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COAL SUPPLY AND STRIKES.

JUDGING from recent occurrences it would appear that the Crow's Nest Pass coal miners are displaying an ill-advised disposition to go out on strike upon the very slightest provocation, the strike this month at Michel, happily short-lived, being a case in point. The men are creating by their tendency in this regard a prejudice against themselves in the public mind, and selfishly injuring important interests in other localities. The feeling of the great body of the people towards mine labourers and workers is that they merit every reasonable consideration that can be extended towards them. Indeed it may be said with truth that the dangerous and difficult nature of their occupation entitles miners, and coal miners especially, to the hearty sympathy of all classes of the community, and the general disposition is to extend to them every protection and advantage to which they can make any colour of claim. Our statute books furnish evidence of this, and the attitude of the press towards miners on strike is cor-

roborative. But this sympathy may easily be alienated, and there is no surer way of bringing about such a result than the course which apparently commends itself to the judgment of the Crow's Nest Pass Miners' Union leaders.

The relation of the coal miners in the locality mentioned towards the mining industry of Southern British Columbia is very intimate. If coal is not mined, coke cannot be produced, if coke is not produced smelting operations cannot be carried on, and without the operation of smelters near at hand the profitable working of most of the British Columbian mines is impossible. A stage has been reached in this province, when by the production of good coke at a moderate price, the provision of transportation facilities and the erection of smelters, the successful working of our copper mines has been removed from the field of doubt. If labour conditions remain tranquil, there is every reason to look for a considerable investment of capital, and the consequent employment of a very large number of people at good wages, and a consequent increased prosperity of the whole community. This harmonious working of the several interests concerned can be dislocated by a refusal of either one of them to act fairly. But if a smelter owner is unreasonable he can be brought to terms. If a railway company is exorbitant in its charges, there is a remedy at hand. The owners of the Crow's Nest Pass coal mines are tied down by their agreement with the Government as to prices. Even if these things were not so, the several businesses mentioned would be compelled by self-interest to take a reasonable attitude towards each other. Capitalists are not likely to be guilty of the egregious folly of rendering each other's investments unprofitable, if they can avoid doing so. Each may endeavour, and naturally will endeavour, to make the best possible bargain for himself, but none of them is ever likely to adopt the suicidal policy of tying up industry, that is, of rendering invested capital unproductive, simply because he cannot have his own way. It is only among the miners that we find such a course favoured. At the instigation of, generally, irresponsible leaders, who in many cases foment trouble only for the sake of justifying their leadership, coal miners do not hesitate to go on strike and throw the whole industrial machinery out