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An Absurdity of the Tariff.

During the last session of Parliament there was an effort made by several members representing mining constituencies to have the oppressive and prohibitory duties on mining machinery removed. As the result of this effort the following section appeared in the new Tariff List, bearing date of March 28, 1890: "Free mining machinery imported within three years after the passing of this Act, which is, at the time of its importation, of a class or kind not manufactured in Canada."

The appearance of this section gave great satisfaction to the majority of the mining interests, and to the gold miners in particular, who have had to pay the heavy burden of 30 per cent. upon almost all the machinery used by them in mining and milling, and to whose product, from its nature, the N. P. did not and could not afford protection.

Several importations under this Act have come under our personal knowledge, some have been allowed free entry, others had to pay duty, and of this latter class we propose to speak briefly. The language of the section being so clear, and also so comprehensive, it was not supposed that any difficulty could be encountered in its administration.

But in the following case it would seem that the department, or its officers, chose to put their own interpretation upon the words, "mining machinery." Several importations, at divers times since the 28th of March, were made of silvered copper plates which are a part and parcel of the amalgamating machinery of every modern gold mill. These plates are used to catch the fine gold coming from the stamps, and are made of soft rolled copper, subsequently annealed and coated or plated with a thin layer of metallic silver upon one side. They are not used in any other business, or for any other purpose. Entry was sought to be made under this Act, and by the Local Collector was referred to Ottawa, where the ruling was made by the then Acting Assistant Commissioner of Customs that such plates "are not mining machinery, such as was contemplated by this Act."

The absurdity of this reply and its illogical character is briefly shown.

First, as to the fact of its being of a "class or kind not manufactured in Canada." There are no copper works in the Dominion to-day which do or can make the plain copper plates and anneal them. Further there is not an electroplating establishment in the Dominion which has a bath large enough to take in and properly plate these coppers with silver; hence even were the coppers available, the manufactured amalga-

mating plates could not be produced, at present, by any concern in Canada. It is, therefore, evident that these plates are of a "class or kind" which not only *is* not, but which *can* not at the present time be made here.

Now as to the point that these amalgamating plates are not "mining machinery." A gold mine is of little or no value without a mill, and no gold mine that we know of ever *was* a mine until it had a mill. No gold mill is equipped to save the fine gold unless it has these amalgamated plates, which are a necessary and integral part of the machinery and plant. They are just as essential to the proper and economical working of a gold mine as the engine which hoists, or the air drill which bores the rock, or the pump which keeps the mine clear of water, or the stamps which crush the rock. Being, therefore, of such importance that they are "mining machinery" would appear to us to be axiomatic.

In the discussion in the Commons on the 26th of March, on the matter of admitting machinery free of duty, the interpretation of the words "mining machinery" was not directly alluded to, but incidentally was fully expounded from the context. As examples we may quote Mr. Mara, who, when speaking of Kootenay, said: "Here we have hundreds of tons of ore on the dumps that, in treating, would give employment to a great number of men," obviously this treatment referred to is metallurgical. He says further when speaking of British Columbia: "We say that such machinery as concentrating machinery, quartz mills, reduction mills, etc., are not manufactured here. * * * We ask that the Government will take the duty off that class of machinery for a short time." Mr. Dawson said: "There are certain things such as diamond drills and *amalgamators* which are not produced in this country."

Mr. Charlton, who was a member of the Ontario Mining Commission, in speaking of his experience on that Commission, said: "It was found that various kinds of machinery were not produced in Canada, such as for *amalgamating* work, stamps, diamond drills, etc."

We would, therefore, like to ask Mr. Assistant Commissioner of Customs what mining machinery *was* "contemplated by this Act."

The gold miner usually has a hard enough time to make his mine pay, and if he, in the future, shall have to spend time to find out what "was contemplated" by the Tariff when it says one thing and means another, he will pray for the deacease of the Tariff or the "contemplator" or both.

Florida Phosphates.

Dr. Francis Wyatt, of New York, who has recently returned from a professional visit to Florida fully bears out our forecast of Florida as a competitor in the phosphate market. Here are his concluding remarks:—"To take up such short options as are now offered on lots

of land in various counties at great distances from each other, under any conditions of price or surface indications, is simply suicidal, since they allow no time for efficient inspection. The country is wild and practically unsettled. Traveling in the interior is attended by the greatest difficulties and inconveniences. There are no wagon roads suitable for transportation purposes, for the horses sink everywhere knee-deep in sand. The railroad facilities, broadly speaking, are nearly nil, and the postal and telegraphic services are utterly inadequate. Under these circumstances (and I am rather understating than overstating facts), the control of a widely disseminated lot of workings carried on simultaneously would be impossible.

As to the question of quality and usefulness of these phosphates, I consider that the large number of my analyses of samples taken in all directions and under all kinds of conditions gives a satisfactory answer. It has been said that these phosphates are, to a great extent, combinations of phosphoric acid with alumina and iron, but I have shown that in the great majority of cases this is really a misapprehension. On the whole, their average richness is less than we were led to expect, and the proportion of really high grades is extremely small. While I can see no present outlet of importance for the second-class matter, the rich boulder material compares favorably with many others much appreciated by manufacturers of superphosphate. If they are properly selected before shipment, I can, therefore, foresee no possible objection to the high grades, and I believe they will find a ready market at European ports directly their composition is fully understood."

Dr. Wyatt thinks the field may prove profitable to those who purchase and work mines with judgment: but intending purchasers are warned of the disastrous results that will follow to those who are led away by the prevailing "boom" and pay exaggerated prices for surface indications or anything but high grade test.

Arbitration.

The losses sustained through the deplorable strikes at the Springhill and Wellington collieries, not only to the employers and employes, but also to the consuming public, is fitting illustration of the necessity of arbitration as a simple and suitable method by which these and all other demoralizing disputes may be smoothed over and adjudicated. For many years boards of arbitration have coped with the great conflicts between capital and labor in Europe, Great Britain and the United States, and having proved successful in these countries it cannot be doubted that in instances like the present they would be of immense service to both parties in effecting a satisfactory solution of the questions at issue. The benefits that these boards have conferred upon the coal and other trades are incalculable. A most friendly feeling has taken the place of hostility, and confidence and mutual respect