

BY THE WAY.

A NORWEGIAN firm is reported to be engaged in the manufacture of bricks from condensed petroleum for fuel purposes. These bricks are said to give out four times as much heat as coal, and without smoke. In view of the attention which the production of petroleum is at present receiving as the result of recent discoveries in Western Ontario, this might be an opportune time to experiment with the manufacture of petroleum fuel bricks in this country.

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A CONTRACTOR from Uncle Sam's domains came to Toronto not long since for the purpose of tendering on a contract about to be let. After taking the quantities from the specifications and making his estimates thereon, he enquired in a matter-of-fact manner what commission he should allow for the architect. He seemed greatly surprised on being informed by the architect that in Canada it is not customary for architects to accept commissions from contractors. The inference might reasonably be drawn from this incident that the practice of accepting commissions from both client and contractor is one which obtains to some extent across the border.

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As an illustration of the old saying that one must look abroad for home news, I find the following paragraph in an English technical journal:—"It is said that many hundred rolls of wall paper with solid black grounds, designs for the most part in slate-colour, are yearly used in Canada by French Canadians. These people, when they go into mourning, never do things by halves, but even hang their private apartments with these gloomy papers, indicative of a death in the family." The improbability of this story was so evident that I caused enquiries to be made in Quebec regarding it, and found as I expected, that there was not the slightest truth in it. In fact, the very reverse is true—the French Canadians being partial to lively colors.

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DROPPING into the office of a well-known solicitor in Toronto the other day, I was informed of a peculiar incident which occurred in connection with the testing of cement. Two buildings were in course of construction, by different contractors; the same architect and clerk of works having charge of both. The contractor for one of the buildings obtained a quantity of cement which he believed was according to specification and would stand the necessary test, but it was refused by the architect and his superintendent as being of an inferior grade. It was consequently stored in a downtown warehouse. The two contractors, being on friendly terms, the one whose cement had been refused sold the same cement to the contractor of the other building, and it was accepted without a word of complaint. What rendered the transaction still more peculiar was the fact that the specifications governing the cement were exactly the same in both cases. Either the architect and his clerk were unduly severe on the first contractor, or allowed inferior materials to enter into the construction of the building in which the cement was used.

It is reported that the Danville, Que., Slate and Asbestos Co. is to be capitalized at \$2,000,000. English capitalists lately visited the works in connection with the proposition.

DUTY ON BUILDING MATERIAL.

MESSRS. Joseph Wright, president, J. W. Taylor, manager, and David Carlisle, director, of the Toronto Radiator Manufacturing Company interviewed the Tariff Commissioners at Toronto and asked that the duty on radiators be allowed to remain as at present, the duty of 27½ per cent. being considered sufficient under certain conditions. They were, however, desirous of having a bonus of \$4.80 per ton on exported radiators, whether made of Canadian or American iron. The competition from the United States gave considerable cause for complaint. Labor was cheaper there than here, was of an inferior class, and the vast expanse of this country made freight expensive. Mr. Taylor said that radiators sold in Toronto 30 per cent. cheaper than in the United States, and the cheap rate of freight, viz.: 14c. from Boston to St. John, compared with the 58c. rate from Toronto to St. John compelled the Canadian concern to sell 10 per cent. cheaper in St. John than the United States firms did, in order to meet the American competition. The present duty of 27½ per cent. ad valorem was, if anything, not high enough, as it gave the American concerns an opportunity to work off their surplus stock in this country.

At Hamilton representatives of sewer pipe companies asked for the imposition of a duty of \$5 per ton on sewer pipe. The present duty averages 35 per cent. In the event of there being no specific duty they asked that the value for duty be placed at 70 per cent. off the American list instead of 77 per cent.

Among the reasons presented for a specific duty was that double-strength pipe was frequently admitted as ordinary standard pipe, whereas it should be 20 per cent. dearer. There were in Canada five factories, but there was no association for keeping up prices.

William Findlay, builder and roofer, asked for a lowering of the duty on slate for roofing purposes. He said the duty used to be 80 cents per square, but it was subsequently changed to 20 per cent. ad valorem, and at the last revision was fixed at 30 per cent. He asked that the duty again be reduced to 20 per cent. The source of supply was chiefly in the United States. There was one quarry in Quebec, but that concern could find a market in its own district for its output. The difficulty in obtaining supplies was often great, and builders were seriously hampered in their work. With a lower duty, slate would be cheaper and would be more generally used.

The Hamilton Blast Furnace Company asked for protection for their works. The capacity of the furnace was stated to be two hundred tons of iron per day, but the average turnout was one hundred and twenty tons. They intended next season to bring the ore from Lake Superior by water transportation. Since starting they had purchased Canadian ore, found chiefly in Hastings county, 10,000 tons, costing \$35,000. They have produced 21,000 tons of pig-iron. Of this 10,000 tons have been sold and delivered, and 4,000 tons are booked, leaving a little over 6,000 tons not sold. They have paid in inward freight on ore \$66,000, and \$7,000 in outward freight. Their wage bill amounts to \$1,150 a week, making a total paid in wages \$46,000. If the present protection were withdrawn they would lose the whole of their investment. If the Hamilton furnace was well encouraged it was the intention to go into the manufacture of steel, employing at least 500 men. It was stated that about 16,000 tons of pig-iron were produced in Canada in a year from five blast furnaces.