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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.

April 30, 1892.

Weather has just opened fire after a period of dull coldness that was not favorable to the growth of vegetation or the best thing in the world for business. As a result progress has been slow and it may be that the fruit crop will be injured as it was last year by the chilling of the flowers. The backwardness of spring has been unusual and has had a decided effect on the general situation. This has been marked in the interior, and especially in the Kootenay where operations have been delayed a month longer than expected. The snow is not off the mountains yet. So far as comfort is concerned it has been anything but unpleasant, but it has not been what the farmers call "growing weather."

However, the weather whatever disappointing effects it may have had in other respects, has in no way chilled the promoters of town-sites which just now in the interior flourish like a green bay tree. Balfour, Eldorado, Pilot Bay, Columbia, and a number of others have been laid out and each one promises to be the chief distributing point of West Kootenay, and if we believe all we read lots are selling rapidly in all of them. We may expect that kind of thing to continue until conditions settle down. It is hard just now to say which of those many "prospects" will eventually be realized, one apparently having as good a chance as the other at the present time, so much depends on what may turn up in the future. It is the old story of the western towns over again, some will win and some will lose—the very uncertain lottery of speculation. Nelson just now appears to be in a hopeful mood and conditions are favorable for its growth into a considerable town. It is well on in the race for supremacy. The great danger to be feared in that country is too much speculation and too large a rush for the present development of the mines. It is well enough to talk of the great wealth of minerals and the excellent prospects, but it must not be forgotten that Kootenay is a quartz mining district, where miners cannot make a living by unaided efforts as in placer mines. They depend upon capital to develop their claims, and any persons acquainted with the conditions of mining know that progress is of the slowest possible character, that it will take at least

two years before, with good speed, a mine can be got in operation. When the many disappointments and delays are taken into consideration and the expense of completing smelters and making roads to the mines and all the rest of it that is not allowing too much time as the minimum. In other words it means some considerable time before mining properties can be made labor-employing, except so far as preliminary operations are concerned and in the meantime a large population must be supported, speculation speedily runs up to the limit of values and before the legitimate business of mining is commenced the reaction will have set in from which mining activity itself will not enable it to recover for some time. Of course, the building of roads, smelters, houses and so on will give employment to large numbers, but if the great danger of feverish speculation, involving loss of capital, depression and the other well-known results, is to be avoided those whose interests are at stake should set their faces against inflation and take steps as far as possible to wisely direct the inflow of population.

J. H. Brock, Winnipeg, has been in the province interesting capitalists in the proposition to establish a local board of directors of the Great Western Life Insurance. It is understood that a large amount of stock has been subscribed.

Fish are becoming more plentiful, salmon especially being offered at cheaper rates. Cod halibut and sturgeon are plentiful. The second car lot of fresh salmon has been sent to New York, and this phase of the salmon industry may grow to proportions second only to salmon canning itself. The steamer Iona has returned from the north with another cargo of halibut, 20,000 lbs in all, which is being supplied to the local trade. Halibut properly treated can be kept on ice for a month at least in good condition. A local paper speaks of "a shipment of frozen salmon." That illustrates a popular error. Fish are not frozen for export because freezing spoils both fish and flavor. Fish are packed in boxes surrounded by finely broken ice. They do not freeze, but are simply kept at a very low temperature.

At the Vancouver board of trade a matter was brought up of somewhat serious character. The report in a Victoria paper was headed "How settlers are treated. An immigrant's difficulty in searching for land." In order that the full purport of the matter may be understood the report in question, which is a fair representation of the case, is reproduced from the Telegram: "At a meeting of the board of trade, last evening, J. B. Ker brought to the attention of the board the case of Rev. Mr. King, a retired Episcopal clergyman, who had officiated in a poor parish in New York for some time past, but who, on account of poor health, had been compelled to abandon his calling, and had decided to come to this district with a view of going into farming. Mr. King, he said, before breaking up his home in New York, wrote to

the department of the interior and agriculture at Ottawa for information concerning this province, and had been informed that he could secure suitable land in the railway belt at \$5 an acre, or could purchase or pre-empt provincial lands on most favorable terms. He was also directed to write to the immigration agent at Vancouver for further particulars. When he arrived at Vancouver he found there were no government lands available in this locality, but was given maps of the upper country by the immigration agent, with what were said to be good farming lands marked on them, well located and open for purchase at \$5 per acre. He was also told that he could get full particulars in regard to these lands at the government offices at Vernon. Mr. King then proceeded to Vernon, where he interviewed the government agent, who told him that the lands marked on the maps he had been given by the agent here were located on or near the summit of a snow capped mountain some 50 or 60 miles away. In reply to his further enquiries as to the possibility of purchasing other lands in the Okanagan district, Mr. King claims that he was informed that there were none to be had, that all the available farming lands had been already purchased."

There is no doubt about it that many of the statements published abroad apparently under authority are misleading. Not intentionally or with knowledge of deception, but because information is not explicit enough as to the actual conditions and the class of settlers required, which accentuates the necessity of British Columbia having representatives in the east and in Great Britain who are thoroughly well informed, and not mere disburbers of literature—concerning the truthfulness of which they are totally incompetent to express an opinion—and supplying conventional information which is about as useful to an immigrant as one leg to a table. This is not true in every instance, but there is a great deal of "rot" both *pro* and *con* circulated about this province in a missionary sort of way, pointing to the necessity of better and more authoritative methods. This particular case of Mr. King, however, is not one calling for much sympathy. Whatever inducements were held out to him to come to Canada, he was certainly well informed in Vancouver, as to the character of the country in Okanagan, where he could not have expected to have obtained land at \$5 an acre, land such as he wanted. Mr. King unfortunately belongs to a class of men who fancy they have rights to special consideration, and because he was a clergyman expected land for nothing or at very low prices. Failing to receive that consideration he thought to pose as a martyr. This is a good country for clergymen as a rule, but there are not many instances on record of their dealing in real estate at half rates.

An admirable move has been made by the fire insurance men of British Columbia. Representatives of the board of underwriters for the different cities met at Victoria last week and organized a provincial association. Over thirty companies were represented. It was arranged to hold provincial meetings annually, for the discussion of topics of interest to the business. The election of first officers of the British Columbia Underwriters' Association was then proceeded with, the following gentlemen being chosen to bear the honors of office: President, Richard Hall, Victoria; first vice-president, H. T. Ceperley, Vancouver; second vice-president, C. H. Woods, Westminster; secretary-treasurer, F. G. Richards, jr., Victoria; executive committee: Messrs. Pierson, McKenzie and Ross, Westminster; Greveley, S. O. Richards and Banfield, Vancouver; and Nicholles, Eggs and Monteith, Victoria. Among the matters discussed was a uniform rate for the the province outside of the cities and also a uniform scheme of reporting on all risks. Electric wires—a new source of uneasiness to insurance men came up, and the expert supervision of the placing of wires was discussed. The matter was left to local boards to act upon independently, Westminster already hav-