

The Colonist.

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 Per week, it delivered..... .90
THE SEMI-WEEKLY COLONIST.
 Per year, postage free to any part of the Dominion or the United States..... \$1.50
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THE BUSINESS SITUATION.

At this season, more especially as we are entering upon what so many predict to be a new and extended era of development for the Province, it will be of interest to review the present business situation, with reference to the year just closed and the prospects for the near future. In our regular New Year's edition in which a supplement is devoted to a review of the Province for 1896, containing statistics of trade and commerce, and facts indicating the progress of that period, the data supplied were decidedly encouraging to those who have been looking forward to a return of prosperity. It is natural to look for hopeful signs and to be sanguine for the future even where the encouragement is but slight. The late depression set in the business community has, at the beginning of each year, hoped that that year would turn the scale in its favor, only, we regret to say, to suffer disappointment. The actual volume of trade was well maintained throughout, but conditions continued to be discouraging and bad.

Now, however, we may fairly say that the record of the past year places it beyond doubt that times have improved. The returns we have published show a healthy expansion of business; but, in addition to and more important than that, the tone pervading the commercial community is buoyant and strong. Wholesale men, the state of whose business is a safe barometrical guide, report that the volume of transactions has not only increased, but that the character of trade is better and the method of doing it greatly improved. Accounts have been reduced to a thirty and sixty day basis, and collections are prompt. From the standpoint of profit and permanency the latter considerations are much more important than increased volume, but when we find both conditions existing our satisfaction is greatly enhanced.

The retail trade in every instance has not had the same satisfactory experience, but these are sure to follow, provided credit is properly restricted and business is kept within the limits of legitimate demand. The tendency among retailers is always in the direction of too much book-keeping, overstocking and extreme competition. The Province as a whole, and Victoria in particular, has suffered in all these respects.

With regard to the industries of the Province, and we refer more particularly to manufacturing establishments, we cannot speak with the same certainty as concerning the wholesale trade, but from inquiries we find that demand is better and prospects are decidedly improving. In fact, the conditions which have affected wholesale trade have reacted favorably on our industrial interests.

One important fact is to be noted, that the increase of trade noticeable, so far as it can be attributed to a specific cause or referred to a particular locality, has arisen largely out of mining developments directly or indirectly, and those firms which have taken advantage of, and sought for trade in, the channels thus opened up have been those most largely benefited. This is significant of the prospective results of the mining industry, as it assumes the anticipated proportions, and emphasizes more strongly than can be expressed in words the great necessity for augmenting the facilities of communication with the mining districts.

The other large industries have had varying fortunes. Coal mining has suffered severely owing to the low freight rates, which stagnated the San Francisco market; but this is a condition likely to

improve materially on account of the foreign demand for wheat. The lumber trade has not been as healthy as could have been desired, but it has improved, and, we believe, is on a much better basis, with prospects of continued improvement.

Salmon canning has experienced good sales and a large pack. Apprehension, however, is felt in some quarters on account of the prospect of overloading the season's pack and the new canneries starting into operation and under way. To what extent these fears are well founded we are unable to say.

It has been a decidedly bad year for sealing, both as to the number of seals caught and the price of skins. The future of this industry, as it appears at the present time, is not of the brightest. The increased restrictions under the Paris Regulations, and the probable decrease in the herds, render the success of future operations doubtful. In the event of the industry being entirely "gushed," it may be possible that a few of the schooners here, which have been a source of great profit to this city, and to the Province at large, may be utilized for deep sea fishing, but that is extremely problematical, if not out of the question.

Perhaps one of the most gratifying features of the past year has been the success of the farming community. After a series of years of ill luck, either in the way of poor crops or low prices, or from other causes, there has been a bountiful crop, and during the latter part of the year a good demand, at good prices for spot cash. We are informed that farmers have never succeeded so much in disposing of their produce so early in the year. Agriculture is now beginning to assume that importance in British Columbia which makes the success or failure of a season's crop felt as an influence in trade. Heretofore it has never been counted upon as a factor as in other provinces where farming is a staple and a stable industry. There is, perhaps, no more encouraging indication of progress than this, because despite the discouragements and disappointments of the past there is room for a large consistency of farmers in British Columbia and the capabilities of its farming lands under cultivation are sufficient to meet the demands of home consumption for all time to come, and probably afford a surplus as well. Looking, therefore, at the situation as a whole from a purely business point of view, the record of 1896 has been most encouraging, and the outlook for the future is hopeful to a degree which should inspire confidence generally, and stimulate every business man to exert his best energies during the year upon which we have just entered—a year which, let us hope, will be as fruitful in results as it gives promise in the bloom of anticipation.

THE B. C. SOUTHERN.

With respect to the remarks of the Times last evening on the subject of the land grant to the B. C. Southern, it is simply necessary to say that what the Colonist stated was absolutely correct. It was never intended that the Act of 1894 should carry the land subsidy to the coast, nor was it so understood. Of course the Times makes the most of a statement which was the result of a misapprehension, or of the intent but the letter of the law. It had been known and understood that the Act as passed gave a right to a land subsidy of 15,000,000 acres, how was it that the Legislature gave to the Columbia & Western land which was included in the grant and belonged to the B. C. Southern until it was forfeited? The question was not then raised, as it assuredly would have been had the position of affairs been known. Upon this point the Times is significantly silent. It endeavors now to convey the impression that its admission that the land grant would have been objectionable. It referred to the grant in the "original form," but it forgot to qualify the statement in that way when it made it. How was it that this watchdog of the public interests never discovered the "iniquity" of the transaction until it was pointed out by Hon. Mr. Blair? It was on the ground and if it knew, as it apparently professes to have known, that the Act of 1894 was as it is, should it not have raised a warning voice before? Its delinquency in this respect is remarkable, in view of its present attitude.

INFORMATION TO BE GIVEN.

Everyone who has lived any length of time in this or any of the newer provinces of the Dominion must have noticed that there has been, even among intelligent people in Great Britain, a great want of knowledge of the conditions of life in Canada. This country is looked upon by many, despite efforts that have been put forth to spread information regarding the conditions of Canada; as a sort of wilderness, where the comforts and conveniences of civilized life are not to be obtained, or, on the other hand, it seems to be imagined that a youth brought up in the midst of luxury, and without having learned any trade or profession, has only to be sent to the colonies to secure the employment which he had not the influence, or perhaps the acclime to get among his own friends in his own country. While there were so many misconceptions

about Canada in the Mother Country it is rather a matter of wonder that so many immigrants should have succeeded than that a few, overpowered by difficulties they were not prepared to meet, should have given up the struggle to maintain a respectable existence and live amid surroundings they have neither the means nor the energy to render suitable either to their education or their former station in life. But in future no one in England need be without the fullest knowledge of the life they will have to lead in the colonies, for it is announced that the Imperial Institute has made arrangements for the delivery in London of courses of free, popular lectures on the Colonies, adapted more particularly to the working classes. The lectures are to be descriptive of the colonies, and especially of those to which emigration seems desirable. They will be delivered by lecturers who have intimate personal knowledge of particular branches of the Colonies, and will give the climatic conditions of life, cost of living, rates of wages, natural resources and requirements of each colony, indicating where openings exist for extended colonization and immigration. The first course will comprise four illustrated lectures on Canada, by qualified authorities on the subject of the Dominion's resources. These lectures will be of great benefit both to Canada and to intending investors and emigrants in England, there can be no doubt.

EDITORIAL COMMENT.

In the *Scapellato* "a Frenchman" gives his views at length in regard to the depression in France. He says that it is not the high death rate that is blame-worthy, but the low birth rate, while the defective vitality cannot be laid to the charge of poverty. "The richer a Frenchman is," continues the writer, "the fewer children he has—the rich, the educated, the cultured are the culprits. The French people do not choose to have families." After discussing the subject in a plain and cogent manner, the writer inquires: "Should we not blame the decadence of an effete civilization in which refinement is pushed beyond the limits of reason?"

U. S. MINERAL PRODUCTS.

New York, Jan. 2.—The Engineering and Mining Journal contains statistics of the mineral product of the United States during 1896. The production for 1896 is given with a total value of \$53,511,488, showing a decrease as compared with 1895 of \$2,689,286, or about 5 per cent. This decrease was largely in pig iron, which in quantity was \$10,949,987, a decrease of \$28,383,377 from 1895. A large part of this was due to the lower value of iron ore, which other iron products, very little resulting from the smaller quantities. The production of aluminum shows an increase of 400,000 tons over that of the year before, for the year being 1,300,000 tons. The production continues in the hands of a single company, the Pittsburgh Reduction Company, which reports that the tons is reported in the production of an iron, which came wholly from California. In copper the total gains which are reported in the United States were more than absorbed by the extraordinary exports for the year, which are the largest on record.

The gold production of the United States in 1896 reached the total of 457,000,000, a gain over 1895 of no less than \$10,169,800. This extraordinary advance which far surpassed the gain reported from any other country in the world, puts the United States in the lead of the gold producing countries. Our output of gold was no less than 26 per cent of the total output by the entire world.

The production of pig iron has been in 1896, 8,768,800 long tons. The depression in business which made itself manifest in the latter part of the year, had less effect than had been anticipated, the decrease from 1895 being only 577,499 tons, or about 6 per cent. The production of lead from the domestic ores in 1896 amounted to 178,717 short tons, an increase of 20,863 tons over that of the year before. In addition to this there were 79,000 tons produced from imported ores, or refined from imported bullion.

The output of silver for 1896 was 38,012 flasks of 75 pounds each, showing a decrease of 936 flasks from the previous year. The production continues to come wholly from the California mines, no new deposit having been developed to the producing point during the year. The production of silver from domestic ores reached a total of 45,465,175 fine ounces, a decrease from that of 1895 amounting to 865,009 ounces only. There were also produced or refined from foreign ores and bullion by United States smelters no less than 40,000,000 fine ounces of silver, making a total quantity refined or put in final marketable form in this country 85,465,175 fine ounces. Of the silver obtained from foreign ores, it is estimated that 38,000,000 ounces came from Mexican ores and bullion and 2,000,000 ounces from materials brought from Canada, chiefly British Columbia.

The total production of spelter for commerce for the year 1896 amounted to 77,084 short tons, a decrease of 4,070 tons from that of 1895.

The increase in coal was not large. The output in 1896 was 141,770,069 tons, gaining over 1895 of 4,371,769 tons. On the other hand there was a decrease of 6,782,057 short tons in the anthracite production, this amount being greater than the gain in bituminous. The total coal production was therefore 134,988,012 short tons, and the total decrease, as compared with 1895, was 2,410,305 short tons. The production of coke showed a gain of 445,276 tons, chiefly due to the activity of the iron and steel trade in the earlier part of the year.

CANADA'S RESOURCES.

In the course of an extended interview published in the *Citizen*, of London, England, on the 12th ultimo, the Conservative leader in that reported to have expressed himself in regard to several subjects of special interest to this province as well as to the Dominion at large. The following are extracts from that paper:

"What account the line between Canada and Australia?"
 "That is a most valuable line, and one of the most important services it is performing to-day is to carry Canadian wheat to Australia to supply the deficiency of the wheat crop in the southern colonies. It has been the means of establishing the most important trade between Australia and Canada, which will be greatly increased when we get the new fast line of steamers between the United Kingdom and the Dominion."
 "And now, Sir Charles, with regard to the grand Canadian Dominion, of which you are so distinguished a representative, what, may I ask, were the prospects when you left?"
 "Canada, as you know, occupies as large a portion of the continent of North America as does the United States—that is to say, the country lying to the south. I do not, of course, take in Alaska to the north, which is practically a desert. The climate is everything that can be desired for European colonization; in fact, there is no more healthy or invigorating climate in the world. Its resources are simply boundless and inexhaustible. Its fisheries are unequalled, its forests rival anything that can be found in any part of the world—more so, in fact, than those of the North American continent. Its mineral wealth is at this moment attracting the attention of the world; coal of the finest bituminous quality is found in enormous quantities both on the Atlantic and Pacific coasts—there is none in the United States—and gold is found in every province in the Dominion. In Nova Scotia, on the R哈利 river in Ontario, and in Manitoba great discoveries have been made, and important developments are taking place. In British Columbia the output of gold, silver and copper within the past twelve months is represented by a great many millions of dollars, and yet it is quite evident that the discoveries are only in their infancy. The Le Roi mine alone, at Roseland, in British Columbia, has already paid a quarter of a million dollars in dividends, and this is only one of a number that are being profitably worked. Then, again, the world is at present dependent upon the nickel mines in Sudbury, Ontario, and New Caledonia for the entire supply of that important metal. All the warships of the United States have been armor-plated with nickel steel from the Sudbury mines in Ontario."
 "What about the proposed new fast Atlantic steamship service between the mother country and Canada?"
 "As you are doubtless aware, the Imperial Government and the Canadian Government joined in providing a subsidy of £80,000 a year for ten years for the purpose of placing three steamers on the line between Vancouver, Yokohama and Hongkong. These steamers were built by the Naval Construction Commission under Admiralty supervision, and are now being put under Admiralty supervision so that they may take on at a moment's notice the necessary armaments to form Royal Naval Reserve cruisers. The Imperial Government has agreed to contribute £75,000 a year. These steamers are to be of the class of the *Tonic* and *Majestic* of the White Star line, and are to be built under Admiralty supervision so that they may take on at a moment's notice the necessary armaments to form Royal Naval Reserve cruisers. The Imperial Government has agreed to contribute £75,000 a year. These steamers would bring even New York within easier distance than it is to-day."

"That is so, Canada being 400 miles nearer to America than New York would enable us to deliver mails and passengers in that city quicker than by any direct line now existing. Such a service would also bring Quebec, Montreal, Toronto, and all the Western States very much nearer to the country than they are now, and by means of the great transcontinental line of railway across from Montreal to Vancouver such a line would appreciateably lessen the distance between Europe, Japan, China, and Australasia. We are now able to deliver letters from Yokohama in London by the Canadian Pacific railway and steamers in one half of the time required by the Suez canal, the next shortest route, which is a most striking instance of the value of the proposed new service."

G. H. Hadwen, Duncan, is a guest at the New England.

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THIRTY-NINE

RUSSELL VS.

Prisoners Withdraw Justification (Case)

The "Times" on General Walker Dynam...

LONDON, Jan. 7.—The Scott-Russell libel case, occupied by the speech of defence of the male defendant, Justice Hawkins referred to the alleged misconduct of Lady Scott also expressed the sworn statement of erick East, the groom of the chamber, but not consumption in Holloway was the only evidence produced in support of case. The justice, however, this request.

Sir John Lubbock County seat at the solicitor her mother's hand for his affectionate was passing towards for Lady Scott said the judge it was clear the justification did not in behalf of his therefore withdrew the for the male defendant Ayloot, and he refused to rule in Justice Hay resist a verdict again withdrew their plea for the libel case. Russell, said his client the course the defence but deeply regretted that taken before the court, cross-examine the defendant was postponed until prisoners being allowed. The bimetallic case, one of its members, Mr. now in Boston, request a wreath and to attend Gen. Francis A. Walker in the Times on the Walker says: "His greatness in Great Britain, much as the honor of one of the fairest and advocates of bi-metallic giving the deceased's reputation as a public man length, the Times consider, it is improper to publish the substance further the avowed Wolcott's visit. Sent he welcomed here. Mr. McKim's conduct more acceptable opinion in English hostile than before. Nothing can be hoped except as a political salve to the libelers his mission is certain, whatever the charges, think the present an opportunity to meet the question, which is not at an event, the metal case, metalium appears to have according to American domestic press. The vanouver ish Premier, declared ports circulated regarding cabinet changes are chamber was present. John Daly, who was from prison after a conviction of being a dy speech on the subject to a densely-packed Holborn town hall yer of societies march previous to the protest enthusiasm. Daily cries of "God save the King" were heard, and the nature of his describing of the subject. The Bank of England remains unchanged at The Chronicle's special cific cable commission report. It says the der for a Fanning, led from 21,517,000 to 21,5 to whether a 12, 15 or ute cable is laid.

U. S. TARIFF

Senator John Sherman following statement of correspondent of the posed to the creation of a commission because I believe roughly competent tariff or other economic doubtful in my mind were created congress ate it. People who far vision do so on the ground dealt with as a purely This is an imputation ability and patriotism does not look well enough not to go unanswer of fact, politics play in the creation of a tariff people assume. A tariff bill are being the several business country that are inter hearting.

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