

The Weekly British Colonist.

Tuesday, February 13, 1866.

THE "CHRONICLE" AND THE UNION PETITION.

The union petition which met with the unanimous sanction of the recent public meeting will, in all probability, be presented to the House of Assembly to-day. It will be the largest petition ever introduced into the Legislature. Yesterday it numbered between eight and nine hundred signatures, and to-day it is expected there will be considerably over a thousand. This speaks more forcibly than anything we can say. It shows how unanimous is the public feeling on this political question, and how impotent was the opposition of our morning contemporary against the action of the recent public meeting. The people were told by the Chronicle in the most anxious tones and in the most desperate language that the thing was a "swindle," and they have responded to the warning by endorsing the "swindle" with their signatures. Our contemporary ought to learn even at this eleventh hour that the public of Vancouver Island are capable of thinking for themselves, and much better able to form opinions on matters affecting the general interest than the few shallow-pated scribblers who insult the intelligence of the community in the columns of the Chronicle. To impute every unworthy motive to public men who are arduously working for the public good, and to denounce every project for benefitting the country as a "swindle" or a "jodge," or a "humbug," may be a very good principle on which to build a sensation newspaper; but Victorian intellect and Victorian taste have not yet degenerated to the level of the vulgarities of the New York Herald, and our contemporary will find that a little attention to decency, uprightness and propriety is an indispensable requisite to popular and influential journalism on Vancouver Island. The treatment it has recently received at the hands of the people—the determined rebukes it has met with on all sides, in the Legislature, in the public meeting, and on the public streets, all show how helpless and pitiable a journal becomes when it identifies itself with the enemies of the country, and leaves the well-defined path of justice and integrity.

THE COUNCIL AND THE HOMESTEAD BILL.

If there is anything which shows more forcibly than another the necessity of a change in our constitution that will allow the public to have a proper control of their own interests, it is the antagonistic attitude assumed by the Legislative Council to almost every measure which the public demand. The history of last session is enough to make every man who pays a tax set down his foot firmly and refuse to contribute another farthing to the Government of the country until every measure which the people have asked for shall have been engrafted on the statute book. It is morally impossible to get anything but fogism out of our Upper House. We see it in almost every debate. We have either the antediluvian ideas which prevail among the most narrow-minded of the Conservative class in the mother country, or we have the slip-slop crudities of a childlike inexperience. Yesterday's debate on the Homestead Bill shows these qualities stronger, probably than anything that has recently taken place. We have the Chief Justice enunciating sentiments about debtor and creditor that certainly belong to an age far in the remote past, and we have the Treasurer talking infinitely more foolish than the smallest boy in the Central School. The Attorney General we will do him the justice to say, showed a much better appreciation of the subject. He pointed out the reverses of fortune that must necessarily occur in new countries like Vancouver Island, and defended the debtors who had so far taken the benefit of the bankruptcy laws of the colony. He saw no fraud when a man gave notice to the public that he reserved a certain portion of his property. The fears expressed by some of the speakers that men would run away from other countries with \$2500, and invest in a homestead, were rather amusing. We will not discuss the question whether the morality of the country would be injured to a greater extent than its material wealth would be increased by this influx of men with \$2500, but considering that we are almost virtually surrounded by countries possessing Homestead laws of their own, it is rather a good joke to suppose that citizens of these countries will run away to obtain the same benefits in other lands which they can possess in their own. The question at issue in the Homestead Bill is shirked by nearly every speaker on the subject, and it is this:—Does it open out any greater avenues for fraud than exist at the present time? We have shown before that a person lends money on some tangible security or merely on men's honor. If he lends it on the former, the Homestead measure cannot affect him, for the homestead is no security; and if on the latter, the debtor can leave the colony at any moment, and make another among our long list of skeddaddlers. So far, therefore, the Homestead law could not increase in the

slightest degree the present facilities for fraud. On the other hand, it would tend to bring us up another step in competition with our American neighbors. It would tend to induce settlement. It is one of the necessities of our position to keep up in liberal enactments with the adjacent countries. We can no more hope to settle up the colony with old country ideas than we can suspend the laws of gravitation. Our helpless condition to-day is simply the effect of short-sighted foolish men holding the legislative power. Let another year or two pass over with the same ignorant repudiation of laws that are filling up the American territory, and the only industry in the country will be the labors of the beaver.

THE BLACKFOOT COUNTRY.

The following interesting letter has been received by a Cariboo miner now in town from a Caribooite at present sojourning in Blackfoot, which we have no doubt presents a truthful picture of that country, its present condition and future prospects:

Bear Creek on Hell Gate River, December 19th, 1866.

FRIEND R—: I am in the Blackfoot country, all well, as is Collins. In forty days after we left Cariboo we got into Blackfoot City, properly called Ophir, the centre of the Blackfoot mines. Procure a map of this part of the country, draw a line due north of Salt Lake, another due east of Lewiston at the mouth of Clearwater river; where the two cross each other you will have a position on the map very nearly corresponding with that of Ophir City. I will now give you some idea of our line of travel. From Colville we came 40 miles down the wagon road toward Walla Walla; thence about the same distance across to and up the Spokane river; thence across to the lower end of Pen d'Orielle lake, a widening of the river of the same name; thence up the right bank of the Pen d'Orielle river in a south easterly direction 270 miles—the first half a wretched road, and forded the left bank; thence up about 20 miles to a little stream somewhat resembling the Bonaparte, coming from the south, called the Poeka fork; thence up that stream and over a little divide to Hellgate, at the junction of the Bitter Root river from the south, and the Hellgate river from the north east, all flowing ultimately into the Pen d'Orielle.

From Hell gate we proceeded up the river of the same name, forded the Big Blackfoot, a stream larger than the Cottonwood river in Cariboo, and coming from the east direct from the Rocky Mountains, on the head of which, by the way, are a number of paying gulches. After crossing Big Blackfoot we kept up the river to the mouth of the Little Blackfoot, a stream less in size than Willow river in Cariboo, where we saw the first muddy water from the mines. On the head of this stream the first diggings of any account were found last spring around where Ophir City now stands. We have got now just on the sunset side of the summit of the Rocky Mountains. Ophir has perhaps less than 200 houses, plenty of timber to the rear, and any quantity of bunch-grass on the hills and valleys in the foreground. It is pretty well laid out, as are all mining and farming towns in this country. Within 50 miles of it, on the western slope, have been found this season perhaps thirty paying creeks and gulches, some of them not of much account and others good. Ten miles north-west of it is Washington gulch, with town projected, of course, and a number of good paying claims; two miles further is another egg from the same hen called Jefferson Davis seven miles farther, over a steep and high hill, is McClellan gulch, perhaps the best creek in this part of the country—3/4 miles of paying ground and a town of 40 houses at the foot called Pacific City. No mining town with money about it on this coast seems complete without a "burdy-mill," and this, of course, has its four-foot bench on, which sit four charms for sale at four bits a dance, while a three-stringed fiddle and an asthmatic accordion grind out such music as would "clean out" the best filled Victoria ball room in one minute and twenty-nine seconds. "Come, gentlemen, have another dance."

Several Cariboo men are on McClellan gulch, among whom are John McClellan, Jim Wade, and John O'Leary. Some claims on it are supposed to be worth over \$20,000. Old man Hutchinson and the hopeful Ed. have a baker's dozen of Cayuses, and are getting a start in the packing business; Haskell, of the Aurora, has something more in the same line, besides claims on the new creeks all over the country. Some may be good or not, and by the first of June all will have to be worked or abandoned. There is an institution here called Stampede, meaning a rush to new diggings. The Territorial law requires 13 miners to form a mining district, consequently the discoverer of a creek on coming in gets a dozen of his friends, burries back in the night with them, all make laws, elect a recorder, form a mining district, and record their claims from the Discovery both ways. No. 1 is first below and No. 1 is first above, and so on to any number that the creek is long enough to admit of. The first recorded are of course the favorite numbers, one, two, three, &c., below or above the Discovery, those not in the secret have to take the higher numbers furthest off. Smothering claims, or ringing in acquaintances, and one man recording a dozen claims for friends are common—hogging it is called. Those who come last hunt up the Recorder, and register claims without seeing them, because it is the Recorder's duty to measure claims and number them. One instance occurred where about a hundred numbers were registered above the Discovery, and when they came to be measured seventy reached over the hill to the other side. Of course the remaining thirty paid their two dollars each for nothing. Claims are generally 200 feet with the creek, and reach the summit on either side. Imagine a mile to each side of the creek, and the miner has a respectable claim of about 50 acres.

A great number of those who did well hereabout were emigrants from Pike, particularly known here as pilgrims—pil for short. A pil is supposed to find gold, and plenty of it, where no other person would think of looking for it. Indications here are different from those of other mining camps that I have been in. A good share of the rock appears to be a kind of limestone with blue flint quartz scattered through it. Where mining is going on it seems to block out more horizontally than vertically or inclined. There are numbers of spurs of bedrock to be seen with red streaks and crumbled depressions of the same color, indicating lots of fire at some period. There are mining on both sides of the Rocky Mountains. Virginia, Helena, and Bannock are the principal towns on the Eastern slope, and situated on tributaries leading into the Missouri River. The mines will probably be found to extend northward to the 49th parallel and beyond, but what is in the future nobody knows. The country is large, without side, end, or bottom. A man coming here and getting in the right place at the right time would be pretty sure of doing well; but that, as a rule, in a year or so of time spent here he would perhaps do as well as in other mining countries, with some chance for striking something big. Everybody prospers on horseback, and a ride of 60 miles in a night is not uncommon. I once followed a stampede and got on the creek eight hours behind those that made the laws; but the nearest claim that I could get to the Discovery was 43 below or 44 above, and I know that there were not over 15 men ahead of me—acquaintances! That's what was the matter. Wages here are five and six dollars per day; ten for drifters, but there is little of it done, however. There is so much competition here for a job, that no matter how rich a creek may be, everything but dividends is reduced to two dollars a day in a short time. I expect to do well at the whipsaw, and be prepared for something better at any time. I am 50 miles down Hellgate River, north-west of Ophir City, writing at random—paper scarce. Collins and I have a cabin half finished and a winter's stock of grub. The weather has been pretty cold at Cottonwood, the county seat; the thermometer on the 13th and 14th showing 20 degrees below zero, while at Helena on the east of the Summit it was 33 below zero. We had pretty fine weather here till the 1st, since which it has been cold. Snow is now about a foot deep. Climate generally resembles that of the Bonaparte and Thompson rivers in British Columbia. The Mullan road between Walla Walla and Fort Benton leads through the centre of the mining country. It was reported in Cariboo that Jimmy Fitzgerald had made his pile in Boise; ment tell me that it is not true. Also that Jack of Clubs and Ted Sweeney had their tens of thousands here, but the very contrary is the case. George Hanche is here with a lot of claims on his hands and his hands in his pockets. Getting claims is nothing here but making them pay is different altogether. Provisions will very likely be cheap here after next June, but now prices are "lightning." Flour which was once selling at 15c is now up to 35c; Beef, 18c to 25c on the block; Bacon, 75c; Coffee, \$1; Sugar, 60c; Tea, \$3; Tobacco, \$5 per lb, and whiskey two "bits." Most kinds of hardware are a little above Cariboo prices. There is going to be a large immigration to this place next summer from all parts of the United States west of the Mississippi River—some reckon it at 40,000. I think it a good country for business because it is just opening and filling up. I am writing within four feet of the fire and the ink freezes on my pen. Excuse this dirty paper for it is all we have just now. Collins is going to Ophir to-morrow and I will do better next time. I cannot under the present circumstances write half what I would like to. I expect to do pretty well next summer and spring. Lots of Cariboo men and all of Kootenais are here. J. M.

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A MAGNIFICENT STEAMER—The superb river steamer Capital, built for the C. S. N. Co. and intended to run on the Sacramento River, under the command of Capt. Poole, late of the Yosemite, was at latest California dates ready to make her trial trip from San Francisco to Benioia. She is described in the Alta of the 29th, as the most perfect steamer afloat, far eclipsing the Chrysopele and equal in speed to the princely St. Johns, the pride of the Hudson River, or any other passenger ship in the world. Her interior arrangements and decorations are said to be on a scale of magnificence fully warranting her being styled a "Floating Palace," and among other new ideas she possesses two bridal chambers fitted up in the most magnificent and costly manner. In fact everything that the art of man could devise for his ease and comfort seems to have been combined in this vessel. She is a credit to her owners, designers, builders and the State that gave her existence.

LARGE STEAMER—The Alta's New York correspondent says that the largest wooden steamer in the world is now building at the yard of Henry Steers, at Greenpoint, for the Pacific Mail Steamship Company. She is 5,000 tons burden, 360 feet in length, 50 feet in breadth, with 31 feet and 6 inches depth of hold, and will cost over \$1,000,000. It is generally supposed to be one of the vessels intended for use on the route from San Francisco to China. The new steamer building by Lawrence and Foulke for Ben Holladay's line between San Francisco and Portland, Oregon, is 3500 tons burden, 280 feet in length, 42 feet in breadth, and 21 in depth. Her engines are in process of construction at the Allaire Works. She will cost about \$500,000.—Oregonian.

BIG BEND—From a gentleman recently arrived in town from the Big Bend gold mines, we learn that there is no doubt but gold, in vast quantities, exists in that region of country. The statements published heretofore in reference to these mines are said to have been no exaggeration. Many of our citizens are getting the fever, and King County will doubtless turn out a good number of "gold seekers" this spring.—Seattle Gazette.

SANDWICH ISLANDS—A letter from Honolulu to the Courier de San Francisco says that C. de Varigny has been appointed Minister of Foreign Affairs, and his place as Minister of Finance is filled by C. C. Harris, late Attorney General.

SHIPWRECK ON THE COAST.

Loss of the "Mustang."

From Captain Marcellus Tobey, of the bark Mustang, we have the following particulars of the wreck of that vessel while prosecuting her voyage from San Francisco to this port.

The Mustang sailed from San Francisco, January 14th; had heavy S. E. gales and thick fog from Point Race to the latitude of Umpqua. Got an observation and found the vessel 60 miles from shore; afterwards, very thick weather and heavy S. E. gales; ran the ship until 8 p.m. on Saturday night, when the captain hauled the ship too to the westward, supposing his position to be 20 miles west of Flattery Rocks. At 12 noon ship and stood to N. N. E. At 2:30 a.m., Sunday, saw breakers ahead. Hauled the ship on the wind to the westward, and after making sail for about a mile and a-half again saw rocks ahead and surr to leeward. Wore ship and stood in for the softest place, where the ship grounded, but before doing so she struck on a ledge of rocks, knocked part of her keel off and immediately began to fill. She now lies on a sandy bottom in Long Bay, near Schooner Cove, between Claynet and Barclay Sound. Captain Tobey and his men got ashore safely, and at low tide commenced unbending sails and sending down top-gallant yards. Removed provisions and some cargo to shore, and placed it above high-water mark. When the tide fell again removed some more cargo from the hold and placed it for better safety between decks, where the water did not reach.

Remained at the wreck for eight days repairing boats, removing cargo, &c. On Tuesday, 30th, all hands, eleven all told, took to the boats and started for Neah Bay. The captain, second mate and two men were in one boat; the chief mate and six men in another boat.

Two men belonging to the captain's boat deserted to an Indian camp but they finally succeeded in reaching San Juan Harbor, where Captain Spring secured a canoe and kindly brought the captain and second mate to Victoria.

The other boat has not been heard of, she is supposed to have made for Neah Bay or Port Angeles. No Indians had presented themselves up to the time of the departure of the crew, but they were afterwards observed making their way towards the scene of the wreck, and on the way along the coast Captain Tobey was much annoyed by their thieving propensities.

Captain Tobey speaks in high terms of praise of the conduct of his second officer Mr. Scammon. The name of the chief officer who had charge of the other boat is Doyle. Both the captain and Mr. Scammon are much worn out with fatigue.

The Mustang is a vessel of 332 tons register, and belongs to New York. She had a general cargo of merchandise on board for this port and the Sound, particulars of which appear elsewhere.

CHANGE IN THE LONDON TIMES MANAGEMENT—REMOVAL OF MR. DELANE—Among other items of news telegraphed from the East we find the following: "The London Correspondent of the Chicago Tribune, under date of January 13th, writes, 'Mr. Delane, editor of the London Times, was dismissed from that position on the 1st January. The Times was to be under new auspices. This change is said to be due to the feeling that it is necessary to cultivate more friendly relations with the United States. The correspondent adds that Samson, the Money Editor of the Times, will also probably go out. It is a fact that Delane and Samson have committed the paper, and as all our wise men have changed their policy on the American question in consequence of American success, we must accept the results and shape our policy accordingly.' The fact of a change occurring in the management of the Times may be true, but we are somewhat sceptical as to the causes assigned for it.

ENGLAND'S ULTIMATUM.—All hopes for a peaceful adjustment of our claims on England seem to be at an end. The English Secretary of Foreign Affairs curiously informs Minister Adams that it is useless to prolong the controversy, and that diplomatic correspondence on this subject will not be continued. All that is left for the United States is, therefore to pocket the loss which our citizens have suffered by English rebel cruisers, and with it this very uncivil rebuff, or go to war. If our Government did not intend to insist upon, and even to enforce, if necessary, the settlement of these claims, then the claims should not have been preferred. It must be owned that, as the matter now stands, this country is not left in a very enviable position. Our cause has been most ably conducted by Minister Adams, and this Government lost nothing so long as the English Cabinet was disposed to argue the points in dispute; but the refusal of the British Government to proceed further with the case is a sharp snub for the United States and leaves us to elect what shall be done next. We have Britain's ultimatum; what will be the action of our Government upon it?—Oregonian.

OPPOSITION STEAMERS.—We heard it stated a few days since, in San Francisco, says the Folsom Telegraph, that a company has been organized in New York city, with a capital of five millions, to run a line of steamers on the Sacramento river, and also on the coast routes, in opposition to the California Stearn Navigation Company's boats.

MESSRS. HIBBEN AND CARSWELL have placed upon our table a copy of the "Illustrated London Almanac for 1866," which has arrived by express from England. This elegantly compiled publication is published at the office of the London Illustrated News, and contains in addition to numerous wood cuts, and useful information, some beautiful colored lithographs. The work will make a handsome ornament to any drawing room table.

THE GOVERNOR'S MESSAGE.

In another column will be found the message of Governor Kennedy to the House of Assembly, in reference to the recent action of the latter body on the estimates. We do not know under what evil genius His Excellency penned such a document. To tell a British community, in the enjoyment of representative institutions, that no increase can be allowed to any item of public expenditure, and no money vote introduced into the House of Assembly until they shall have first been recommended by the Executive is to show not only an unparalleled ignorance of colonial history, but a most dangerous disposition on the part of the Governor himself. The matter is in no way improved by the remarks on the auditorship. His Excellency in those remarks tells us that the House of Assembly have no power to interfere with the Queen's warrant. Well, possibly the House of Assembly cannot say that Captain Torrens shall displace Mr. Wakeford; but the House can refuse to vote Mr. Wakeford's salary, and where then is His Excellency with the Queen's warrant?—either he must refuse to have the accounts audited, or he must have them audited for nothing, and the House affords him the latter alternative by offering him the services of the clerk of the Assembly—the most efficient public officer, we believe, in the colony. So much for His Excellency's prerogative; but now to the history of the Queen's warrant. Last year when the estimates came down they contained an item of \$1920 for auditor. The House, considering that this was only one of the various attempts to foist a certain gentleman on the public of Vancouver Island, refused to entertain the proposition, and voted \$1200 not for any officer known as "the auditor" but for "auditing the public accounts." His Excellency, however, was not to be beaten; his pet was not to be cast aside. Accordingly an appointment of auditor was made and forwarded to the Home Government for sanction. This, in the absence of correct information with regard to the disposition of the Assembly, the Imperial authorities could not of course refuse, and so Her Majesty's warrant was obtained; but it may turn out to be a dear warrant for His Excellency. Such sleight of hand as this, bringing Her Majesty's Government unconsciously into collision with the representatives of the people of Vancouver Island, will scarcely, when the whole history of the affair shall have been laid before the Colonial office, meet with Mr. Cardwell's approval.

There is something in the tone and spirit of the message that is anything but conciliatory. His Excellency evidently fancies that his position is unassailable, and he talks to the House as a hedge schoolmaster used to talk to his scholars. He knows of course much better than the members the wants of the colony—he knows exactly what the people are able to pay. Does His Excellency never imagine for a moment that it rests with the people to-morrow to cut down every establishment on the Island but the Governor and Colonial Secretary? When he talks about his responsibility and his ideas of what should be paid for the Government of the country, he is simply talking to the sea. It is not what a Governor may think can be extorted from the public pocket, but what the people may choose to give. His Excellency on landing in the colony was very anxious to assure everybody that all he desired was to carry out the public wish, the people took him at his word, and the first proof of his patriotic protestations is to be found in a persistent opposition to the people's will, in overthrowing the deliberate decisions of the Legislative Assembly, in attempting to make offices of emolument for unpopular men, in endeavoring to force *volens volens* an outrageously large expenditure on the public, and in coolly insulting the sense as well as the dignity of the House, by leaving it to be inferred that the people's representatives are actuated by personal feeling in the abolition and reduction of official salaries. Governors have been compelled before now to come down to the Assembly and apologise for much less than His Excellency has written in his message, and if the House does not insist on what it can legitimately claim in this respect, it is because it is more anxious to show a spirit of forbearance in order to carry on the public business of the country. There is still time for His Excellency to retrace his steps—still time to recede from a position which, if followed, must inevitably lead to his summary removal. A word to the wise is sufficient.

LIVES LOST IN THE U. S. REBELLION.—The War Department computes the number of deaths in the Union armies, since the commencement of the war at 325,000, and of Southern soldiers at 200,000, making at least 525,000 lives that have been lost, a part of the costly price paid for the defence of the nation's life. At Gettysburg 23,000 Union soldiers were killed, wounded or taken prisoners—our greatest loss during our campaign. General Grant's losses, from the time he crossed the Rapidan until the surrender of Lee, were about 90,000. Great as were our losses, they were far below those incurred in European wars, owing to the superior medical and sanitary arrangements, and the care of the Government for its troops.—Oregonian.