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THE MONTH.

A FIRM of Victoria metallurgists and assayers recently presented a petition to the Premier, praying for the abolition of the Government GOVERNMENT Assay Office, on the grounds that COMPETITION, that institution seriously interfered with the practice of private establishments doing business in the Province, and that such competition was, moreover, unfair, for the reason that the Government office was maintained at the public expense. That there is some foundation for the grievance complained of will not, we think, be questioned. No professional men are, perhaps, as a class more poorly paid than assayers or analytical chemists and it is certainly not desirable that the Government, whose advantage in the matter of prestige is necessarily considerable, should be regarded as a competitor in this already somewhat restricted field of professional work. On the other hand the abolition of the Government Assay Office altogether would be, in our opinion, a very regrettable and ill-advised step, its practical utility and value being fully recognised throughout the country. But the work of the office should be more strictly confined to investigations of an experimental and scientific nature, in the interests of the mining industry generally, rather than to a class of examination for private individuals that could be as well performed by qualified men who depend on work of this description for a livelihood. For the protection of private assayers, and yet not absolutely to prohibit the public from sending ore samples for assay examination, or for check purposes to the Provincial analyst, we would suggest that a scale of fees double those ordinarily charged by assayers in private practice, be imposed at the Government office. If this were done all cause for complaint on the part of private assayers would be at once removed and while the Government would be called upon to contribute a small additional sum

for the maintenance of the office—the Provincial analyst, deriving at present a part of his income in fees from private sources—the efficiency of a Government Laboratory in association with the Department of Mines, would be decidedly more marked than is the case now. In addition, however, to work calculated to benefit the mining industry, which would include, for instance, the melting and stamping of gold bullion; the identification of mineral samples; the naming of rock and specimens free of charge; the testing of ore with regard to their amenability to certain treatment processes; and the assaying and classification of representative mineral specimens for exhibition purposes; the utility of the Government Laboratory would be further enhanced if placed at the disposal of the Department of Agriculture and the Provincial Board of Health, and facilities would be thus afforded for the testing of soils and fertilisers, or for the making of analyses for sanitary purposes.

Mr. Treadgold's able articles, from which in our September issue we were permitted to print extracts,

THE YUKON ROYALTY.

on the Yukon Gold Fields, are now being published in the London *Mining Journal*, for which paper he acted as special correspondent. The reports, especially that one dealing with the imposition of the 10 per cent. royalty tax on the gross gold output from placer claims, have attracted a great deal of attention and brought forth much voluminous correspondence in the columns of the London press, on the subject of royalties in general and the Klondyke royalty in particular. Meanwhile, it must be admitted that Mr. Treadgold makes the best of his case. He points out that the miner is the producer of the Kootenay, and he alone is thus specially taxed there; the many traders who live upon the fruit of his labours get off free, while the miner is heavily burdened. Again, he says, there is in this royalty much of that retrospective nature which is always hated. Purchasers of mines did not include it, contracts with laymen did not take it into account, being made long before it was enacted in many cases. Even when it was known ere the winter's work was arranged, men inside did not believe it, did not think it would be enforced. Then, too, it was decreed by Major Walsh that mineowners should pay all the royalty and laymen none; that is to say, Major Walsh split every dump in half, and said: "This half belongs to the layman and pays no royalty; this to the mineowner and pays all." Thus the owner paid 10 per cent. on the whole with his half share, or 20 per cent. on the amount he received! Work this out, and the owners pay one ounce in every five to Government. It is not surprising that many had to be exempted, while others borrowed money with which to pay royalty—there are, in fact, naturally, many claims which cannot stand such a tax. If one seeks to understand its imposition, one