

British Columbia Trade Letter.

(SPECIAL CORRESPONDENCE.)

VANCOUVER, Feb 23,—During the past week the weather has stiffened up considerably, and has been severer than anything experienced this year. Yesterday the sleigh bells were heard for the first time, and last night was the coldest of the season. The effect of this has been perceptible in the stiffening of prices and the suspension of building operations, and advances are looked forward to in eggs, potatoes, hay and oats, fish and vegetables, although any extended cold weather is not anticipated at this season, and is so unusual as to be greatly commented upon. Business is good all round, considering that this is invariably the duller portion of the year.

Last week New Westminster suffered from a very disastrous fire, by which the citizens of that place lost some \$250,000 worth of property, including the finest block in the city. The result has been to inaugurate a policy of strict fire prevention and the removal of all explosives outside of the city limits.

In shipping the week has not been uneventful. The steam ship Parthia left port with over 2000 tons of freight, the ship Spartan arrived from Manila with 1000 tons of raw sugar for the sugar refinery, which is now largely supplying the provincial market, and the steam ship West India has arrived from Liverpool by way of the Horn with general merchandise consigned to Victoria and Vancouver merchants. The West India is the pioneer vessel in the British Columbia and Australia route, and will ply between Vancouver and Australia. There are two ships in Burrard Inlet loading lumber for foreign markets. It is also announced that the Union Steamship Co., of Vancouver, will put a new steamer similar to the steam ship Islander on the Vancouver-Nanaimo route and place the Catch on the route to Portland in connection with the C. P. R. China boats, while two smaller boats will ply between Vancouver and points on the Fraser river. It is understood that the Premier will be taken off the Sound route owing to railway connections having been completed, and that, the Islander being placed on the Alaska and coast routes, a new steamer will ply between Victoria and Vancouver. Increased facilities have been provided for the coasting trade in British Columbia which is rapidly growing.

It is now pretty well settled that the hop industry will be undertaken this coming summer, for which this province has many valleys admirably adapted. The fact that Washington territory alone exported \$2,500,000 worth this last season, and that the principal market is Great Britain, should be sufficient inducement for our people to go boldly into it.

Owing to the unusual demand for British Columbia coal in San Francisco, and the protracted strike at the Dunsmuir mines, the mines of the New Vancouver Coal Co., have been doing an enormous business, the output reaching 2500 tons daily. It is said that the strikes among the Australian miners having been settled that the Australian coal will again find an American market and the price likely to go down.

Real estate in the cities has had no unusual features of late, but a good deal of property in outside towns. Liverpool, Mission, Vernon, Steveston, Centerville, North Vancouver, Huntingdon, Nelson, Revelstoke, and so

on — is changing hands. The warning words of THE COMMERCIAL editor in regard to this matter have been duly appreciated by your readers here, but there is a decided difference between most of the new towns started in British Columbia and those which were boomed in Manitoba. While a similar danger exists, so far in British Columbia most of these have by their situation sufficient hope of growing to be good sized and prosperous villages and towns, and therefore at present prices investments may be regarded as safe. However, it is so easy to pass the limit of legitimacy that the remarks of THE COMMERCIAL are most opportune.

Up in the mining regions, there is every prospect of great activity next summer, so much so that there is an urgent demand for more railways. Care will be exercised by the legislature, however, that in any charters granted trade of the interior will not be diverted into American channels, as there was great danger if some charters asked for had been allowed. At Nelson, some of the mines, notably the Silver King, are giving evidence of being extraordinary rich. And the possibilities are that the Revelstoke smelter will have sufficient ore to smelt by the opening of navigation on the Columbia. Unusual attention is being attracted to the Okanagan country, a good many settlers will go in there this summer, where much more land is obtainable than is generally supposed. For general farming purposes it is the best section of British Columbia.

Politics here as elsewhere in Canada is engaging attention but not nearly to the same degree as in the east. For the first time, however, party lines are beginning to be drawn, and Liberal opposition is developing to a greater degree than was at all expected, and in a few years political parties will be just as decided as anywhere. This province will go Conservative as usual this time.

Game is much more plentiful, but salmon and other fish is yet scarce.

Current prices are as follows: Meats—Dry salt, 10½ cents; breakfast bacon, 12½ cents; roll bacon, 10½ cents. Lard, in pails, 12 cents; in tins, 12½ cents; in tubs, 11½c; Chicago lard, compound, 12c. Sugar—Granulated, 7.00 per lb.; and yellow 6½c per lb. New Japanese rice 5½c per pound, New Chinese rice \$75 a ton. Salmon, salt, \$9 per 290 lbs. barrel and canned, \$4.50 to \$5.50 per case. Shorts, \$26 per ton; chopped feed, \$32 to \$36; bran, \$25; wheat, \$35 to \$40. Flour: Manitoba Patents, \$6.00; Manitoba Bakers, \$5.55; Oregon flour, \$5 to \$5.25; Rolled oats \$3.50 per sack; oatmeal, \$3 to \$3.50; cornmeal, \$2.50. Oil cake, \$40 per ton. Potatoes, \$22.50 per ton being the usual price paid; oats \$35; hay \$18 per ton. Turnips and carrots, \$10 to \$12 per ton for common, and \$15 per ton for table use; onions, natives, \$4 to \$5. Best pickled eggs, 22c per doz. Eastern fresh eggs 27, fresh ranch eggs 30 to 40c per doz. Butter—Cooking, 10 to 17 cents per lb.; dairy, 20 to 23 cents; creamery, 25 to 28 cents. Oranges—Riverside seedlings, \$3 to \$3.25 per box. Washington navels are quoted at \$4.75 and \$5 per box, and California seedlings at from \$2.75 to \$3.75 per box. Ontario apples are worth \$1.75 per box, and Oregon apples, \$2. per box.

Conservative speakers and writers appear to place too much importance upon the loyalty

cry in the present political contest. To be sure in the United States the unrestricted reciprocity movement is almost invariably looked upon as meaning annexation ultimately, and one of the leading journals of the republic has declared that every vote cast for the Liberal policy will count for annexation. In Canada, however, it cannot be truthfully said that it is a movement for annexation, though it may appear that way to outsiders. The Conservative party have by all odds the best of the argument in the practical trade questions involved in the contest, and to the more independent electors it appears unnecessary to make so much of the sentimental aspect of the case. If there are annexationists in Canada, they likely will be found with the Liberals in this contest, but there are also many supporters of the party whose last thought would be annexation. It does appear, however, that there is a question of honor, if not of loyalty to the Empire, in the issue. At the present time Canada is under the protection of the British empire. The United States has treated us in a very unfriendly manner in the Behring Sea matter. We demanded protection from the Empire, and we received it. The firm stand of the home government prevented the seizure of our ships in Behring sea last summer, and Great Britain still stands in the breach ready to protect our interests this year. Now it is proposed to admit the products and manufactures of the United States free, and raise the duties upon imports from Great Britain. This is the only possible way in which the policy of the Liberals can be carried out, no matter by what name they characterize that policy. We propose to increase the tax upon the manufactures of the country which is defending us, and admit all imports absolutely free from the country which seized and confiscated our ships. Is this fair or honorable? We should at least first relieve Great Britain from any responsibility of defending us, before we attempt to carry out such a policy.

There is another aspect of the unrestricted reciprocity question which has not been taken into account. The home government would be called upon to ratify any unrestricted reciprocity treaty between Canada and the United States, before it could go into effect. Could we reasonably expect the British government to ratify such a treaty? One leading English journal has recently declared that "Canada will never be allowed to favor a foreign nation at the expense of the Mother country, while she remains a portion of the Empire." This is only reasonable. The British government is at the present time withholding its assent from a treaty arranged between the United States and Newfoundland, for the reason it is said that this treaty discriminates against Canada and other countries. This may to some extent be taken as a precedent that a treaty discriminating in favor of the republic would not be ratified in the case of Canada. Supposing the British government would say: "We will ratify this treaty, but we will place a special tax upon products coming from Canada, in order to provide a fund against expenditure incurred in maintaining the integrity of the Dominion." This would certainly cause an outburst of resentment in Canada, though the proposition would be in keeping with the policy of the unrestricted reciprocity party.