

NELSON.

(From Our Own Correspondent.)

This month the Hall Mines announced that their mine (the Silver King) and smelter would be closed down on the 15th instant. This will entail loss of work to some three hundred men. The Dominion Copper Company which owns several properties in the Boundary district, also announces a close down. The number of men employed there is not known, but the present action at Rossland and Nelson and Boundary probably affects 1,000 men. Of these about one-half are union men and the organization, without outside help, cannot stand their being transferred from subscribers to pensioners. At the present time of writing (14th February) it is said that the union has decided to raise the embargo against men working in the Slocan mines, which will result in the re-opening of all those properties. This action, however, is probably only anticipated by a short time, as the union has received one or two heavy blows in that locality. The first of these was the successful introduction of outside labour by the Payne. The second was the persistent habit of the men on strike of spending their dollar a day, which they received from the union, on whiskey, letting the storekeepers and boarding house keepers have the benefit of their custom on credit. These latter worthies were getting tired of the honour. The men themselves are

getting tired of the tyranny of the unions and will be only too glad of a change of circumstances, which permits them to go to work again. As it is, half the men at the Silver King, the Athabasca, the Granite, and other mines, are union men working in defiance of their union rules. But "one must live" is the motto that effects miners as well as others. Many of them are honest, straightforward men who are too proud to live on charity when plenty of work at ample wages is to be had for the asking. It must be remembered that the case of the miner in the Western part of this continent has nothing analogous to that of the 'piece workers' of Europe and Eastern America. There, it is a question of a living wage. His earnings barely permit a workman to live. Anything in the shape of the mildest luxury is unknown to him and how he clothes himself and his family is a mystery. Here, the miner is charged from \$5.00 to \$7.00 a week for his board and lodging and he has the balance—at least \$60 a month—to spend as he likes. He is seldom married, and if he is his wife lives comfortably and anything like want is unknown.

The hardships of the present close down will fall upon the non-union man. It is no fault of his that he now finds himself out of work, with at any rate a month or two of winter yet upon his hands. Some relief will come to him in the construction of the railway from Nelson to Balfour, just about to be commenced, but it is a poor consolation, as the wages will probably be small—\$1.75 or at the most \$2.00 a day, with accommodation considerably inferior to what is afforded at the chief mines.

The closing down of the Hall Mines is not altogether owing to the labour situation. It is the natural sequence of the course which the Board of Directors in London, contrary to the advice of the officials on the spot, has thought fit to adopt. Ever since Mr. M. S. Davys was appointed superintendent of the mine, some years ago, he has never failed in his reports to

the directors to warn them that sufficient attention was not being paid to the development of the reserves of ore, and that at the then rate of working, the available ore would be speedily exhausted. The time has arrived when the prediction of Mr. Davys has been fulfilled. There is practically no more ore in the upper workings, and the new shaft and its drifts to tap the deeper deposits are about six months short of completion. If there had been no close down in the Slocan, sufficient ore would have been obtained from the different mines with which satisfactory contracts had been made to keep the smelter going, and the smelter would have paid the piper or rather the miner, for the progressing development. Unfortunately that source of revenue was cut off and the board in London supplied no other. A closing down was not to be avoided.

The War Eagle at Rossland is in somewhat similar least \$60 a month—to spend as he likes. He is seldom only lack of certain machinery are more easily relieved. This, at any rate, is the reason given by the management.

It is announced to-day (February 16th) that the strike in the Slocan is off. Doubtless your special correspondents in that district will send you full accounts of the collapse of the union and the resumption of work. From the miners themselves and especially from union men one hears nothing but expressions of relief and gladness at the turn events are taking. The bulk of the men had no love for the union and its leaders. The language in which they express their contempt for the latter is picturesque, if perhaps a trifle forcible and would be quite unfit for your columns. Still it is the language which the majority of Westerners constantly use and by its vigour one can judge of the intensity of a man's feelings.

The miners' unions of Kootenay were organized by men from across the border. There was a sufficient leaven of miners from Montana and Idaho here to spread the propaganda amongst our honest but somewhat easily led Canadians, and so they fell beneath the baneful yoke. Now they are rejoicing in their freedom.

A miners' union in itself is a good thing and benefits owners and men alike. Could one only be formed on proper lines and not under the leadership of ruffians from the Cœur d'Alenes and other desperadoes, it would lead to the best understanding between the men and their employers.

A strict quarantine is being maintained against the districts of the United States in which at present there is an epidemic of smallpox. The Board of Health has ordered compulsory vaccination and large numbers of people are willingly complying. There are, however, certain of those misguided people called anti-vaccinationists who howl about the tyranny, uselessness and danger of the practice.

Judging from their cries and complaints one would almost think that they were condemned by a cruel Inquisition to the state itself. Where an epidemic of smallpox exists, it would seem to be the duty of everyone to the community at large to take the simple precaution offered by vaccination. The names of those who refuse or neglect to take it should be conspicuously advertised as enemies to society and they should be treated not less severely than criminals. In spite of all precautions one case was brought into town on the steamer *Moyie* on the evening of the 15th