

Weekly Rossland Miner.

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A STRANGLER OF ENTERPRISE.

In India there formerly existed a band of men who were stranglers. There were large numbers of them, and they committed hundreds of murders by strangling. The British government rose in its might and finally wiped the murderous band out. In Canada there is a company which, it appears, strangles enterprises that it considers are inimical to its interests. A case in point is one which has just come to light at Nelson. The Tribune of that city quotes a Canadian Pacific official as saying: "We would be fools to allow smelters and sampling works at Nelson to compete with us for ore that we need ourselves." This is taken to mean, by the Tribune, that the determination has been arrived at that the Hall Mines smelter at Nelson is to be strangled, or given its quietus in some other manner, by the railroad company. It will probably be ground to death between the upper millstone of high rates exacted by the railway company and the nether millstone of its smelter at Trail.

It was feared by many, when the O. P. R. embarked in the smelting business, that the outcome would be the establishment of a monopoly on its part, and it now seems certain that this apprehension was well grounded. It is now more than probable that the Hall Mines smelter will be harassed and persecuted and its efforts to secure ore so blocked that it will ultimately be compelled to shut down. Its only hope is evidently to secure what ore it can from its own mines, and be content to be operated to that limited extent.

The Canadian Pacific railway when it entered the smelting business declared that its policy would be to build up and foster the industry, and now it appears that its intention was to do this simply and solely for its own benefit.

In this menacing attitude of the Canadian Pacific railway toward the Hall Mines smelter history repeats itself. All will remember the struggle which the British Columbia Smelting & Refining company of Trail had with the big and consciousnessless corporation. The former company had invested a large sum in erecting its smelter and in constructing a railway in order that its works might be supplied with ore. Its enterprise assisted materially in the building and development of the country. The bigger corporation viewed the operations of the smaller one with a jealous eye, as it saw in it a rival to its monopolistic ideas. The smaller corporation was poaching, it was claimed, on what the larger concern claimed was its preserves. Its agents tried to bully and threatened to strangle the smaller concern unless it sold to the larger one at a price fixed by the latter. The smelter owners finally sold out their interests for considerably less than they were worth so as to avoid being crushed by the big juggernaut. Even after the bargain was made, on what was virtually terms dictated by the Canadian Pacific Railway company, its perfidious agents refused to carry out all the terms of the agreement, and the courts have been appealed to in order to compel them to do so.

Now it seems it is the Hall Mines smelter that is in the way of the railway juggernaut, and it is to be crushed out of existence. Further on it will be some other institution. These incidents reveal the system by which the Canadian Pacific company has determined to rid itself of those whom it conceives to be rivals, and how relentlessly it is determined to create for itself a monopoly of the transportation business and the smelting industry in the Kootenays. Is it not about time that a halt was called to this sort of thing?

THE PROSPECTING SEASON.

Now that our spring is coming with its birds and flowers and its absence of snow, the prospector is making ready for his season's work. He is tired of the long period of inaction that lies behind him, and is hunting up his cayuses and his grub stake for the time of activity that spreads itself so invitingly before him. The question that naturally presents itself to him, where there are so many alluring and promising fields as there are in British Columbia, is, which one to select for the season's exploration. In the past the mining sections tributary to the waterways have been the most thoroughly prospected and are the places, therefore, that now contain the productive properties. A Le Roi 100 miles or a good deal less than that distant from transportation facilities would be almost valueless, and no one knows this better than the seasoned searcher for new locations. This is the

reason why prospecting is not carried on at points remote from the railways and waterways of the country.

Therefore, we believe that the country adjacent to the new railroad line that is being built across East Kootenay, West Kootenay and Yale districts will be the favorite field of the prospector. The will give a big action for the nomads of the mining industry, stretching from the Rocky mountains and running clean across East and West Kootenay and a portion of the Yale division. The railway will, at least, be completed as far to the west as Midway this season, and in a year or two perhaps be constructed on west as far as Pentiction.

The prospector has a wide range of diversified country to select from between the foothills of the mighty Rockies and Pentiction. He can hunt for the ledges from which the placer gold came that made Wild Horse creek famous in 1861-5, when some \$17,000,000 was taken out by lucky placer miners. Then he can find gold copper ledges if he but hunts hard enough for them, for they are there, in the vicinity of Windermere. Coming west he can find silver-lead and copper-gold deposits in the Nelson mining division. Along the Arrow lakes he can find high-grade copper leads that carry in addition other metals. Then he can hunt around, in and about Burnt basin, and along the shores of Christina lake, and find prospects which have ledges that carry both free gold and gold in conjunction with the base metals. Then he can wander over the hills and valleys in the Kettle river division, and there can find almost any sort of a mining property. Still farther to the west there is the country on both sides of Lake Okanagan and the section around Camp McKinney. This is largely a free milling belt, and we believe that there will be more prospectors in this section than any other during the coming open season. Then there is the Lardeau country, which is to be opened this summer by railways. There are sections, too, in Trout lake and Illecillewaet divisions that as yet have been untouched by the foot of the wandering prospector. Besides there are many undiscovered ledges in the Sloan country.

Dame Fortune has hidden some of her most precious favors in the hills and mountains of this great mining section, and judging by the preparations that are now in progress on the part of the prospector a number of them will be found before the snow begins to hide them again late during the coming fall. This is to be a banner year in mining, and there never was a better time to dispose of meritorious prospects at a good figure than the present. There is, therefore, more than the usual incentive to go into the wilds to find them. Hence it is probable that the army of prospectors this year will be larger than ever before.

THE PARLIAMENTARY SESSION.

The present session of the Dominion parliament, which opened on Thursday last, is likely to be one of the most important in many years, and the progress of the legislation which may be enacted will be watched with unusual closeness and interest by the country. To the people of the eastern provinces, where party feeling runs high, the fencing between the Government and the opposition will furnish the chief material for comment and consideration. It will rather be the general conduct of the administration and matters affecting international relations than local measures which will fix their attention. Any Government which is fairly capable and honest in its intentions and measures is, during a period of prosperity, such as seems to have set in on this continent, pretty sure of general support in the old and well settled parts of the country. At least, there is no marked disposition on the part of the people as a whole to quarrel with it on general principles. In a new country, however, which is just being opened up and where the settlers are alive to every act which may affect their advantage or otherwise, a more personal concern is taken in the course of legislation. Fighting, as they are against natural difficulties and occupied with local details, they are willing to leave national questions in the hands of their representatives, and in return they ask that the Government should aid them intelligently and disinterestedly in their work of developing their own district.

This is the position which British Columbia occupies: for while the people here by no means forego their interest in the general administration of the Dominion they are much more concerned with the adoption of measures which will enable us to push forward actively the work of developing our mineral resources than with the question whether the members of the cabinet have displayed sufficient dignity on this occasion or on that in negotiations with representatives of other peoples. At least we will leave it to the older provinces to sustain the position of the Dominion in this respect, giving them, of course, our moral support, and we will direct all our own powers to the up-building of our particular province. This being the case, we are particularly desirous, and the Government would do well to take heed of our wishes in this respect, that no impediments to our immediate progress should be placed in our way.

The people of British Columbia recognize that they have the richest province in the confederation—the richest, that

is, in natural resources—and they are content that whoever will should come in and assist in wresting that wealth from the soil. They insist that the Government shall not hand over the province, or any part of it, to the tender mercies of a monopoly; or assist any monopoly in crushing freedom of trade. They are anxious for the construction of railway lines which will enable them the more rapidly to place their great estate on a paying basis, and they are solicitous that no company with bona fide intentions should be hindered or hampered at the instigation and for the benefit of a rival.

Sir Wilfrid Laurier's government has an opportunity to make a record for itself such as no Canadian Government has yet done. Our administrations hitherto have been the sport of monopolies; it remains to be seen whether the present one will follow in the old beaten path or blaze out a roadway of its own.

THE OIL TRUST.

The trust has never taken very deep root in Canada, but has a strong and vigorous growth in the United States. There were some of these great combinations in Great Britain in the early part of the nineteenth century, but they never obtained such flower and fruit as they have in the United States. One of the largest of these is the Standard Oil trust. This is the creation of the genius of John A. Rockefeller, who began his career as a \$1,000 a year clerk, and of whom it is now predicted he will die a billionaire. Mr. Rockefeller is now endeavoring to force the oil interests of this country into a combine which will give him and his associates a monopoly similar to that enjoyed by his giant trust in the United States. When Rockefeller first began to form the nucleus of what was subsequently the oil trust over which he is now the ruling spirit he entered into combinations with the railways and by a profit sharing plan, which was in the nature of bribe giving, he induced them to give him special rates; that is to say, he obtained lower rates than his competitors in the oil business. At a later period he threw the railways to one side, as he then reached his leading markets by means of pipe lines built to transport his oil hundreds of miles to the principal markets. The railways, therefore, made but little out of the partnership, as if the trust had not been successful the pipe lines would not have been constructed perhaps, and they would still be engaged in hauling the oil to the several points of distribution. By means of this alliance with the railways Rockefeller was enabled to crush all his rivals who refused to enter his combine.

Mr. Rockefeller is trying to foist the Standard Oil trust on Canada, or, rather, is endeavoring to create a branch of it here. In this endeavor he is following similar plans to those which made him so successful in the United States. In this instance the Canadian Pacific and the Grand Trunk railways are assisting him. These two companies in October last made an advance in the rates on American oil, and it was soon discovered that the advance was accompanied by a secret agreement with the Standard Oil company by which the latter receives a rebate of 33 1/3 per cent. The effect was an advance on the freight rates of the independent refiners, the trust actually shipping at the old rates. Another detail of the scheme was an advance in the local rates on American oil, while the former rates were maintained on the Canadian product. It is held that this was obviously a part of the trust's plan, for the reason that it had secured the control of all of the output in Canada. The secret rebate remained in force in favor of the trust. The open discrimination, however, was so obviously an infraction of the law that the appeal to the privy council secured its withdrawal. It was impossible, it seems, to get at the secret rebate, and it is still said to be in force. The price of oil, gasoline and benzine, has been advanced already by the trust, and it is tightening its hold upon the apparently helpless public. In a little while it will probably crush out of existence all its rivals and will have a clear field in Canada, and then it will become as proud, arrogant and show as much contempt for popular rights in Canada as it does in the United States.

The Dominion parliament is in session and this trust should be crushed out of existence before it obtains the full sway that it so earnestly desires.

There have been many attempts at anti-trust laws in the United States. Laws of this character have been enacted in Illinois, Michigan and several other states. Maine is said to have a most comprehensive law on the subject. It must be admitted, however, that they have been in the main of doubtful utility. These statutes are usually penal in character, and declare all combinations or agreements regulating the price of any article or commodity to be criminal conspiracies and prescribe penalties therefor. Surely there is wisdom enough in the Dominion parliament if it will earnestly upon the task to prevent this great trust from fastening itself forever upon the people of Canada.

THE SITUATION IN THE KOOTENAYS.

The people of Eastern Canada, conjointly with those of Europe and the United States, are rapidly and effectively beginning to realize the magnitude

of the possession which this Dominion has in the Province of British Columbia. It can be said, without any extravagance of language, that at the present time the eyes of the world are upon us, and that the belief is very general that our mountains contain almost fabulous wealth to reward the skill and industry of an immense population. This opinion is not based on the impetuous vision of enthusiasts, but is the deliberate conviction of men of knowledge and judgment who have confirmed, by investigation, the conclusions at which they have arrived. Nor has the knowledge of the latent wealth of this Province been confined to that class of men possessed of money, who are constantly on the lookout for the profitable investment of their capital. The mass of the people have awakened to a sense of the value and importance of this great country, and it is now being invaded by a continuous stream of immigration from the east, composed largely of individuals with small means, but possessed of all the qualifications of good citizens, who purpose making this Province their home and of doing their share in developing its resources. These individuals, when they find on their arrival in this country that the statements regarding its richness have not been exaggerated, but that, in reality, in addition to those districts whose wealth in minerals has been placed beyond dispute, there are great unexplored regions which are probably as rich, and it may be much richer, than any yet occupied, naturally communicate the intelligence to the friends whom they left behind, and this means a great deal for it may be said without fear of contradiction that there is not a township in Eastern Canada which has not its representative in the British Columbia gold fields. The whole Dominion is thus kept in constant and familiar touch with this Province; a universal knowledge of the country is disseminated, and a watchful interest in it aroused. This, then, is the position occupied by British Columbia today. Of all the members of the Confederation she is the one to whom attention is directed almost to the exclusion of all the others. In her great mineral properties the surplus capital of the older provinces is being confidently invested, and the Canadian people are beginning to take a sentimental as well as a practical pride in their ownership of such a promising estate. This being the case they will naturally expect it to be administered prudently, intelligently and honestly. They will look to the stewards who may be entrusted with its management for a due fulfidelity and consideration of the future, without which wastefulness and excess are bound to creep in. They will expect in its conduct a judicious admixture of vigor and economy, so that while its resources may be fully developed there may be no impairment of its value. In particular they will insist that no mortgage be placed upon it such as will lessen the revenues or jeopardize the ownership.

To the Dominion government, as the guardian of our rights, as the great representative body which should watch with jealous solicitude and cherish with paternal care the progress and prosperous development of our Province, we in British Columbia and the Canadian people generally, will look for such beneficial legislation as will shield the public domain from the insidious attacks of private enemies, and which will contribute substantially to our material advance and improvement. This we take it is one of the chief functions of government, and we look to the present administration with something like confidence for the adoption and carrying out of such a program. We know that already the rights of the Province have been successfully invaded by the encroachments of designing corporations, and that large tracts of valuable territory have been violently wrested from the rightful possessors through the complicity of those in whom we should have been able to place our trust. Of this we shall have something to say; but it is not beyond hope that even in this particular we may obtain relief from a government which has shown a disposition to consult the interests of the people, and to restrain the rapacity of institutions against which, in the past, the country has been almost defenceless. We cherish the expectation that, with a fuller knowledge of the situation such as must now be possessed by it, the government of Sir Wilfrid Laurier will release us from the strangling grip which an aspiring monopoly has obtained upon our industrial and commercial body, and will stimulate a free and healthy circulation through all the channels of business enterprise.

The people of British Columbia—and while speaking for the Province generally we have a more direct reference to the Kootenay district—are more than desirous, they are eager for the establishment of such enterprises as will enable us at once to commence a systematic and thorough development of our great resources. The opening-up of our mines will mean the rapid settlement of our Province, the investment of immense quantities of remunerative capital, the stimulation of great commercial activity, and the conversion of what once seemed a waste and barren "sea of mountains" into a wealth-producing land, inhabited by a thrifty, an industrious and a happy people. This desirable result can only be obtained, however, when the

enterprise by which this development is to be secured is directed by men who fully comprehend the duty they owe to the people; who, having great means at their disposal, do not strive to monopolize the returns which they should share with the country, but regard themselves as partners in a great commercial undertaking, and are satisfied with a reasonable return for their capital invested, and for the benefit to the Province by the employment of their skill and ability. It is enterprise, actuated by motives such as these, which a new country like British Columbia needs, and it is the duty of the Government to see that any contracts which are entered into with any corporations for opening up of this country should be based upon these fundamental principles of justice, and that they should not be infringed. It would very naturally and properly occur to any man of intelligence that a great corporation, directed by able and enlightened men, who are not insensible to all but purely selfish and personal considerations, would look beyond the immediate present, and would seek to establish themselves, as many old world institutions have established themselves, in the pride and confidence of the people. Looked at from what is regarded as the lowest, that is, the purely monetary standpoint, such a course would surely suggest itself as the best. A great corporation, by judiciously fostering local industries in a new and productive country, by dealing honestly and generously with the people, would build around it a commonwealth of towns and cities of which it would be the wise and beneficent genius, and to which tribute would be willingly paid by a trusting and grateful population.

British Columbia has already had much experience of corporations, organized for the promotion of great undertakings within her borders; in the future she will probably have a still larger acquaintance with associations of capital seeking the privilege of opening up to the world her rich and, as yet, almost undeveloped territory. It would be well, therefore, for her people, it would be well for the citizens of the whole Dominion, who are associate proprietors in this vast inheritance, to "take stock," so to say, of what they actually have as far as it is now known, and to put a prospective value on those districts yet unexplored, so that the history of previous transactions may not be repeated to the spoliation of the Province. It would be eminently wise, too, to examine the position of those great corporations which have obtained concessions from former parliaments, and which, acting on those concessions, have established themselves in the country. By such an investigation we would not only thoroughly inform ourselves as to our present relations in regard to them, but we would discover what we might have to expect in the future; we would, by going to the original sources, learn whether they have carried out the terms under which they obtained the privileges which they possess, and whether these privileges were obtained by coercion and fraud, by corrupting legislators and by dragging the people; we would also discover, perhaps, whether the transactions were conducted and concluded with a realization on the part both of the Government and the corporations that the Province was being defrauded. If the original negotiations were not founded on honest dealing it would be a question whether we might not yet obtain redress and restitution. By such an enquiry, however, we should be able to determine whether the whole conduct of such corporations in their dealings with this Province has been on lines of a fair business venture and investment, or whether it has been a well and carefully calculated conspiracy to get the Province into their power, and tax the property and industry of the people without giving them any reasonable equivalent; whether, in short, the intention was to create a monopoly which only looks to securing immediate profits for its management and stockholders, regardless of the interests of the country and oblivious of the future; or to build up an industry which would thrive with the prosperity of the inhabitants. We think the people of British Columbia will agree with us that the whole history of previous transactions of this kind should at once be taken into most serious consideration by the Dominion Government, and that they should act during the present session and from this time onward with a clear knowledge of how their legislation may affect the Province. If they find among the corporations applying for railway or other privileges in this Province, those who in the past have shown themselves unfit to be trusted, they will surely refuse to have any further dealings with them; but on their past record will condemn them. It is the intention of this paper in a subsequent article to consider the position of the Great Railway monopoly of this Dominion in regard to the lead industry of the Kootenays, and to make some statements of facts which may be of service to the Government at Ottawa.

THE RIGHTS OF STOCKHOLDERS.

The policy of shutting out the minority stockholders from nearly all participation in the affairs of a mining company is one that in time will have to be legislated against. Anyone owning shares in a mining corporation should, at all times, have access, not only to the books, but also to the properties being operated. This latter privilege should be conceded,

to the end that the shareholders may know the condition of the mines of companies in which they own shares. A shareholder has put his money in and is to the extent to which he has purchased a proprietor. A case in point is the Virginia property in this camp. Information concerning the condition of every other mine and mining property in the Trail Creek division can be readily obtained and access can be easily had to every other property or mine in the camp under certain restrictions. This one property is a sealed book to the stockholders and the public generally. We grant that the general public has no rights in the premises, but we contend that the stockholders should have. If a strike is made in the Virginia the stockholders are entitled, in all justice, to know it.

Under the circumstances the public would, perhaps, consider itself justified in saying that there could be but one construction placed upon the secretiveness displayed by the management of the Virginia. It might be contended that if a strike was made in that property the management would wish to keep the news to itself to the end that the few in the secret and their friends might purchase the share of those who were not aware of the find at less than they were actually worth. If the minority shareholders were in the secret they could not, perhaps, be induced to part with their holdings at the price offered. Perhaps some of them would hold grudgingly to their shares in the hope that a strike would be made, and then part with them through ignorance of the actual condition of affairs in the property. In the case of the Virginia the superintendent is not to blame. His orders are to keep everybody but the miners out of the property. These orders are received from the executive office of the company. There are the individuals who are to blame for the peculiar condition which this property occupies in this camp.

The question now is, have the stockholders of the Virginia company no rights which those in control are bound to respect? This is a question which they may have to answer in the courts. We believe that an equity proceeding, brought by a stockholder would result in a decision to the effect that he was entitled to inspect the workings of the Virginia under reasonable restrictions. There is a principle involved in this question which must, sooner or later, be threshed out by the courts of this province, and the sooner a test case is taken before the courts the better.

Once by one the boards of trade that passed resolutions against the granting of charters to the Kettle River Valley railway last year are coming to the mourners' bench, confessing their grievous sin and recanting their action. The latest to experience a change of heart is the board of trade of Victoria, which is said to be preparing to pass a resolution endorsing the plan for giving the Kettle River Valley railway a charter. It took the opposite action a year ago. The Victoria city council has taken the matter in hand and has passed a resolution urging parliament to grant the desired charter, and so the good work goes bravely on. These incidents show conclusively that the former action of boards of trade throughout the Dominion against the granting of the charter under consideration did not represent the true sentiments of those who adopted them. A false sentiment was created by the subsidized press and the paid agents of the Canadian Pacific railway. When this feeling had been worked up to a certain pitch meetings were called and the resolutions rushed through. Reflection has revealed the falseness of the sophistries used, and there has come a great revulsion of popular feeling, which will render abortive any further attempts which the exponents and disciples of monopoly may make to prevent the Kettle River Valley railway and like companies from obtaining charters.

There is now in the field a small army of "experts," whose business it is to go about the country making examinations of mining claims in all stages of development, says the Mining and Scientific Press. Men thus engaged have assumed a great responsibility, and in passing judgment on mines have not only their own interest at stake, but their opinion usually affects many others. A realizing sense of this responsibility seems to make some men overcautious, and others pay little heed to the result of their report, being satisfied to receive the agreed fee for their opinion. Fortunately the tendency seems to be towards the conservative side, for the most prominent men in the business are generally well-known conservatives, and the lesser lights, finding that a bad error of judgment is likely to result disastrously in the future, are falling in line and condemning almost everything they go to see, and perhaps by so doing make fewer mistakes. A would-be investor may have occasion to look back with regret at a lost opportunity, but such regrets are of a somewhat different nature from those occasioned by large sums lost on unsuccessful "good things." There have been plenty of "lost opportunities" referred to in Kootenay. Many properties that were promptly turned down by imported experts have since developed into dividend-paying concerns. Where little or no work is done on a mineral claim, and where no property in the immediate neighborhood is sufficiently developed to assist an expert in arriving at a satisfactory conclusion, his report, in the first instance, must necessarily be a speculative one. An expert who thoroughly understands his profession, and who desires to make an honest report, can generally make intending purchasers understand fairly well what chances they are taking in buying.

George Purgold left yesterday for the Similkameen country, where he will spend six weeks on a combined hunting and prospecting trip.

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