

comes in. Proceedings have been begun against the Beaver line to compel it to carry cattle without insisting on the payment of insurance in a particular company; and report says the other two steamship companies are to be dealt with in the same way. The contention is that the steamship companies, as common carriers, are obliged to take freight at regular rates, and have no right to say where the shipper shall place his insurance.

THE MINING COMMISSION.

The commission to enquire into the mining resources of Ontario may be expected to throw some light on an obscure subject. But the light can scarcely be expected to do more than make the darkness visible. Mineral resources for the most part lie below the surface, with occasional outcrops perceptible to mortal eye. Appearances are not always what they seem; the extent of the riches in a mine, even after it is opened, is one of the most difficult things to gauge. But the witnesses will not have to tell of opened mines and their probable value; they will for the most part have nothing to tell beyond surface indications; and unless they be mining engineers, rare birds in this region, or geologists, their information will be as likely to mislead as to enlighten. Some valuable evidence may be expected to be given; some disinterested witnesses may make themselves heard, and so far the public will be enlightened. A man may know of the location of some valuable mineral, without the means, the capacity, or the wish to acquire it; and he may tell what he knows for the benefit of whomsoever it may fall to utilize the same. Mineral lands are either under the ownership of the Government, in its capacity of trustee for the people, or of private individuals. There is special need for knowing what minerals are to be found on the public domain; and the Government appoints a commission to find this out, as well as to find out what wealth private lands conceal. Of what there is, on either sort, very little can be known; but what knowledge there may be in the bosoms of individuals ought not to remain unfruitful there, and something will be gained if the commission draws it out.

The geologist and the mineralogist must, after all, be our main reliance. The evidence of a man who mistakes mica for gold is not only valueless, but may lead the public on a false scent. The commission is a means of feeling the way, sometimes groping in the dark, sometimes showing things in the clear light of day. It is only one of the many means of information on a subject which is at once wide and abstruse. We have had some explorations on the North Shore; geology has been at work, in patches, throwing gleams of light here and there; we are now to hear what casual observers have to say. Between interested and disinterested evidence, the proper distinction will no doubt be made. Of all "boomers," the mining boomer is most to be dreaded; his means of deception are infinite, and he seldom scruples to use them to the utmost extent. Deception, here as elsewhere, thrives best on ignorance, and of mining matters the public is helplessly

ignorant. The commission may do something to lighten the general darkness, but it cannot be much; it may do enough to justify its own existence.

The chances are that at this moment, mining boomsters and harpies are waiting in unprecedented numbers for prey. But not all promoters of mining ventures are harpies; mining, like every other industry, has succeeded by honest endeavor. The great need is to distinguish the one from the other. The mining commission will serve a good purpose if it points out clearly the best way to proceed in the development of our mineral resources. What to undertake and what to let alone must be learned otherwise and elsewhere. The danger is soon likely to be not in doing too little, but in doing too much, acting without due discrimination. The fact that a certain mineral exists here or there, over a largely extended area, tells us nothing economically; the question, will it pay for working, remains unanswered. Gold is known to exist over large areas in Ontario and Quebec; but that it can be worked at a profit is a presumption which experience tends to negative, and so far does in a very positive way seem to disprove. Of copper and silver extensive deposits exist, in varying degrees of richness; where workable at a profit and where not experience must often be left to tell. And in mining experience is costly, when the result is adverse a serious disappointment.

Too much must not be expected from the commission under the guidance of Mr. Charlton, but it will give useful points, if we know how to improve them. It will scarcely teach us what to avoid, which in the infancy of mining enterprises is even more important than what to undertake. But we shall be thankful for whatever gleams of light it may show on the subject.

EARLY CLOSING.

Interest in the Toronto early closing by-law is still kept up by the proceedings brought to quash it. This is a many-sided question, in which a balance between good and evil, between overwork and inconvenience, has to be struck. But on the whole the early closing movement is a salutary one, and more can be urged in its favor than against it. Small storekeepers who, man and wife, aided, it may be, by some member of the family, do their own work, feel it to be a hardship that they should not be allowed to put forth their energies, at a time when it best suits their customers to do their shopping. That this complaint is just cannot be denied.

But on the other side there is much to be said. The city, as a whole, can scarcely lose much by the abridgement of the hours during which the stores are kept open. The few casual customers who have come to the city from a distance, and whose time does not permit of retail purchases except after seven in the evening, may be lost. Want of convenient opportunity may cause a few residents to restrict their purchases. In these two ways, the sum of the city's business may be decreased. But we

can conceive of no further contraction to which shortened hours would expose it.

It cannot be denied that purchases have often been deferred till after seven o'clock p.m. which could without inconvenience have been made before that hour. The shortened hours of labor, in some trades, release the heads of families earlier, and this will make earlier shopping possible to the class for whose convenience long hours in stores have been deemed a necessity. Shortened hours will bring relief to a large number of persons of both sexes and various ages. The time gained will be available for recreation and improvement, and if not so employed, it will be the fault of those with whom the option lies. A great deal of expense, mainly unnecessary, will be saved in gas, fire, etc., and this will either go in enhanced profits or to the benefit of purchases, or partly in one direction and partly in another. To the large storekeepers the gain will be considerable: greater than the loss arising from any diminution of business is likely to be.

We have no sympathy with those who are afraid of work, when work has to be done, but there is a limit to what the human frame can endure without detriment to health, and in ordinary times and in ordinary occupations that limit ought not to be passed. On the whole, we feel that we must give our suffrage for the Ontario statute on which the Toronto by-law is based, and for a by-law framed in accordance with the statutory requirement, whether this be true of the present by-law or not.

RELATIVE COST OF COTTON CLOTH IN BRITAIN AND AMERICA.

An interesting discussion of this question is to be found in last week's issue of *Bradstreet's*. The article of print cloth, on account of its simple and uniform character, has become a standard of value in the cotton goods market. When business in this staple is brisk and prices advance, an improvement in the demand for other fabrics is generally expected, though they may be dull at the time. In like manner, if print cloth declines other cotton goods are sustained with difficulty, if at all. The article discusses a report by United States Consul Schoenhof, which makes this same standard fabric the basis of an extended comparison of costs of production.

Mr. Schoenhof, possessing samples of American cloth, undertook to analyse the expenditures for labor in the mills at Lowell. The conditions of manufacturing there are probably not essentially different from those at Fall River, where print cloth is the characteristic product. It was sought to obtain similar statements for the same goods in Lancashire. The only noteworthy difference between the cloths in the two countries appears to be in the number of the yarn, the American mills using No. 28 and No. 36 to No. 38 for the warp and weft, respectively, and the English mills No. 32 and Nos. 40 to 42. The report contains a great variety of statistics in detail, taken from the actual accounts of factories at Lowell, Mass., and Burnley, Lancashire. The principal object of the inquiry was to learn the cost of labor in producing a given