

First Real Estate Deal in British Columbia.

By HAROLD SANDS.

WITH land selling at over two thousand dollars a front foot on the principal streets of Vancouver and with prices going up in all the chief cities and farming districts, it is not out of place to recall the first real estate deal in British Columbia. Chief Maquinna, of the Nootka Indians was the party of the first part and the buyer was Captain John Meares who, in 1788, purchased land at Friendly Cove, Nootka Sound, Vancouver Island, for which he paid several sheets of copper and some rum. The following year the Spanish war vessel *Princessa*, seized the land, although Captain Meares, to use his own words, had "hoisted the British colours thereon." This action of the Spaniards was the foundation of the quarrel between Great Britain and Spain which almost caused war and which ultimately led to Vancouver's expedition and the occupancy by Great Britain of the Northwest Pacific Coast.

Meares followed up his real estate deals at Nootka by others at Port Cox, Port Essingham and the country bordering on the Strait of Juan de Fuca. In his memorial to the government of King George III, protesting against the Spanish seizure, he said he obtained the land "in consequence of considerable presents," and that he took possession "in the King's name." When the Spaniards captured Meares they threatened to hang him at the yard-arm and he mentions that they indulged in some minor Inquisition tricks which were not to his taste or to that of his officers and men. He begged leave to hand to the cabinet of George III, "a statement of the actual as well as the probable losses which he and his associates sustained from the unwarrantable and unjustifiable proceedings" in open violation of the treaty existing between Great Britain and Spain. He asked the crown to take the proper and necessary measures "to obtain that redress which he and his associates, as British subjects, have a right to expect."

Captain Meares' statement shows in detail that his actual losses were \$153,433 and he placed the probable losses at half a million. The British Government was prompt to take action in regard to this real estate deal and the seizures of Captain Meares' vessels which happened at the same time.

The result was far-reaching. It destroyed Spain's power above California and forever disposed of the ridiculous claim of the Court of Spain to the sovereignty of the whole west coast of America, from Cape Horn to the sixtieth degree of north latitude, which was the assumed limit of Russian occupation on the continent of America in those days. Meares' real estate deal, then, was, in a way, more important even than the great deal by Uncle Sam whereby the United States secured Alaska from the Russians. Great Britain should have outbid "your uncle" in that latter purchase, but Canada was only one of "those damned colonies" to British crown ministers of that era.

First Miners' Union in B. C.

By HAROLD SANDS.

AT a time when terrible details have come from Idaho concerning the Western Federation of Miners, it is pleasant to recall the humorous incidents which accompanied the formation of the first Miners' Union in British Columbia and the no less ludicrous death of the organisation. The union was born at Nelson in the early part of 1891. As it was the first time the boys had had a chance to join anything except the fire brigade, most of the old-timers of the Kootenay town figured as charter members. Old Tom Collins, one of them, confesses that there was no great need of the organisation as not many men were engaged in mining near the town then, and most of these were developing their own properties and so really belonged to the mine owners class. They joined, nevertheless, for the fun of the thing. They looked upon it as more or less of a lark.

An assayer named Ellis, who had recently come from Butte, Mont., where a union was in full swing, was the first president. Like lots of other good movements the union was shipwrecked on a constitutional question. The wagon road to the now celebrated Silver King mine was being constructed in those days and Dan McDonald cut one foot severely with an axe while working on the construction. That accident was the real cause for the "bust up" of the first union. Dan had joined the or-

ganisation in the first flush of enthusiasm, but he quickly forgot to pay his dues. In the opinion of many members a little thing like that should not have debarred him from sick benefits. But President Ellis was an Englishman who spelt constitution with a capital C.

"I would like as much as anyone to help Dan out," he said, "but the constitution says that a member in arrears is not entitled to sick benefits and the constitution must be upheld. We can't defy the constitution."

John Houston, who afterwards was Mayor of Nelson for several years and represented the city in the Legislature, argued that Dan's mishap gave the union a chance to show that it was of some use to the camp. "Let's fit the constitution to meet Dan's accident," he exclaimed, "instead of fitting the accident into the constitution."

Half the members supported Ellis and the rest agreed with John Houston. The debates grew spirited, even torrid on occasion, but it was impossible to break the deadlock. At last the union got sick of the subject, and it was impossible to obtain a quorum at the meetings. The organisation, therefore, gave up the ghost and turned over the money in its treasury to the local hospital.

But Dan never got the sick benefit fund, unless the hospital failed to send him a bill.

Do We Reason?

IN a recent book entitled "True and False Democracy," Professor Butler of Columbia has the following remarkable paragraph:

"When we endeavour to direct public opinion or to study its genesis, we are surprised and astonished to find how small a share the ordinary individual has in making up his own mind; and while claiming independence, how largely he is dependent on forces and influences with which the student of psychology and of history is very familiar. This is due, in the first place, to the very small part which genuine thinking plays in the life of any of us. We are a bundle of reactions, and those reactions which are systematically directed by serious and sustained thought are not very numerous. Except for the purpose of living up to our reputation as human beings and for emergencies, most of us could get on very well with considerably diminished brain surface. Dr. Maudsley put the matter correctly when he said: 'To say that the great majority of men reason in the true sense of the word, is the greatest nonsense in the world; they get their beliefs as they do their instincts and their habits, as a part of their inherited constitution, of their education, and the routine of their lives.' The part which we thoughtlessly attribute to thought in guiding our beliefs and our actions, is really played, for up Republicans or Democrats, Presbyterians or Episcopalians; we do not reason ourselves—as a rule—into the one form of belief or the other, be it political or religious. We find our way naturally into a group or class by reason of hereditary tendencies, family example, or influence, and that impalpable either of surrounding opinion, which despite its impalpability, regulates so much of our mental breathing. Then we energetically support our faith-formed convictions with ex parte reasons which appeal to the intellect. Like the Schoolmen, the motto of most of us is—Credo, ut intelligam. We believe first and defend our beliefs afterward."

A Story of Town Lots.

THE West is busy selling town lots. Some purchasers have made money in the game; some have lost. Some will make money in the future, some will lose. It all depends on the lots. A story is told of a Western gentleman entitled to have "Honourable" printed in front of his name, who has made a considerable fortune selling town lots to Eastern purchasers. An Eastern friend burst in on him at Ottawa and upbraided him for not having let him (the Easterner) in on certain "good things." The Honourable calmed the angry one with an apology and a statement that he had actually forgotten to tell his friend about it. "Look here," he said, "I can make up for it. I have twenty good lots in — that I can give you at \$40 each." The Easterner took them and handed over the cash without a question. He has since learned that they are about two miles from the railway station in a little town of 800 inhabitants and are worth about \$5 apiece.