

British Columbia Trade Letter.

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENCE.

Vancouver, Dec. 14.—The Christmas season is fairly on us and every person knows what that means for trade in certain lines. It does not mean the same on the Pacific coast as on the Atlantic slope or even in Winnipeg. There is a lack of crispness and sleigh bells that takes some of the romance out of the season. A humid atmosphere puts somewhat of a damper on the exuberance of spirits which reigns over the last two or three weeks of the year, but it is Christmas all the same, and the force of tradition and association is here all powerful as elsewhere. As a reminder of the approaching festival there was a fall of snow Saturday which disappeared Sunday under the influence of a very bright warm sun. The weather this fall has been favorable all round, and although there have been some right smart showers, the majority of days have been exceedingly pleasant.

Prospects of an improved lumber trade are becoming brighter every day. The sawmills are running with increased working force. This is an industry that cannot long remain depressed, owing to the ever increasing demand, and the decreasing supply. Undoubtedly the South American republics will be reorganized on a more permanent basis, and for several years at least be free from the turmoil of political agitation and minor revolutions. In a country with such a large import trade the effect of quietude in political and diplomatic circles must be decidedly in favor of a lumber exporting province like British Columbia. Prospects generally seem to be much better in the lumber trade. Owing to the large number of logging camps closed down during the latter part of the summer, the stoppage of the sealing industry, the expected shortage in the salmon run, and the comparative failure of the fruit crop, this has been a decidedly off year in British Columbia, compared with previous years, and business all round has been, though very much larger in volume, not quite so brisk. The activity in building and the number of large construction works of one kind and another have, however, considerably offset a condition of things that might have been serious, and instead of having had, taking the province over, a bad year, it has been a particularly good one in which a great amount of real development has taken place. Particular interests have in some instances suffered. Perhaps, the direction in which the greatest development has taken place is in that of shipping and shipbuilding. Both of these interests are growing enormously, and there is nothing which promises so well for the future. Local shipping, the coasting trade, and the Pacific steamship business have expanded rapidly, and an extensive volume of traffic has been carried. All the cities are reaching out in this respect.

Taking the interior more real progress has been made than for many years. Several branch lines of railway have been constructed and any number of lines have been projected. Several small towns have sprung up, which are important feeders for the coast cities. Nelson, Vernon and Revelstoke are among these, and one indication of their importance is the fact that the Bank of Montreal, a safe money concern, is establishing a branch bank at the first

named place. In the Okanagan country, to which a great deal of attention has been directed during the year, has absorbed a number of settlers and the breaking up of these large ranches which has hitherto stood in the way of settlement, has begun. Lord Aberdeen's example of buying and dividing into small holdings an estate of 15,000 acres, is bound to have a beneficial effect, provided it is followed and the land generally improved. Mining development, though still very slow, had never brighter prospects. The reported discovery of extensive deposits of coal, both bituminous and anthracite, in the vicinity of Crow's Nest Pass, and the recent rich finds in Illecillewaet and in the country around Nelson will be stimulative of both railway construction and the mining industry. From the numerous finds of ore, assaying highly and extending over such a wide area of the province, there can be only one conclusion as to the character of the mineral deposits and the future of British Columbia as a mining country.

Coming now to the industrial feature of fruit growing, it has been much more marked than the advance in the cultivation of fruit itself. Within a year, five fruit canning establishments have opened into life—one at Westminster, one at Vancouver, one at Chilliwack, one at Ladner's Landing and one at Victoria. Another is talked of to be undertaken by Lord Aberdeen at Vernon in the Okanagan valley. That there is a market for British Columbia canned fruit and a natural adaptability in the country itself for the industry are very evident from such investments, but, while the demand for fruit for canning purposes will act as a great incentive to the fruit industry, it must be admitted that the sudden expansion of this business is somewhat premature. It is not perhaps that there is not sufficient fruit grown in the province to supply them all, although that is rather limited to begin with, but that the varieties are not right in the first place and in the second place farmers do not sell cheap enough to make it pay. Notwithstanding the apparent scarcity of fruit it will be surprising to know that very much more is allowed to go to waste and rot in the orchards than is sold. Farmers will not take the trouble to study the methods such as have made the industry great in California and Oregon. When that condition of things is remedied or new conditions are developed we may expect to see British Columbia take that place as a horticultural province which its great capabilities entitle it.

All efforts on a large scale to develop the deep sea fishing of the coast so far have proved partially at least a failure. It cannot be said that these efforts heretofore have been either very vigorous or persistent, but enough has been learned to know that it is necessary to give the subject a little careful and scientific investigation in order to ascertain the habits and migrations of our deep sea fish, because at the present it is not known how or where they are to be found at certain seasons. The crofters, who are fishermen by instinct, if the efforts to colonize the west coast be successful, will no doubt fathom these mysteries for themselves. It would seem, however, that in the multitude of commissioners under governmental auspices, one might very profitably be spared for the coast of British Columbia, and an

expedition, similar to that of Judge Swan in the Albatross, undertaken for the benefit of piscatorial science and the fishing industry, the report to be in the language of practical men and fishermen and not loaded with technique and scientific formulae only intelligible to experts—such as burden the pointed results of most governmental enquiries.

Coming back to business pure and simple, trade is fairly good but not very brisk. Another ship has arrived to load at Hastings mills, and the ss. Grandholm from San Francisco. Her cargo was 600 tons lighter than expected, owing to having left a consignment for China and Japan. The Empress of Japan sails this week for the Orient and another steamship is expected on the 29th. A good deal of beef from the interior to the coast cities has been moved and the consignments are unusually heavy. Potatoes are plentiful and cheap and generally of excellent quality. Good eggs are scarce and dear. California grapes are still on the market, but apples are the principal fruit offered. Heavy consignments of eastern poultry are expected for the Christmas trade; game is plentiful. The prices for canned salmon are very much depressed in the English market. There is very little of a marked change to note in any line. Quotations are about as follows, it being understood that the prices named are the wholesale and jobbing prices here and not the buying prices:

Butter—Creamery, 27 to 29c per pound; dairy 21 to 25c. Pickled eggs, 22 to 25c; fresh eggs, 27c per dozen.

Meats—Dry salt, 11½c per lb; roll bacon, 12c; breakfast bacon, 14c; hams, 14c; long clear, 11½c.

Cheese, 12½c to 13c per lb.

White beans, \$3.25 per 100 lbs., and China beans, \$4.

Sugar—Paris lumps, 6½c per lb; granulated, 5½c; light yellow, 4½c; syrup, 3c.

Fruit—Oranges, \$1 to \$1.25 per box; apples, 75c to \$1.25 per box; peaches, \$1.40 and grapes at \$1.75; tomatoes, \$1.50 per box.

Potatoes—\$15 to \$16 per ton; Ashcroft potatoes, \$20 to \$23. Turnips are quoted from 50 60c per 100 lbs; cabbage, 50 to 75c; carrots, 60 to 75c; parsnips, \$1.50, and onions \$1.50.

Flour and feed—Manitoba Patents \$6.00 ditto strong bakers, \$5 80; Oregon Flour, \$5.80 to \$6; Premier, Enderby mills, \$6; XXX, \$5.75; XX, \$5.45. Oatmeal at \$4 per 100 lbs; eastern rolled oats, \$3.50; Californian do, \$4; eastern cornmeal, \$3.75; Californian, ditto, \$4.00. Wheat, \$35 per ton; chopped feed \$36 to \$38; bran, \$24 to \$25; shorts, \$26; oats, \$30 to \$34; hay, \$15 to \$16; oil cake, \$40.

Fish is quoted as follows, retail: Cod 10c per lb; salmon, 12½c; emelts, 10c; flounders, 10c; halibut, 15c; herring, 10c.

THE Toronto Empire, of a recent date, says: "The fight between the British Columbia and eastern refiners is giving Winnipeg cheap sugar and preventing Ontario and Quebec jobbers from doing any business there. Refiners are selling granulated delivered in Winnipeg, freight paid, at \$4.90. The freight is 65c on the gross, or say 70c on the net weight, making the Winnipeg price \$4.20 net. This is 30c less than the refiners charge eastern houses. Though the Vancouver people sell at \$4.90 in Winnipeg they charge an advancing price as they get nearer home. For Portage la Prairie their price is reported to be \$5.12½; Brandon and Qu'Appelle, \$5.25, and at the coast, \$5.62½."