

OUR HALIFAX LETTER.

Recent events indicate that the people of Halifax are beginning to realize the advisability of taking that piece of advice which has been so often tendered to them, namely, to depend on their own exertions rather than on outside assistance for the advancement of the city. About a year ago it was prophesied in this correspondence, as may be remembered, that the withdrawal of the navy and the army from Halifax, although involving an immediate loss of considerable magnitude, would eventually work out for good by teaching the people to seek new sources of revenue-production of a more virile and helpful nature. Whatever is the impelling cause, this is assuredly being done now. There are a half dozen things of considerable importance now before the public in this city, which point to an entirely new spirit among the people. One of these is the interest shown in technical education, which the Board of Trade, the Mining Society, and other influential bodies are discussing and endorsing. Another is the excursion of merchants and manufacturers along the western shore of Nova Scotia. On May 7th a large number of the leading business men of the city will make a three days' tour along the Halifax and South-Western Railway, in order to meet, in a purely social and friendly way, the business people of that part of the country. No attempt will be made to solicit orders, although it is doubtless hoped and expected that orders may come of it.

For some time past there has been under discussion in the newspapers and elsewhere a plan to establish an Industrial Promotion Company in this city, to encourage small industries, and it is now an assured thing. The Council of the Board of Trade, before whom it was put for endorsement have after full consideration endorsed it unanimously. It contemplates a capital of \$250,000, subscriptions payable not more than 20 per cent. each year for five years, the shares being of such moderate denomination as to enable the small capitalist to participate. Only such industries are to be aided or established as shall have received the endorsement of the committee of the company. The scheme is now being put into concrete shape and will be before the investing public shortly. Several large subscriptions have already been promised, and there appears, no doubt, that the whole capital will be secured without difficulty.

The Provincial Government has announced that it will give assistance to the proposed Nova Scotia Eastern Railway on the same terms as it did to the Halifax and South-Western, a loan of \$12,000 a mile, secured by a first mortgage on the road. An Act has been introduced in the Legislature to incorporate the "Halifax and Eastern Railway Co.," composed of H. A. Allan, Andrew A. Allan, and Charles J. Coll, to build this line, which is to run from Dartmouth (across the harbor from Halifax) to Guysboro' with a branch line at or near New Glasgow to Country Harbor. The company is capitalized at \$2,000,000, and construction will be proceeded with at once.

The announcement that the Allans and the C. P. R. will divide the contract for the mails hereafter has caused great satisfaction here, as by providing the element of competition it is hoped we shall be given a more satisfactory service than in the past. The winter service has been very unsatisfactory, the mail-boats usually taking from eleven to thirteen days from Liverpool to Halifax with the mails. There has been no reduction of time during the past twenty-five or thirty years, and the new turbines, which were expected to make such an improvement, were put on only at the close of the season.

An effort is at last being made to divert to this Province a portion of the stream of immigration from Europe constantly passing through to the West. It seems remarkable that such an effort was not made long ago. Mr. Keefe, M. L. A. for Halifax, said in the House a few days ago that he thought it would be a good idea for the Government to have the different counties make up a register of vacant lands, and endeavor to induce some of the immigrants who now go directly West to remain in this Province. The Premier replied that he would ask the House for a small appropriation towards such a work.

The Midland Electric Company, Limited, of Truro, is seeking a charter for the purpose of furnishing light, heat, and power in Colchester County. It is the outcome of a move on the part of citizens of Truro, who are dissatisfied with the present service.

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OUR NORTH OF ENGLAND LETTER.

A new thing in English commercial life is the System Club, which has been formed lately in London. Its founders are heads of very large but dissimilar businesses, who found benefit from sharing experiences when only three or four met for exchange of ideas, and who foresaw that a richer harvest of suggestion would be reaped from a larger fellowship. So, in a quiet way, the club is enlisting leading members of each leading industry and trade and confining its membership to one representative of each. At a monthly dinner a particular problem is posed, and is discussed without too much ceremony, so that every one may be encouraged to contribute to the common stock. The club seems more American than British to our unaccustomed eyes, but as it arose out of a real want, and has already given satisfaction to its privileged few, the inference is that the club is not entirely fantastic. As no guests are admitted and its transactions are secret, one cannot say how much intimacy is shown. No doubt the discussions go somewhere near the heart of affairs, for it would be difficult to picture some of the founders wasting time over the platitudes and rhetoric which characterize conventions we read of, that are held in the States.

An interesting stage has been reached in the conflict between the Proprietary Articles' Trade Association and the Co-operative Societies. The former is, of course, a league of manufacturers who insist that certain prices shall not be cut, and the latter are organizations which give a bonus on sales. Either you stop paying bonuses on purchases of these goods—say the manufacturers, in effect—or you stop selling our brands. So far as the Co-operative Wholesale Society is concerned the matter involves a turn-over of \$100,000, and it is a nice point as to whether the association is not forming an illegal conspiracy in restraint of trade. We shall know better later.

But the point of the matter is that the co-operatives will have very little difficulty in providing passable substitutes for any of these brands under marks of their own. In this sleepy old country the art of substitution has been carried far. I can turn to the advertisements of "specialists" who announce their willingness to supply cough-mixture to match Barker's, of soft-soap to equal Saunderson's, or almost anything to the pattern of anybody else. What they have not got ready the specialists will speedily compound, or supply a receipt for, after a day or two for careful analysis. We do not take these professors entirely at their own valuation, but in these days secrets are ill to keep, and there is considerable transference of them.

Dewsbury, in Yorkshire, from whence a fair proportion of Canada's imports of woollens come, is in arms against the new proposal of the German Government. This is no less than the application of an export tax on rags, equal to sixty cents per 112 pounds. Dewsbury is Rag Fair, and its rag buyers scavenge even in Siberia for the raw material for woollen goods. Between woollen and wool an important difference lies, which the least experienced may detect. Whether, having the rest of the wide world to draw from, the German action can have much effect on English prices remains to be seen. The proposal is one, however, that is worthy of note.

The worst of pension funds provided by employing firms or companies is that they tend to insolvency in a disturbing manner. A few months ago it was discerned that the Railways Clearing House fund, to which various of our railroads are tributaries, was a half-million or so to the bad. But the deficit actuarially ascertained on the superannuation fund of the Midland Railway appreciably exceeds four million dollars. Perhaps the workers will not lose, as the companies are distinctly solvent, yet the instances are not without their