

Chloride Sodium .....	98.739
Sulph. Calcium.....	1.364
Ch. Magnes. ....	0.016
Insoluble matter .....	0.017

Total .....100.136

Salt is admitted into Canada free of duty if it be imported for use in the fisheries or if it be brought direct from the United Kingdom or any British Possession. On salt other than this is imposed 8 cents per 100 lbs in bulk and 12 cents if in pkge. Out of a total import of 234,643,000 lbs. in the last fiscal year, 231,640,000 lbs. or 98½ per cent came in free. But this quantity, over four million bushels, was not, we should judge, imported entirely for use in the fisheries. For example, we find that 598,718 bushels, equal to 36,000,000 lbs. of salt, not the produce of Canada, was exported to the States and about 50,000 bushels to other countries in 1881. Nor were the imports all from British Possessions, 26,000,000 pounds came in free from countries which were not British besides the 3,003,000 pounds which paid duty.

The importations of salt for several years past have been in 1879, 175,000,000 lbs., in 1880, 212,000,000 lbs., in 1881, 234,000,000 lbs., showing a steady increase, whereas our exports of fish, &c., in 1881 were less than in 1879 which does not confirm the contention that the increased import of salt is being used for the fisheries. We are informed, on the contrary that the fisheries consume less than half of the quantity given as imported. If this be true, therefore, the letter of the law is being evaded, and much foreign salt comes in free which should pay duty. If we deduct the quantity we export the remainder must of course go into domestic consumption. The salt now produced in the County of Huron, Ont., equals, we are told, one-third the consumption of the Dominion. Treble the quantity might just as well be produced but for the disadvantage under which the domestic article is placed in this respect, and in respect of freight by rail.

We have communicated with some of the Huron county producers and learn that the salt they make has to pay \$24 per car freight to Toronto, 200 miles, while English salt is carried twice the distance for \$10 to \$11 per car, a discrimination against our own people and our industries which there can be nothing to justify. What the Ontario salt manufacturers require is to be placed on a footing of equality with the foreign as regards carriage, in which case they could, we believe, send their salt to the Maritime Provinces and might bring back coal in return. The duty on salt does not appear to benefit them. If it was intended to give Canadian producers a chance of a

living profit by restricting the American supply, it does not appear to succeed therein. Nearly 6,000,000 lbs. of American salt came in to Canada last year.

The proposal has been made to place a duty upon all salt, and give a rebate of the duty upon all which is proved to be for use in the fisheries. But this, it seems to us, would be a roundabout and not desirable proceeding. If the tariff presses, as we are told it does, upon the salt makers by roundly taxing their tubing, pan-metal, machinery and fire-brick, they have surely the right to demand that the salt which comes into the country from abroad, shall conform to the requirements of the tariff.

#### AMENDMENTS TO THE LIEN ACT.

At the instance of certain mechanics of Toronto, employed in the building trade, the Government of Ontario has brought in a bill to amend the Mechanics' Lien Act. By clause 13, it is proposed to enact that :

"In case the land upon or in respect of which any such work as aforesaid is executed, or materials or machinery are or is placed, or labor performed, is encumbered by a prior mortgage or other charge, and the selling value of the land is increased by the construction, alteration or repair of the building, or by the erection or placing of the machinery, the lien under the 'Mechanics' Lien Act,' or under this Act, shall be entitled to rank upon such increased value in priority to the mortgage or other charge; and the seventh section of the said 'Mechanics' Lien Act' is hereby repealed."

There is nothing inequitable in making the lien operate on the increased value which the building confers on the property except when the building is just up with money borrowed on mortgage; but there will sometimes be great difficulty in ascertaining the two values, the value of the land without the building, and the value of the land with the building. Especially would this be difficult if the land had not been recently sold before the building was commenced; where it had been purchased just before the building was commenced there would be something to go upon. But would the *bona fide* selling price, even in that case, be held to be the real value, for the purposes of this Act? Certainly no better standard could be got. Would it not then be well to enact that whenever any parcel of land, so built on, had been sold within a certain time—one, two, or three months—from the time when the building was commenced, the price paid for it should be held to be its true value? It would never do to make the cost of the building the measure of the increased value of the land, for there are many cases in which such increased value could not be realized by a forced sale of the property or any sale at all.

As the clause stands, the two values would have to be ascertained by evidence, and some hard swearing on one side might be expected. The cost would be increased by the number of witnesses, and there would be so much the less left for mechanic and owner.

The mortgagee, in the case of new buildings, might lose by the operation of the proposed clause, because he lends not merely upon the value of the land but upon the joint value of the land and building, advancing money as the structure proceeds. At present many builders, who are themselves the *entrepreneurs*, do not borrow till they get the roof on, and it is evident that the building, equally with the land, furnishes the motive for the mortgagee to lend. In view of this fact, it becomes important to ascertain what interpretation the courts would put upon the words "prior mortgage" in clause B; whether the priority should date from the commencement of the building or only the registration of the lien. In any case this class of loans will be much more difficult to obtain, and the first to suffer will be the mechanics and laborers for whose special benefit the amendment is proposed. There are laws of political economy which act of their own force. One is that no lender of money will run inordinate and unknown risks. Another is that a law intended to give an advantage to labor over capital will defeat its own object, because capital will take wings and fly to more secure quarters; and labor instead of having obtained an undue advantage, will be in danger of finding itself without employment.

#### THE BORROWER'S FRIEND?

Mr. Orton is the father of a bill now before the House of Commons, which is intended to be strongly in the interest of borrowers and against that of lenders. But we venture to say that, if it were passed into law, this bill would prove more injurious to the interests of borrowers than to those of lenders. At present, any mortgage made since the law of last Session was passed, after it has run five years, is payable at the option of the borrower, who, for that privilege, must pay three months' interest in advance. Mr. Orton proposes to reduce the time from five to three years. Also, that interest on interest in arrears of interest should not be recoverable; and that an overdue mortgage may at any time be discharged by paying the capital and the amount of interest due up to the time the money is tendered. In the latter case, six months' interest is now payable after maturity. It might perhaps be reasonable to reduce the six to three months' interest in such cases, but this is the utmost extent to