that called for a carpet, the carpet that called for new furniture and the furniture for a new house. It transpires that the Utah Copper can uncover more porphyry at Bingham than the mill can treat, and the mill can treat more ore than the present railroad can haul. Posterity never did anything for the Utah Copper, and the company is not disposed to leave any profit that additional equipment will render available, for posterity. It argues that, with a steamshovel equipment capable of doubling the ore output, a railroad able to haul double the tonnage and a mill big enough to handle 12,000 tons, or twice the present daily capacity, would double the earnings and the dividends of the company. It does look reasonable, doesn't it? Manager Jackling is in New York at this moment with his hand on the pulse of the directors.

Before his departure Mr. Jackling was feeling particularly well over the newspaper comments on the Ray Consolidated Copper company, of which he is vice president. An eastern publication asserts that the work already accomplished on the Ray's Arizona property establishes the presence of half a million tons of copper ore in one shoot—ore than will average from 2½ to 3 per cent. The Ray proposition is so nearly like the Utah Copper in its early days that one can only marvel that the stock of the former commands but $6 a share, while the shares of the latter are quoted around $50.

There is something uncanny about the ease with which the Utah county farmer can produce coin from an empty sock. Talk about Uncle Jesse Knight being a wizard! Why, those beet-raising farmers around Provo have him nailed to the mast in the wizzing business. The collective bucolic sock was first emptied when Colorado Mining dropped from $8. It was emptied again by the drop of Crown Point. The episode of the Sioux Consolidated left the sock wrong side out, yet when Iron Blossom began to be touted, Mr. Beet Grower took the stocking from under the granary and, lo! its contents had been mysteriously renewed! The magic coin was poured into Iron Blossom. Yet by the time Crown Point was recommended as a buy, the agricultural hosiery was again ready to give forth its stream of fairy gold. Either farming in Utah county is a marvelously lucrative occupation or the Utah county farmer is the gamest of the gamesters when he once breaks into the mining stock game—perhaps we will know which after President Roosevelt's commission finds the answer to: "Why is a farmer?"

The wisdom or folly of the farmer et al., in purchasing Crown Point, depends chiefly on the price at which he purchases. The losses hitherto sustained in this share resulted from the overconfidence which sometimes causes the public to pay mine prices for prospect stock. It should not be forgotten that Crown Point is still a prospect, and not a mine. The same caution applies with more or less propriety to all would-be investors in Tintic. The obliteration of those lines which distinguish prospects from mines and non-dividend from dividend paying mines is always a peril to the buyer. It is difficult, however, to classify some shares. Lower Mammoth, for instance, changes from class to class as easily as William Randolph Hearst changes his politics. Now it is assesing its faithful stockholders in order to obtain the means of going to the 2000 level; tomorrow it may be paying dividends, and the day after that it is likely to be pawning its cable for cash to keep a pump going.

Not a few of us are asking ourselves why we did not borrow money and buy Little Bell when that share was selling at $1. Nothing was more certain than the doubling of that price at the first sign of industrial improvement. A hundred dollars in Little Bell at that time would be $250 now. Park City and Alta are being held back by the poverty of silver, but other Little Bells are to be found in both camps without half looking.

Thirty-dollar gold ore, when found in sufficient quantity, is not treated with disdain, but with stamps, in Goldfield, Nevada. The Goldfield Consolidated has a 6-foot vein of the quality mentioned, and the Goldfield papers not only mention the fact, but put a headline over it. The West