

THE story of the life of Charles D. Lane would make an interesting volume. His biography should not be condensed in a sketch, such as may be given in this book to the men who have made the history of Nome. The necessity of brevity will deprive the writer of an opportunity to present a careful and complete study of a sturdy pioneer character. I regret this because there is much in the long and active career of Mr. Lane which would not only be of much interest but of great value to many struggling young men. His life has not been a continuous summer day. There have been times when the clouds hung low and looked ominous, but his courage never forsook him, and he never lost confidence in himself; and herein lies the secret of the men who succeed.

Charles D. Lane is the Nestor of the Nome country. From the beginning his judgment told him that this country was rich in gold, and with the courage of his convictions he projected a great enterprise in this region. The inauguration of this enterprise required the expenditure of millions; its ultimate accomplishment means a great many more millions for himself and his associates. The partial consummation of this work shows his unerring perception of the mineral resources of this country. Realizing at the outset the necessity of a large amount of money to develop his plans, he organized the Wild Goose Mining and Trading Company with a capital of \$1,000,000. The stock was subscribed by himself and a few of his San Francisco and Baltimore friends. This large sum of money was invested in mining properties of Seward Peninsula. With a few exceptions the numerous claims owned by this company were acquired by purchase. For three years the product of these claims was \$1,000,000 the year, but no dividends were declared until the end of the fourth season's operations. The money that was taken out of the ground was expended for improvements, which consisted of facilities for mining work, and in the acquirement of additional property. Many miles of ditches were constructed, a great pumping plant to force the water from Snake River to the summit of Anvil Mountain was erected, and two railroads were built, one from Nome to Anvil Creek and the other from Council City to No. 15 Ophir Creek. At the close of the season of 1904 the company paid all of its outstanding indebtedness and declared a dividend of thirty per cent. I shall not attempt to estimate the value of the company's property, but think I may safely say that it has work in sight on its present holdings for the next quarter of a century.

The man who acquired this property and who planned this work, whose methods permitted the acquisition of this property without the levying of an assessment or the call for a single dollar from the stockholders other than the price of their stock, deserves the credit of excellent judgment and splendid financial ability. To a man accustomed to big enterprises there may be no more difficulty in making one dollar purchase twenty dollars' worth of property than there is in making one million dollars purchase twenty million dollars' worth of property, but the men who are capable of handling the bigger enterprise are not conspicuously numerous.

Mr. Lane was born in Palmyra, Marion County, Missouri, November 15, 1840. His parents were Virginians of Scotch descent. His father was a miller and a staunch old Democrat of the Jackson type. In 1852 Mr. Lane crossed the plains with his father. The family settled in Stockton, California, and engaged in farming and stock raising. Although only a boy of twelve, Mr. Lane began the work of gold mining the first winter he resided in California. In the fifty odd years that have elapsed since then he has worked at mining in every phase, and is familiar with the use of all kinds of mining machinery, from the rocker to the best improved and most modern apparatus. His experience has covered every feature of gold placer and quartz mining. In his work he has had one rule to which he has strictly adhered, and that is, to try to do well whatever he undertakes to do. For a period of his life he drove an ox team, and he is now proud of the fact that he was one of the best ox drivers in the West. Not only did he try to do his allotted work well, but he tried to derive some satisfaction and pleasure from doing it. To use his own figurative way of expressing it, he always tried "to draw a little bit of honey out of any kind of a flower."

His first experience in quartz mining was acquired in Nevada where he obtained a quartz property in 1867 and operated it for several years; but the venture was not a success. He pluckily staid by the mine, however, until he was "broke" and in debt. A part of this indebtedness he liquidated years afterward, when by patient toil and assiduous wooing he had won Dame Fortune's smile. After the unfortunate experience in the Nevada quartz mine, he worked for wages as foreman in a quartz mine at Battle Mountain. He drove ox teams in Nevada and farmed in Idaho. His first successful mining was on Snake River in Idaho. The gold of Snake River was very fine and associated with black sand, but Mr. Lane's method of mining these placers was profitable. He afterward operated by hydraulic methods the Big Flat Mine, of Del Norte County, California.

He was fifty years old when he made the strike in the now famous Utica Mine at Angels, California. This great quartz property had been exploited to a depth of ninety feet, but a great deal more work was necessary to be done to prove its values. This was a trying time in Mr. Lane's life. The work of developing a quartz mine without adequate capital is a splendid test of pluck and persistence. A poor man must have unbounded faith and courage to devote years of unrequited labor to such an enterprise. After three years of unprofitable work his associates became uneasy and wanted to dispose of their interests. Notwithstanding the adverse conditions, Mr. Lane never lost faith in the property; he never lost faith in himself nor confidence in his judgment. He succeeded in inducing Messrs. Hayward and Hobart, San Francisco capitalists, to buy out his partners and supply the money that was necessary to continue the development work. The Utica Mine has produced \$17,000,000 and is still a valuable property. This brief sentence tells the whole story.

The Fortuna Mine of Arizona is another valuable property which Mr. Lane has developed. This mine has produced \$3,000,000. Mr. Lane became interested in Alaska in 1898, at the time of the Kotzebue Sound excitement, and outfitted an expedition to go to this country. He accompanied the expedition and spent a part of the summer of 1898 in this region. After he returned to San Francisco, G. W. Price who was a member of the expedition, made a journey from Kotzebue Sound to Golovin Bay, and was at the Swedish Mission on Golovin Bay when Lindeberg, Lindblom and Brynteson returned from Anvil Creek with the news of the gold discovery on this stream. Mr. Price accompanied the discoverers on their second trip to the New Eldorado, assisted in the organization of the district and acquired some valuable property. Mr. Lane was immediately notified of the great strike, and the following season was the beginning of his extensive operations on Seward Peninsula. Although Mr. Lane is the owner of two quartz mines that have produced \$20,000,000, he believes that a greater success than any of his previous ventures is to be made in Alaska.

This is but a brief and unadorned sketch of Mr. Lane's business career. As a man he is a distinctive type of the pioneer fortune builder, surrounded by an atmosphere of the frontier and yet possessing the instinctive qualities of the educated gentleman. He has been the architect of his own fortune, and has toiled along the uncertain trails of poverty before he walked the highways of affluence. But at all times, whether laboring with pick and shovel, driving an ox team or directing a small army of men engaged in work that has produced millions for him, his character has remained unchanged. He is, always has been, and always will be Charles D. Lane, plain-spoken, straight-forward, frank and honest in his methods, and as easily approached by one of the toilers in his mines as by the man of title or wealth. With him appearances do not indicate the man. He knows that an honest heart and a true soul may be hidden in a body clothed in a jumper and overalls. In truth, I believe he would look for them in this garb before he examined those that wore the raiment of the wealthy.

Mr. Lane's greatest pride is that he is a plain miner. The money he has made has been clean money. It has not caused heartaches and sorrows. There is no blood on it. It was not filched from one class of people to enrich another class. It was drawn from the bosom of old Mother Earth, where it was placed for the benefit of her children. Mr. Lane detests cant and hypocrisy. He believes in work more than he believes in faith. He believes in fair and honest methods, and has little use for the praying money mongers who unload their sins on Sundays and accumulate a new pack during the week. His religion is the religion of justice and charity, a religion of ethics, a religion of work that is helpful to his fellow man. Born on the frontier at a time when public schools furnished but meager facilities for an education, and being compelled at an early age to assist in the work of a bread winner, he did not obtain the scholastic advantages which are the inheritance of the boys of today. But the lack of early educational opportunities has not prevented him from obtaining an education. It may not be a technical education but it is eminently practical and useful. Contact with the world has given him an unerring knowledge of men, and a keen mind capable of comprehending principles has been stored by reading and experience with a vast fund of useful knowledge. He possesses a striking originality of expression and his conversation is illustrated with more pertinent and appropriate anecdotes than have been told by any man since the days of Abraham Lincoln.

D. W. King, a well known newspaper man of the Northwest has written a poem and a toast to Charles D. Lane which I may appropriately use to conclude this sketch. The occasion was the celebration of Mr. Lane's sixtieth birthday on board the steamer Oregon en route from Nome to Seattle. This was a very pleasant incident in Mr. Lane's life, and a number of tributes were paid him in toasts and verse by the passengers. Mr. King's contribution is as follows:

There's an old fellow knocking around out West,

With his grizzly beard and mane—

Reckon I might as well sing out,

I'm referring to Charlie Lane—

Whats had his ups and downs in time,

An' his joys and sorrows, too,

Though now he's flush, on the full red plush

Of Fortune's favorite pew.

He's blazed his trail and packed his grub

'Cross many a high divide;

He's toiled and sweat in dry and wet,

Where the precious metals hide.

Busted and sick of typhoid blues,

He's stood in his last deep ditch,

And cursed his luck like an old woodchuck,

'Fore the mica turned out rich.

Since them old days they's been a change,

For the hardest metals wear,

An' you'd never know unless you looked

At the color of his hair;

An' they say in town when he aint around,

'At his taste is a trifle queer,

For he'd rather shake with "Tough Nut Jake"

Than a bloated millionaire.

He's blazed his trail and packed his grub

'Cross many a high divide;

He's toiled and sweat in dry and wet,

Where the precious metals hide.

Busted and sick of typhoid blues,

He's stood in his last deep ditch,

And cursed his luck like an old woodchuck,

'Fore the mica turned out rich.

Since them old days they's been a change,

For the hardest metals wear,

An' you'd never know unless you looked

At the color of his hair;

An' they say in town when he aint around,

'At his taste is a trifle queer,

For he'd rather shake with "Tough Nut Jake"

Than a bloated millionaire.

I reckon they aint no man we know

That's deserving a better lot;

I reckon there's no one in the game

That's a better right to the pot.

He's won out against the longest odds

In the business of buckin' fate,

And though old and scarred in the battle hard,

He's the same old jovial mate.

They ain't no shine to his make-up, boys,

From his hat to his Arctic sox;

Not even on them old boots of his,

But he's got a heart like an ox.

And I believe some day, when he goes away

To prospect the other shore.

He can give his name whence he came,

And Peter will ask no more.

While the sun of his fortune is highest now,

With him it is long after noon;

He's sixty years old today, boys,

And the shadders will be here soon.

So we'll drink to his health and pray the court,

A receiver for old death's claim,

And we'll let go hard of our friend and pard,

For he won't pass here again.

Then Mr. King offered this toast to Missouri, the native state of Mr. Lane:

We've all abused Missouri,

And sung our songs of Pike;

And laughed to poke some wicked joke

At raw-boned hungry Ike.

But we've got to pull our horses up,

And 'fess up flat and plain;

Can't find no mate to match the State

That gave us Charley Lane.