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VICTORIA, TUESDAY, DECEMBER 26, 1893.

"A HAPPY NEW YEAR."

So say we all of us. Within a few days, we shall have embarked upon the doubtful, to some extent, troubled waters of 1894, but, if our craft are staunch, we hope most of us to be able to weather the storms and escape shipwreck. There are many who are never happier than when their every faculty is at its utmost tension in the struggle for life for very existence, but there are many whose highest happiness is found when all is smooth sailing even if the pace be exceedingly slow or if possibly they are calm bound. But all these make up our world; and whichever way the wind blows during the voyage of 1894 we repeat as we began, we wish you "A Happy New Year!"

B. C. SEALERS.

According to Captain J. G. Cox, president of the British Columbia Sealers' Association, who has just returned from England, the London market is in a bad condition owing to recent financial disturbances. He said that he talked over the situation with the firms controlling the London market and said that while there was nothing to boast of there was a sufficiently good prospect to warrant the British Columbia fleet going out next season. Already a number of vessels are on their way to the Japanese coast both from British Columbia ports and the Sound, and it would seem that the entire interest has made up its mind to do the best possible under the disadvantageous conditions which have resulted under the new regulations. We have not noticed so far that any arrangements are being talked of between the United States and Great Britain as to the policing of Behring Sea during the coming season.

THE "MAUD S."

Latest files by the C. P. R. steamship Empress of India bring the judgment rendered in the British Admiralty Court, sitting in Yokohama on the 31st inst in the case of the Victoria sealing schooner Maud S, seized by the Russian despatch boat Yakout on the 29th August last. According to the judgment, the schooner was at the time at a distance of twenty two miles from the southern point of Copper Island, one of the Komandorski group; and of the fifty seven sealskin then found on board, two were described in the Russian protocol of seizure as being "per-

fectly fresh and still wet." The Judge said, after careful inquiry, he was convinced that the seals on board were not killed within the prohibited zone, and in regard to the contention that the vessel which was seized within the prohibited zone, must be considered to be there in the pursuit of seals, accepted the captain's explanation that owing to an error in his chronometer he was out of his course.

The Judge went on to say: "Now, in all this there is nothing in the slightest degree improbable, nor, as will appear, is it any way inconsistent with the statements in the Russian documents—on which alone in consequence of the seizures not having thought fit to produce witnesses, the case for the Crown rests. If, then, I believe the master's account of the matter, he will have discharged the presumption which arises against the ship under the Act from the mere presence within the prohibited zone with sealskins on board, and there will then be an end of the case for the Crown." The Court further dismissed the counter claim for damages, on account of unreasonable delay in instituting proceedings and unreasonably long detention, in addition to the pretension that there was no reasonable ground for detention at all. Each party was adjudged to bear his own costs.

PILOTAGE.

A number of American skippers recently met at Vancouver to discuss pilotage matters in British Columbia. They loudly complained of the exorbitant fees charged here, and gave warning that if they were not reduced they and their vessels would forsake British Columbia waters and carry on their business where they could be at less expense. But, as has been pointed out, if they go to San Francisco, they will have to pay much higher rates. It is for no love of a British port or British waters that they come here; they find it pays them to do so or they would not come. If they stayed away, British Columbia or at least British ships would do the business. Their absence would not, we think, cause either British Columbia merchants or ship owners to lose any of their equanimity.

AS OTHERS SEE US.

The *Montreal Times* says: "It is passing strange that, after the practice has been prohibited for more than a century, any one could be found in British America to attempt to buy lands from the Indians. In British Columbia the attempt has been made, and the signatures of the Indians concerned obtained to an agreement to sell land. Of course, it was understood that the sanction of the Ottawa Government would have to be obtained to make the bargain effective. It would be dangerous to ratify any agreement of this kind, it would give rise to similar attempts, and constant designs upon the Indian lands would crop up. The practice has long been abolished, for the best of reasons, and its revival, even to the smallest extent, should be impossible."

This we take it refers to the endeavors that have been persistently made to have the Songlish Reserve brought into the

city, negotiations for which have been going on for some time. Inasmuch as there are several rings which are interested in this extension of the city limits the proper course for the Indian Department to follow in the event of the city obtaining control over the property by an extension of limits is to pay no attention to any preliminary arrangements that may have been made but to see to it in the interest of the Indians that not one foot of their land be alienated until the highest and last cent is obtained—we do not say at auction—but in the most effective way possible. It is, of course, impossible that anything approaching the notorious Oklahoma land jumping can be carried out; but there are landsharks who would not hesitate to swallow up the poor Indians' property which has been to them for a long time a sort of Naboth's vineyard.

NEW PUBLIC BUILDINGS.

It is announced—and we suppose it must be a fact that the Government has decided to purchase the Canada Western Hotel lot as the site for the new public building at Victoria, the present post-office building to be sold when the new building is occupied, while the Custom house is to be converted into the headquarters for the officers of the Marine and Public Works Department. It is in this way then, we suppose, that friends and supporters of the Government who in their haste to become rich have corralled unprofitable properties are to unload on the public. The Canada Western Hotel site has for long been a source of expense to its owners owing to the demands for interest and charges, and though it was for long declared impossible to secure for Victoria needed public improvements, when these could be secured and friends of the Government directly benefited at the same time, it was found not to be impossible to set the slow going Departmental machinery at work.

It is to be hoped that the country will not be forced to bear the loss sustained by those patriots who only sold out because their's had been a losing venture. They should not be allowed any profit on their investment for no matter how well they may have made their original purchase, save and except for the value of the excavation work, the property is worth no more then it was when acquired by the syndicate—if as much. We are glad to see that something is to be done in the way of Dominion Government improvements; but we still hold that it would have been better policy to have extended the Postoffice building to Langley street, to have built additional storeys, and to have established there both the Postoffice and Custom House. We do say that it is really too bad that matters are so managed that, with respect to many public enterprises, it's hard to hide the indications of jobbery. However, we suppose that the thing is done; let the work go on without delay, and let every one keep his hands as clean as he can.