

GOVERNMENT TELEGRAPHS.

It is stated, on the highest authority, that Premier Abbott will introduce or cause to be introduced a bill, the main object of which will be the placing of the telegraph under direct control of the Government the same as in Britain. In the latter country, the telegraphs have not been a department productive of any profit. Can it be expected that there would be any difference here? The Dominion Government's conduct of the Intercolonial railway has not been successful from a financial or any other point of view. Is it possible for them to do any better with the telegraph wires? The scheme is a big one, and in carrying out would be productive of much ill feeling, because it would be complained that its object is to increase the patronage of the ministry, while in addition it would be objected that this and that piece of administrative policy would have been designed for the mere object of controlling votes.

SLOCAN LAKE.

Few individuals or journals have spoken more strongly than we have done on the subject of land grabbing and in condemnation of the practice, which appeared to have become a settled policy, for individuals to claim and be allowed to acquire for purposes of speculation large quantities of provincial lands. Much has been said against the system which had so mischievously prevailed, but which there were indications was going to be a thing of the past. There have been, however, many persons who, latterly, have not hesitated to say that in connection with the Slocan Lake Lands the action of the Government in connection with the property which had been "reserved," was intended to take it away from certain individual grabbers and place it in the hands of what may be termed a corporate grab. However, the papers on the subject recently laid before the Legislature show that the Government have so far acted judiciously, inasmuch as so soon as they knew that the land had been grabbed by a few speculators, it put a stop to their manoeuvre and would not permit a few men to take advantage of their position and their knowledge of the country to the disadvantage of the industry and enterprise of honest settlers.

ELECTRIC WIRES.

There can be no wonder, in view of the many expensive experiences on the subject, that municipal authorities and fire underwriters should have undertaken to deal with the subject of electric lighting and other electric wire connections. It is well known how easily a fire is caused by the contact of two wires, and, with many people, the opinion prevails that as one step in the direction of preventing fires insurance inspectors should be especially careful when they examine properties, to see to it that in the buildings themselves there are no hidden or open wire connections which by any process of action can be productive of fire. In some places the municipal authorities have their own electric wire inspectors, and in others the rule obtains that overhanging wires of all

kinds must be done away with and conducted under ground. Victoria ought not to be behind. She can secure all this before overhanging wires become a source of danger as well from their weight as from the fires they are not unlikely to be the means of causing.

PILOTAGE.

It is announced that the Nanaimo pilotage authorities have intimated their intention to put on a steam schooner for the purpose of allowing vessels to take on or discharge pilots in the vicinity of Race Rocks. This would appear to be a move in the right direction; but the question not unnaturally arises of how this action will be regarded by the authorities and the pilots of the Victoria district, who and whose arrangements cannot fail to be affected more or less by the action thus contemplated. In this way, vessels instead of putting on or discharging their pilots as now, would, it so seems, have to perform that duty at some other point. Whatever be done should be with the hearty concurrence of all concerned, otherwise the condition of affairs may be even worse than before.

EDITORIAL NOTES.

THE latest private China telegrams with export figures show that the total shipments of tea from all the ports amounted to 63,150,000 lbs. on the 5th February, against 65,750,000 lbs. at the same time last year, and 90,500,000 lbs. in 1880, the export of Congou from Shanghai being 26,000,000 lbs., against 27,000,000 lbs.; and of green tea 5,800,000 lbs., against 5,000,000 lbs. last year.

CANADA is the only colony under British rule that is without a law regulating the practice of conveyancing. In a case before the divisional court, the other day, the Chief Justice drew attention to the great injury that sometimes results in permitting work of this kind to be done by real estate agents, and not by a person who thoroughly understands the business. It is suggested that the matter could be remedied by provincial legislation.

THIS is the day of immense business combinations, yet we notice from a Philadelphia paper that what is termed one of the most gigantic schemes that has ever been projected in the leather trade is being attempted by a combination of English capitalists, whose agents or representatives have been for some time in the United States, being nothing more nor less than the consolidation of the tanneries of the United States into a trust or syndicate, with headquarters in the east and a local office in each state. The English syndicate has already been formed, and one million pounds of its capital stock has been subscribed for. The names of its members have not yet been made public, but are stated to be among the most prominent leather merchants in that country. The inducement which the syndicate holds out to the American tanners is an entirely new process of tanning leather by means of a liquid that practically eliminates time from the operation. Under the old

method, it takes from forty to fifty days to tan a calfskin, while with the new process it can be accomplished within ten hours. In addition, the reduced cost of tanning, material, labor and machinery brings down the tanning to 50 per cent. of its present cost. This new method would doubtless effect a very great reform, but our American friends are not what we take them for if they do not insist upon having the full lion's share of all that is to be had out of the departure.

AS TO TOWNSITES, ETC.

To the Editor of the Commercial Journal.

SIR,—I must confess that I am very much surprised at THE COMMERCIAL JOURNAL remaining silent while attempts are being made by certain real estate agents to float several schemes, which, if encouraged, will result in the disorganization of trade in this city. It is the mission of a commercial paper, I have always understood, to advance the interests of legitimate trade and expose the wiles of the real estate agent, who only desires to put money in his own purse, no matter how much the merchant or the unsophisticated workman suffers. To the persistent efforts of townsite boomers much of the present financial stringency can be attributed. The true merchant is never caught by these enterprises, but young men and young women who have worked hard for their money are led to believe that by investing in townsite property they will double on their investment. The result is that money which should be circulated in legitimate trade channels is thrown away on worthless townsite property, the only person benefitted thereby being the heartless real estate agent, who very often is incapable of earning a living in any other way. I have examined into the possibilities of one or two of these schemes, and really they are so unworthy that I am surprised that any person can be entrapped into having anything whatever to do with them. I would also direct your attention to the fact that lots are sometimes sold to persons who are directly or indirectly interested in the firm handling the property, so that others may be induced to purchase property that is not within ten miles of even a habitable shanty. By giving this your attention you will be fulfilling the promises you made as a commercial newspaper.

MERCHANT.

In reference to the above it might be said that THE COMMERCIAL JOURNAL has spoken very plainly on this subject several times. We have drawn attention to the fact that property in Victoria, Vancouver, New Westminster and Nanaimo was about the only kind that could be handled with any degree of safety. If, as "Merchant" alleges, "stool pigeon" practices have been resorted to in connection with these "townsite" sales, we shall, upon satisfactory proof, expose the matter. In the meantime we will keep our readers informed on the subject.—ED. COMMERCIAL JOURNAL.]

The Telegram, Vancouver, will shortly be changed from an evening to a morning paper.