of our province as a rival to the famous gold fields of South Africa. Mr. Norman represents an English syndicate, composed of the most astute financiers in London. Mr. Norman has just come from the Kootenay country, where he was accompanied by his expert, Mr. J. H. Clemes, the well-known English mining engineer, for the purpose of finding out whether there were mines there which the syndicate would find it profitable to take hold of and develop. The syndicate is not "making experiments," as Mr. Norman put it in a late interview. "What they want are mines sufficiently developed to show that they will pay for working. He did not feel justified in saying what he had accomplished in Kootenay, but had no hesitation in stating that he was favorably impressed with what he had seen, and had found much greater development in the mining industry than he had expected when he left England." The syndicate do not propose to confine their attention to any one district, but will extend their operations to any portion of the province, as may be thought advisable. Mr. Clemes is still in the interior continuing his examinations. Mr. Norman will probably visit the Alberni country before leaving for England. The syndicate, Mr. Norman explained, was really the offshoot of a well known financial group in the "city," which was already largely engaged in developing mines in other parts of the world.

## The Union Coal Mines.

Experienced capitalists as a rule, do not invest large sums of money in developing and improving their properties without first satisfying themselves that such expenditure is likely to prove profitable. That the Union Colliery Company are this year expending fully $9,000 per month in improvements, besides $150,000 for washers and coke ovens, is the best possible evidence of their faith in the Comox coal fields.

The Union mines are situated about eleven miles from Union Bay, where there are large wharves at which ships of the largest size can be conveniently and quickly loaded. A railway carries the coal from the mines to the wharf. The company has no charter for the line and carries passengers free. The travelling public would further appreciate the cheapness of the eleven mile trip, if a car suitable to convey passengers were placed on the line, nothing better than a box car being at present provided.

The mines were first opened in 1888. The output has increased from 300 tons per day to over 1,000. Three slopes are now worked, the most important being No. 4, or Lake mine. There is here a five-foot seam of excellent coal. Experts have declared it to be the best coal on the Pacific Coast for steam purposes. The British admiralty has recommended that it be used by the men-of-war on the Pacific station. The United States navy, after making tests of coal from numerous mines, found it second only to the coal from the Cardiff mines. The mine is at present down about one and a half miles. The machinery is costly and of the latest design. All pumping is done by electricity. There are also electric cutting machines, which have proved very successful in level places, but which do not work so satisfactorily on the steep grades. A Mitchell tipple is used in the dumping of the coal into the cars. The Shepherd washer separates all rock from the nut coal. The fine coal from the washers is caught in tanks and is used for the manufacture of coke. Cunninghame & Co. have built for the company a Luhrig washer at the wharf, which will wash 600 tons per day. A new mine has recently been opened. It is known as No. 5 shaft. The seam is a continuation of No. 4. The shaft is down 610 feet. Some very heavy and expensive machinery has been manufactured and placed in position at this mine by the Albion Iron Works, Victoria.

The principal market for this coal is in San Francisco, about 18,000 tons being shipped there every month. The local trade is steadily increasing, the C.P.R. Co., C.P.N. Co., N.P.R. Co., Australian mail ships, *Empresses*, Victoria Tramway Co., and city electric light being among the principal consumers. The company has now under cultivation a farm of 160 acres. The ground is being cleared for the building of round houses and repair shops.

Cunninghame & Co. have, in all probability, secured the contract for the building of one hundred coke ovens at the wharf adjacent to the Luhrig washer. These ovens will produce one hundred tons of coke per day. The 2,300 tons of brick to be used in the building of the ovens will shortly arrive from England. The coke already manufactured from Union coal is of an excellent quality, some consumers preferring it to English coke. These ovens should prove a profitable investment, as they consume coal that is suitable for no other purpose.

The manager of the Union Colliery Company, Mr. F. D. Little is kept busy directing these numerous works. In him and the other officers, G. W. Clinton, paymaster; T. W. Russell, underground manager; A. McKnight, chief engineer, and F. B. Smith, surveyor, the company has an efficient staff.

The people are optimistic enough to believe that ere long they will hear the whistle of the locomotive on the line of railway from Victoria. Whether this line will be a portion of the British Pacific or the extension of the E. & N., they care little, so long as they receive more frequent communication with the outside world. At present the district is reached by the *Joan*, a commodious and comfortable passenger steamer built by the Albion Iron Works of Victoria, at a cost of $75,000.

Union has grown so rapidly that it would not be recognizable were it not for that double row of whitewashed houses that reminds me so forcibly of Union three years ago. The new town, sometimes called Cumberland, is built on a high and healthy site. It contains a number of two-storey business blocks and a number of handsome residences. This rapid growth is caused by the development of the coal mines, on which the prosperity of the town entirely depends. As an indication of its rapid growth the two sawmills of Grant & Mounce are kept busy supplying lumber for the mines and for building purposes. Besides these, the Urquhart Bros. ship a large quantity of lumber from their mill at Courtenay.

## The Goldfields Co.

Hon. Mr. Turner, premier of British Columbia, just home from a prolonged visit to England, was asked recently if he had any knowledge of the standing of the men who were the chief stockholders of the Lillooet-Fraser River & Cariboo Gold Co. Mr. Turner stated that, when the company was announced to the public, he made careful inquiries in quarters where the information he sought could be best supplied. He was assured that the gentlemen concerned were among the first in the European financial world and that their names were a sufficient guarantee of the standing of any company with which they were connected. Over half of the stock, £135,000 was taken up by the following well known financiers:

Henri Rosenheim, of the Anglo-French Exploration and the East Rand Exploration Cos, and principal controller of *Societe Generale*, one of the greatest bankers in Europe.

Jules, Baron de Machiels, senior partner of J. de Machiels & Cie., bankers, Paris, with branches in Amsterdam and Berlin.

Gustave, Baron de Rothschild, of Rothschild & Cie, one of the two senior partners.

Baron de Hirsh.

Gabriel Tueni, banker, Bayreuth.

Max Leon, French capitalist.

Henry Marie Leon Say, the millionaire sugar monopolist.

Tursog, Tursog Freres, Constantinople.

Wallart, of Wallart & Cie., bankers, Brussels.

J. Scott-Montague & Co.

Goetz & Co., bankers, Berlin.

Hon. Mr. Turner considered these a very formidable array of financial names, and well entitled to the statement, made by Mr. Barnard, that they were among the first financiers of Europe.

Mr. Turner also made inquiries concerning the company represented by Norman & Co., of London, with equally satisfactory results. Mr. Norman is now in British Columbia, investigating its mining fields.