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AS TO NICKEL.

RECENT experiments made by the naval authorities of the United States at the navy yard at Annapolis, Maryland, demonstrated the fact that what is known as nickel steel is the best material known with which to manufacture armor plates for war vessels. The importance of this discovery cannot be overestimated; for with the use of nickel steel the invulnerability of armor is not only greatly increased, but the weight of the armor is greatly diminished.

This fact having been definitely established, the most important question growing out of it is the supply of nickel. It is said that there are but two known available deposits of nickel in the world from which the metal can be had in commercial quantities. One of these is in New Caledonia, a French penal colony in the South Pacific Ocean, the product of which, either as ore or matte, goes to France for conversion into commercial metal; and the other is in the Sudbury district, in the western part of the Province of Ontario, Canada. The output of the New Caledonia mines is comparatively small, the capacity of the Canadian mines being said to be at least ten times as great. At this time the product of the Sudbury mines is, we understand, the equivalent of about fifteen tons of metal a day; the market value of the article in the United States being about fifty cents per pound.

There is a mine in Pennsylvania, we believe, from which small quantities of nickel are produced, besides which there are said to be no other known deposits in the United States. To encourage this industry the American tariff has heretofore imposed a duty of fifteen cents a pound upon importations of refined nickel, and a similar duty upon the nickel contained in importations of ores or matte. The Sudbury mines, as is well known, are owned by American capitalists, Mr. S. J. Ritchie, of Akron, Ohio, being, we believe, the largest owner. During Mr. Cleveland's administration as President, an effort

was made to reduce the duty on nickel, both the Mills Bill and the Randall Bill placing the duty at ten cents a pound. But neither of these Bills passed, and the duty remained at fifteen cents. An effort was made some months ago to have nickel ore and matte placed on the free list in the McKinley Bill, but the influence of the Pennsylvania nickel mine owners and the prevailing sentiment defeated the move.

The adverse American tariff on the one hand, and the distance from Sudbury to Europe on the other, made it expedient that the Canadian ores should not be carried out of the country, but put through a preliminary process at or near the mines, which resulted in the production of matte, in which condition about all the nickel produced at these mines has been carried to the United States and Europe for refinement.

But immediately upon the report of the naval experiments at Annapolis being made known, and the largely increased importance of nickel being shown, unprecedented haste was made in the United States Congress to rush through an appropriation of a million dollars for the purchase of nickel for the use indicated; while at the same time and with equal celerity nickel ore and nickel matte were placed upon the free list, leaving intact, however, the fifteen cents duty upon the refined metal. The explanation of this haste is that the American Government were apprehensive that the British Government might contract with the owners of the Canadian mine to take all the nickel they could produce. Be the reasons what they may, it is evident the American Government have suddenly discovered the greatly increased value of nickel, that there are no known deposits in their country at all capable of supplying their prospective wants, and that their dependence for the article must necessarily be upon Canadian mines.

Recent legislation in the American Congress shows that no friendly feeling for Canadian interests has actuated American legislators in making their new tariff laws. A duty of five cents a dozen upon Canadian eggs is a specimen of the animus that actuates them; and, to protect a small concern in Pennsylvania, they have insisted upon Canadian nickel paying a duty of fifteen cents a pound. This eleventh hour conversion business of placing nickel ore upon the free list is exceedingly thin, and the spirit that prompts it will be weighed in the light of other transactions.

The duty of the Dominion Government in this matter is clear. Sudbury is in Canada. Under this modification of the American tariff whereby nickel ores are placed on the free list, never a dollar's worth of work will hereafter be done there further than to mine the ores, place them on cars and haul them out of the country. They will not even be reduced to matte in Canada. They will all be hauled away to Ohio and go to build up large and important industries in a foreign country. Canada will be depleted of her wealth, and all she will have to show for it will be a hole in the ground. The United States Government did not fail to impose a heavy duty upon Canadian nickel until it was discovered that they wanted it and must have it; and then they were anxious to get it as cheaply as possible. What the Dominion Government should now do is to place an export duty of say fifteen cents a pound upon all nickel contained in ore or matte carried out of the country. If this eventuated in the establishment of nickel refining works in Canada, well and good; if not, increase the export duty until it did.