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The General Mining Association of the Province of Quebec.

The completion of the organization of this Association, at the Windsor Hotel, in Montreal, on the 30th of January, marks an epoch in the history of our mining industry. Great unanimity and enthusiasm were manifested, and the only regret was that in a body where all the members were eminently qualified for the position, it was necessary to select a limited number to form a committee of management. But the fullest liberty was given for nominations, and the elections were unanimously carried.

The attack upon the mining industry made by the Quebec Government in its eager pursuit for revenue, has produced the good effect of bringing into union all the persons interested in mines and mineral lands. The wide scope given to membership will have a favorable influence in securing breadth of view, and a pleasing variety of personality and attainment, which cannot fail to promote the effectiveness of the Association in its organized work, and the pleasure and benefit of its members. In the present condition of our mining industries, the number of professional educated mining engineers, who have collegiate authority to append the mystic letters M.E. to their names, is too small to permit of the existence of an exclusive Association of Mining Engineers, and it was wisely determined to make the membership as broad as possible.

This Association will prove of undoubted value as an organization to watch for and oppose hostile legislation, or to promote favorable legal enactment. "What is everybody's business is nobody's," the old proverb says, and it is desirable to have a representative authority to take action in the common interest when emergencies arise. Probably the action as regards legislation will be mainly defensive; for the prevailing sentiment in this respect appears to be a desire to be let alone. The miners have never lobbied for subsidies or protection, but have shown commendable independence in trusting to their own efforts in their arduous and hazardous struggle to win mineral treasure from nature's grasp. But they have almost too patiently borne the imposts and restrictions that have oppressed them in consequence of the favoritism shown by the Dominion and Municipal Governments to manufacturers, by which all their expenses have been increased without any corresponding benefit; and now that the Quebec Government has

singled them out to bear the brunt of direct taxation, it is high time for them to cry, Hands off! and to declare that in this professedly free country there shall be special privilege to none, unjust infliction upon none, and equal opportunity for all.

Legal operation, whether defensive or positive, it is to be hoped will be the smallest sphere of the Association. From the quarterly meetings we may look for its greatest benefits. The chief of these will probably be the value of personal acquaintance and the interchange of ideas. Our mining interests have in many cases suffered from jealousy and rivalry, a lack of intelligent co-operation, and even the manifestation of malignant opposition. The recognition of fellowship in a common cause, which is brought about by association for combined effort, tends to the dispersion of these unworthy sentiments and to the development of a more far-sighted friendliness and spirit of mutual helpfulness. By the comparison and discussion of methods of work all parties are benefited; for it is true in mining as elsewhere, that no one has a monopoly of all knowledge; and he who overcomes his unwillingness to impart useful information to rivals, is always rewarded by return favors, and often finds himself the gainer. Our mining operations have been carried on, for the most part, in crude fashion, by so called "practical" men, whose undertakings might often be improved by the application of "skilled" knowledge. By rubbing up against one another at the meetings, they will wear off some of the angles of exclusiveness and conceit, and be rounded off for more effective service, besides expanding their humanitarianism. The reading of papers by the best talent of the country will be a valuable educational influence both to the members and, by their publication, to the country at large. Several papers by some of our most prominent scientific men have already been promised, and it is expected that at the first quarterly meeting, which takes place in April, at Montreal, there will be a great feast of reason, to be followed by a flow of soul at the banquet.

We appeal to the mining men of all conditions and capacities to unite for mutual benefit in maintaining this organization, which may be made the means of great individual culture and happiness, as well as the instrument of the country's material progress in the development of her mineral wealth. If any one has a criticism to make, or a suggestion to offer, instead of uttering it in a carping fashion in the press, let him show his genuine interest in the mining industry by joining the Association and trying to make it what he thinks it ought to be. But we believe that the gain in knowledge and enthusiasm which may be derived from membership in this Association will permit some future tales of success to be told which otherwise would never have been uttered, and that through its influence an impetus will be given to what is undoubtedly the most romantic, the most speculative, and possibly the most profitable of all pursuits—the Mining Industry.

The Interview with the Premier.

On Wednesday, the 11th instant, a committee appointed by the General Mining Association of the Province of Quebec, held an interview by appointment with the Hon. Mr. Mercier at the Government offices in Montreal. There were present Hon. George Irvine, Capt. R. C. Adams, Alderman R. Prefontaine, and Mr. B. T. A. Bell, representing the deputation, and also Messrs. S. P. Franchôt, A. H. Murphy, Major R. G. Leckie and others. Hon. Mr. Irvine reviewed at some length the legal objections to the new mining law, pointing out that it confiscated rights which had been obtained by purchase, and declared all mines to be the property of the Crown, even though the Crown had previously ceded them to individuals for a consideration. Such a revolutionary enactment, he intimated, would in all likelihood be disallowed by the Dominion Government; but before taking any steps in that direction he desired to call Mr. Mercier's attention to the matter, trusting to his sense of justice to revise the enactment.

Capt. Adams, speaking especially for the phosphate interest, pointed out practical objections to the new law. He said that if the royalty was to be collected by the original purchasers, who had bought lands at low prices from the Government, there could not be much objection, beyond the point raised by Mr. Irvine that it involved a breach of contract, but in nearly every instance the mines now working had been purchased at prices varying from \$50 up to \$1,000 an acre, and these prices had been paid solely on account of the assurance conveyed by the Crown patents that the title gave absolute ownership of the minerals forever. The amount of capital thus invested in the land created a heavy interest charge, and the imposition of a royalty in addition would prove ruinous to some of the less prosperous mines. Already it had checked investment in the industry, and an agent of foreign capitalists intending to invest in Canadian phosphate lands had just received a cable recalling him to Europe in consequence of this enactment. He stated that the miners approved of the principle of leasing or selling lands subject to a royalty and with compulsion of working, but would have the terms of acquisition even more favorable, so that the prospector or discoverer might be encouraged to work his finds. He further called attention to the arbitrary powers given to inspectors, and the vexatious nature of the law compelling the erection of fences around pits. The offer of half of the fine to informers he considered especially demoralizing, and likely to lead to injurious action on the part of discharged or discontented employees. Finally, he objected that the law had been framed without consultation with those engaged in the industries, who understood their requirements, and some parts had evidently been copied from foreign enactments, and were not applicable to prevailing conditions in this country.

Mr. Bell followed with statements of the in-