

## BRITISH COLUMBIA.

[This department is in charge of R. E. Gosnell, who is permanently engaged as a regular member of THE COMMERCIAL staff, to represent this journal in British Columbia. Parties in British Columbia who wish to communicate in any way with this paper, may apply directly to Mr. Gosnell at Vancouver.]

## British Columbia Business Review.

March 20, 1892.

Business has brightened perceptibly, although there is a good deal of room for improvement. It is needless to deny that the past six months at least have been trying on business men and it will be a few weeks yet under the most favorable conditions before trade recovers its usual elasticity. The number of small failures, which have been quite out of proportion to other years, is proof of the depression that existed. Spring has opened beautifully and the prospects are for an extremely active season.

During the week notice has been received that all claims for compensation by sealers should be filed before a certain date in the office of the customs, Victoria. The alacrity with which the response to the invitation came was not at all surprising considering the time the sealers have been waiting for the opportunity. So far, and it is believed the claims are all in, about forty statements have been filed aggregating \$500,000. If all these claims are fully recognized there will be very little "kick" about the *modus vivendi*, and from the present outlook the sealers would no doubt accept another *modus vivendi* with compensation attached, in lieu of the profits for the present season.

The project of exhibiting the old Beaver at the World's Fair is hanging fire. It may be that the fact that a prophet has no honor in his own country applies in more senses than one, for British Columbians have in no way enthused over the scheme and the promoters have had to go to the other side to get the stock subscribed. The object is, of course, to make money by charging an admittance fee to see the first steamer that ever rounded the Horn into the Pacific ocean, and then dispose of the hull to some historical or some other society at the close of the exhibition. As a commercial proposition it may pay, but from a provincial point of view it is a pity that we are being robbed of all our objects of peculiar interest by the Americans, and to the United States archaeological and other scientific institutions we will soon have to go to see or to study the landmarks of our own history.

Reports from New Westminster Slate Quarry company are to the effect that the quarry opened up recently at Jarvis Inlet is doing well. A newspaper item says: "Slates are now coming down from the Jarvis Inlet quarries at the rate of two scow loads per week and the company have orders ahead for as much as they can produce for a year to come. Some doubts were held at first about getting a market, but the superior quality of the slate is working its own way. The stone quarries, of which there are now about five or six working, are doing well. The tendency is the direction of using more and more stone in business blocks and public buildings.

In shipping matters have improved in Nanaimo very considerably, there being 22,000 tons represented there and at Departure Bay last week. That means improvement in business and increase in output of coal. The Upton steamers have not been withdrawn between Victoria and China, as reported. The Empresses are carrying large cargoes to and from Vancouver. Up the coast the Danube and Roseowitz are making regular trips and trade is developing. The steamer Premier remains on the Whatcum route, instead of going to Alaska as was reported. Two steamers, the Aurora and City of Nanaimo, are now making the Westminster and Nanaimo route. Between

Vancouver and Nanaimo the Cutch does a steady and growing trade. The Fraser river steamers will be on the route up to Chilliwack again in a few days, and it is thought the Union Steamship Company will enter the field, at least as far as Westminster, from Vancouver. The little Telephone is again running from Westminster to lower Fraser points. Several new steamers have been built and are under construction for general coasting and local trade, while the Sound connection, and the San Francisco routes are maintained uninterruptedly. A new steamship line with Portland has been established. Navigation on the Columbia and interior lakes has been opened and with train communication on the Columbia & Kootenay and Shuswap & Okanagan railways, all the arteries of traffic may now be said to be under full swing. The British ship Thermopylae has arrived at Victoria with a cargo of rice for the Victoria rice mills from Bangkok. The Norwegian barque Ingrid has been chartered to load lumber at Moodyville for Australia, and the German ship Palawan to load at the Hastings mill for the Southwest coast. The British barque Glenborvie with 634,810 feet of lumber for Squiquio and the British barque India bound for Valparaiso have completed their cargoes of lumber at Hastings mills.

In mining there is nothing new to report except that miners are going into the Kootenay country and the advice of those already in is for prospectors not to be in too great a hurry as it will be some time yet before work under favorable conditions can be prosecuted. The contract for testing for coal in Surrey near the Yale road has been let to Sergeant Godfrey, who with a staff of men, has commenced operations. It will not be surprising if he is disappointed in not finding coal at a depth of seventy feet as he anticipated.

The legislative assembly of British Columbia is prosecuting its work with a fair amount of speed and as usual with most bodies of the kind the "ins" and "outs" are contending strenuously with each other. The feature of last week's proceedings was the introduction of two bills dealing with the Crofter scheme, one as a colonization and the other as a commercial project. This in relation to the material interests of the province is the most important measure or measures of the session. They have been brought down under government auspices, and as the administration is tolerably sure of its position there is every probability of their carrying. Unfortunately, lines are divided in regard to it on political basis rather than as to its economic merits or demerits. If the scheme, however, proves successful, as there is every reason to believe on the principles laid down it will have results very far reaching and will memorialize the present session of Parliament as having performed as great a work as any of its predecessors since Confederation (for if the successful development of the deep sea fishing means anything it means, if we keep in view the industrial importance of the Atlantic coast fisheries, a population of 50,000 or more ultimately engaged in that pursuit, with a vast expenditure of capital and a wonderful expansion of our export trade. The scheme, as outlined in the two bills in question, briefly is this:

1st, in the matter of colonization the Imperial Government having agreed to advance the sum of \$150,000 to aid in the settlement of the crofters in British Columbia; by the bill in question the local government is authorized to conclude arrangements for the settlement of not over 1200 families on the west coast of British Columbia, and to borrow said sum in instalments of £10,000 each, each loan to be made upon the completion of the expenditure of the preceding instalment, the province having the power to terminate the arrangements at any time should it appear that adequate success has not attended the venture. Interest at 3 per cent. per annum is to be

charged and payment back for which debentures may be issued, is to be begun five years from the date of each advance and extend over a period of 25 years. Discretion is left with the Lieutenant Governor-in-Council as to the carrying out of the details.

2nd, The other bill is entitled an act to encourage the deep sea fisheries of British Columbia. It provides for the formation of a commercial company with not less than five million dollars capital for this purpose, which has been incorporated in England under the name of the Vancouver Island Development Syndicate, Ltd., and the entering into of arrangements therewith. The object of the company is to carry on the general business of fishing, aiding the colonization of the coast with fishermen by furnishing the colonists with employment and providing suitable requirements, purchasing their fish, the establishment of industries contingent upon the development of deep sea fishing and the doing of many other things relating thereto. The company in question is to receive a grant of not more than 500,000 acres of land on the west coast of Vancouver Island, on islands and ports of islands adjacent and on the west coast of the Mainland as far north as Fort Simpson. These lands are to be surveyed at the company's expense and selected from time to time subject to the conditions and terms of the act, and to be exempt for ten years from taxation. As a guarantee of good faith the company is to deposit the sum of \$100,000 with the government, the same to be returned on proof of permanent improvements having been made equal to that sum. The date of the formation of the company is to be not later than the 31st of December, 1892; the surveys are to be completed in three years and 100,000 acres the first year after formation.

The natural objections raised to the proposal, the importance of which is evident on its face, are: 1, colonization companies have usually been a failure; 2, the assistance of an industry, which properly should be private, by government lands and cash subsidies; 3, the importation of assisted labor, which is likely to come into competition with that of our own population; 4, the granting of so much land to a private company; 5, the undesirability of the Crofters as settlers; 6, lack of security that the conditions will be complied with. These and other arguments are being issued and will be used to oppose the scheme. The project is, however, of an unusual character to which these objections do not apply when fully understood. That the Crofter scheme will be a failure, founded on the non-success of many other colonizing projects, is not a proper presumption, if the conditions are favorable to success as they certainly are in this case. The trouble with most colonies has been that the colonists were not surrounded by the facilities for making a living, and left to their own resources in a strange land they naturally stranded. Not so here. The whole proposition summed up is simply this: The deep sea fisheries of British Columbia are immensely rich in resource; but so far are almost wholly undeveloped, notwithstanding the province as a colony is over thirty years old. To carry on the industry successfully trained fishermen are necessary, fast steamers, a comprehensive cold storage system, land for fishing stations and the maintenance of a considerable population and capital sufficient not only to force the eastern markets against the combins, but to keep the project on its feet for several years until it can be made remunerative. This must be regarded as a huge undertaking for private parties to undertake and development in that way must necessarily be slow. The lands to be given are comparatively useless for other purposes and in any event can only be made more valuable by a population depending upon fishing. The Crofters are fishermen by instinct, are used to just such conditions as they will find on the north-west coast, and as we have no similar population they cannot enter into competition.