

THE BRITISH COLUMBIA COMMERCIAL JOURNAL

ISSUED EVERY TUESDAY AT VICTORIA, B. C.

SUBSCRIPTION - - \$2.00 PER YEAR.

Advertising Rates on Application.

D. M. CAILEY

EDITOR.

L. G. HENDERSON - - BUSINESS MANAGER.

Office—No. 77 Johnston Street.

VICTORIA, TUESDAY, SEPT. 1, 1891.

MINERS' MISUNDERSTANDINGS.

The union miners at Nanaimo—and they all claim to be union men there—have difficulties among themselves. And the cause is the five per cent. assessment that has been levied upon them for the past sixteen or seventeen months for the purpose of maintaining the Wellington "strikers." These people, according to the report of the Financial Secretary of the Miners and Mine Laborers' Protective Association of the Island of Vancouver, have been receiving \$32 per month for married men; \$25 for single; \$12.50 for half members or boys who were working in the pits, and \$3.50 for each child. The strikers have not, it would thus appear, been doing so badly after all; at any rate they have been receiving at least as much as would keep body and soul together without suffering, and more than that many of them possess their own ranches or small holdings, at which they have been able to grow many things for their own consumption. Under these circumstances, it was not to be wondered at that from 70 to 100 able bodied miners should have been prepared to hold the fort for this extended length of time. If a principle is worth anything at all it is worth contending for, particularly since its maintenance, as in this case, has not involved absolute and entire loss. Then, too, Mr. Tully Boyce, the leader of the miners' movement has, it is stated, been getting upwards of \$100 a month in wages and Union allowances, since, whether he worked in the pits or not, he has had his wages made up to that sum out of the Union funds, while he has been allowed liberal travelling and other expenses for visiting San Francisco and other places on business connected with the Association. Other officials of the Union have also, it is said, received moneys for services rendered. This, it is understood, is the ordinary way in which strikes are successfully maintained.

Another fact is that during the month of July Mr. Robins, the manager of the Vancouver Coal Company, entered into an agreement with representatives of the Protective Association to employ only those who are its members, to dismiss no member except for cause; the Association on its part binding its members not to strike except for cause, and not to interfere with the company in employing or discharging employees. The parties having made the arrangement in good faith, each considered itself and the others bound to carry out the undertaking. For

some time there has been a growing disinclination upon the part of some of the actual working miners to pay their five per cent. assessment, it being felt that as work was almost as active as ever at Wellington, and, that, despite the boycott, there was a demand for more coal than the Wellington pits could supply, the strike was virtually over, and that any further contention was useless. Between two and three hundred of the Nanaimo men who had regularly met the demands upon them recently determined to pay no longer, and their names were sent up to the manager of the mines in order to be discharged, as not being members of the Association. Accordingly, a few days ago, some forty or fifty of them were posted at the pits' head for discharge this month, the manager of the mines distinctly, it is said, explaining, since that was done, that he did not discharge, the men, but that, not having carried out the rules of the Union, they had discharged themselves. The men who had been thus marked out naturally got excited, and a small deputation waited on the manager of the Nanaimo Company, who said there was nothing for him to do but to carry out the agreement. On Saturday, a mass meeting of miners, called by the dissentients, was held at the Green, Nanaimo. It was attended by a considerable number of men, although loyal members of the Union had been officially warned to keep away. The speakers all strongly declared themselves to be Unionists, and spoke of those to whom they were opposed as "the other faction." A resolution was unanimously adopted that they would pay the assessments no longer. After this had been done, there was a considerable amount of discussion, marked by very great moderation, two miners, manifestly representing the officers of the Union, informing the meeting that it was their own fault if the affairs of the Union had not been conducted as they wished. It was their duty, they said, to attend the meetings, and indicate by their voices and votes what they desired, and there can be no doubt but there was considerable force in this. It was further pointed out that the policy of capital was to divide and conquer, on account of which differences ought to be healed, one of the speakers, though he could not make any promises, pledging himself to do his utmost with the officers to secure a settlement and a speedy end to the continuance of the assessment.

But here, and at several previous portions of the meeting, was made the announcement that the men who had been reported for discharge had, until they strongly objected, been paying the assessments regularly, while there were hundreds who had never paid a dollar of assessment, who were left undisturbed; those who were up for discharge being honest, thrifty men, who were among the best of citizens. In accordance with the suggestions of the men who were supposed to have spoken for the Union, a committee from the meeting was appointed to meet a similar committee, which it was supposed the Union would appoint with a view to an adjustment of matters and the restoration of perfect harmony. Mr. Robins was also to be asked to suspend all discharges for the present.

This, as far as we can gather, is a plain, unvarnished statement of the case. There are in no way involved any labor and capital controversies. Mr. Robins is carrying out, no doubt at the expense of much misinterpretation, what as a straightforward business man he was bound to do, the whole trouble being within the Protective Association itself outside of which, as a circular of Mr. Keith stated, the business of the Union ought not to go. But having gone outside, it has, as a matter of course, become subject for discussion.

TRADE WITH THE EMPIRE.

The *Toronto Empire*, commenting upon British trade prospects, says, that it was no wonder the English papers take a rather gloomy view of the matter when they saw the returns for July. Certainly the official statistics, which have now been received in this country, are not reassuring. In July, the exports were £21,945,156, against £24,321,330 in July, 1890, and £22,124,500 in July, 1889. The imports also show a steady decrease. The commerce of Great Britain for the seven months of the present year is also greatly below that of the previous year, and there are reasons to fear that the rest of 1891 will not recover lost ground.

The decreases are heaviest in the exports of manufactures, an indication that the artisans are suffering from the present state of affairs. Take the case of tin plates, for example, the prices for which have not dropped, notwithstanding the enormous falling off of the American demand, the export for July being 4,000 tons, against 37,000 tons in July, 1890. The reason why English prices keep up is on account of the wholesale stoppage of work, so that the loss has come entirely out of the pockets of the tin plate workers. It is upon conditions of this kind that the policy of the United Empire Trade League is based, and those who maintain that England will never give up her free import system, forget that the votes of the workmen are a potent factor in the result.

So far as Canada is concerned, the *Empire* continues, it should not be forgotten, in this connection, that her trade with the Empire is nearly half of her total commerce and more than her trade with any other single nation. Taking the figures for last year, we find that Canada's aggregate trade with the United States was, in round numbers, \$92,800,000; her aggregate trade with the Empire was \$97,550,000, and this has been constantly expanding, having climbed up nearly \$10,000,000 since 1878. Analyzing this trade with the Empire, its chief elements are found to be as follows:

CANADA'S AGGREGATE TRADE.

With Great Britain.....	\$91,743,935
" British West Indies.....	2,710,913
" Newfoundland.....	1,635,378
" Australasia.....	696,103
" British Guiana.....	405,228
" British East Indies.....	191,994
" British Africa.....	30,360
" Other British possessions.....	67,773

\$97,551,094

With the comparatively recent establishment of better steamship communication to the West Indies, and the prospect of similar connection with Australia, there is reason to look for steady growth in the volume of this commerce with the Empire.