

THE BRITISH COLUMBIA COMMERCIAL JOURNAL

ISSUED EVERY TUESDAY AT VICTORIA, B. C.

SUBSCRIPTION - - \$2.00 PER YEAR.

Advertising Rates on Application.

D. M. CARLEY EDITOR-IN-CHIEF.

L. G. HENDERSON . . . BUSINESS MANAGER.

Office—No. 77 Johnson Street.

VICTORIA, TUESDAY, AUGUST 8, 1893.

COAL TRADE DEPRESSION.

The situation in the coal trade of the Nanaimo basin is, at the present time, sufficiently serious. The East Wellington Company—whose production is not very extensive—altogether shut down its mines, and now the New Vancouver Coal Company has been forced to restrict the output to half the usual amount and to reduce by 20 per cent. the wages of all operatives earning \$3 per day and over, those earning less than that amount having to submit to a 10 per cent cut off. When first the contemplated reductions were spoken of, the men appeared disposed to regard the movement as the entrance wedge of a general permanent reduction. They then appointed a committee to wait on Manager Robins with a counter proposition, which was not accepted. Finally, the men and the manager came together and had what seems to have been a frank and full discussion of matters.

From the statement made on behalf of the company, it seems that, during the last eighteen months, there has been a loss of money in working the mine, and any dividends that had been paid had accrued from other sources. But for the financial crisis, which prevented their customers paying cash, not more than a reduction of five per cent. would have been asked for. At the present, said Mr. Robins, the simplest way would have been to have shut down, but there being other matters to consider, the company asked the men to help them up the hill, which being surmounted, things might be expected to go on smoothly. The result of the straightforward personal appeal on the part of Mr. Robins, who has all along acted in such a way as to inspire confidence in him and his methods, was that by a vote of 380 to 90 the men acceded to the request of the company.

The crisis which had to be met by both masters and men was a very serious one and but for the previously existing good relations, there would have been trouble. Too much credit cannot be given to all the parties for the manner in which they came together and grappled with the emergency, and we sincerely trust that the expectations of those most directly concerned will be realized and that the depression in the coal trade will be only of short duration.

[Since the above was written, the men at work at the East Wellington mines and the company have arrived at an arrangement by which operations were continued at a considerable reduction.]

ADULTERATIONS AND COUNTERFEITS.

It may be safely said that there never was a good thing that was not adulterated or counterfeited wherever there was a possibility of imposing on the consumers or the users, and we therefore look upon these departments of the public service whose object is to detect and to punish frauds of this kind as among the most useful. We have more than once drawn attention to the manner in which the public has been imposed upon. Even in the matter of sauces, pickles, etc., by the use of in many cases original bottles aided by counterfeit labels which have been prepared, possibly not in the *ipsissima verba* of the originals, but present so general a resemblance as to be to all intents and purposes a presentment of the original amply sufficient to deceive. It is true that of late we have not heard so much of this kind of thing as there was at one time, owing to the action of the original makers, still if not in the articles previously referred to there are yet among us glaring instances of something which is not quite straight, and which may commend themselves to either purchasers or settlers because they may be obtained at a lower price or may secure to the storekeeper a trifle larger proportion of profit. One fraud which will appeal to everyone is the gilt edge butter compound, which aims to make two pounds of butter out of one, the expansion consisting in a liberal proportion of milk with a corresponding reduction in the amount of butter fat.

The deception that has been practised in the matter of wines and spirits will be familiar to every one of us, if not from actual experience, from what at least we have read, and the periodical reports that are issued from Ottawa continually manifest how in the actual consumptions of every day life, even in the least expensive article, the process goes on. A recent report from Ottawa announces that the laboratory branch of the Department of Internal Revenue is engaged upon the analysis of vinegar, which it appears is extensively made out of a strong acid obtained by distillation from wood. This may not be injurious to health, but it is nevertheless an imposition, and it is to be hoped that whenever possible the authorities will be co-operated with. People are entitled to the article for which they pay and may justly be expected to be furnished with what they ask for. To give them anything else is quite as dead a steal as if their money were forcibly abstracted from their pockets or surreptitiously taken from their houses.

VICTORIA'S WATER SUPPLY.

Unless everything goes for nothing, as it frequently does in connection with municipal matters in Victoria, the city may yet become joint owner with the present shareholders in the Esquimalt Water Works Company's franchise and plant. The company offers to sell to the city one half of its present stock for \$200,000, which according to the managing director, Mr. Theodore Lubbe, would

be spent in extending the works and completing them, but principally in laying the 24 inch main necessary to give connection with the present city service. The corporation would own its own city services, as now, and collect all the water rates as at present. Should the offer be accepted, the city would buy the water from the company in which it would own a half interest, paying six cents per thousand gallons for it.

This departure figures have been cited to show would mean an annual expenditure by the city of \$52,325, made up of interest on \$200,000 at 4½ per cent., six cents per gallon for one and three-quarter millions of gallons, and the expense of collecting water rates from the citizens. The company would receive from Esquimalt, and the city of Victoria for water \$13,325 nett. Half of this or \$21,662, would constitute its dividend upon the investment, while in addition it would receive as now \$56,000 for water rates, or in all \$77,662, or a surplus of receipts over expenditures of \$25,337, about 12½ per cent. on the investment. This is supposing that the consumption of water is no greater than at present, and the figures are those of the company. These no doubt can be readily verified, as well as those as to the capability of the works being equal to all that is said of them. Moreover, it is claimed that from Goldstream can be obtained all the power necessary for whatever electric concerns there may be in the city as well as for the requirements of other machinery. The subject is one of special interest particularly since we are all aware that something must be done to substitute something for the utterly inadequate and really impure supply now obtained from Elk Lake, that from Goldstream being pure, clear and cold.

DOMINION FISHERIES.

The fact that the fisheries yield of the Dominion was last year almost twenty millions in amount and four times greater than it was in 1860 is certainly matter for congratulation, and still, as we all know, there are great possibilities on this Pacific Coast upon which but a mere beginning has been made. The Crofter proposition, about which so much was said and which was to be so important an element in Vancouver Island, seems to be for some reason or another held in abeyance, and the very uncertainty regarding it may perhaps serve to dissuade individuals from taking up what it was announced was to be undertaken by corporate enterprise under Government auspices. We observe that at present the export of fresh salmon from the Fraser River aggregates 30,000 pounds per day, a large proportion of which finds its way to New York. This, it will be borne in mind, is of the one article, but what a trade might there not be worked up, were our halibut, herring and other fish systematically handled and made the most of! At any rate, at least for the present, their supply is practically inexhaustible. Why should not our great Province go to work and make the most of all its boundless resources which, at the same time, are so varied?