

CANADIAN PHOSPHATE TRADE.

For the past ten months a report of progress at the phosphate mines has been regularly published in the REVIEW, and as no change of any importance has occurred in the condition of the mines since the last report, it will, no doubt, be of greater interest to those engaged in the industry to learn something that bears more directly on the outlook for the future profitable working of the deposits. A movement has been afloat in Montreal to circulate exaggerated and incorrect statements concerning the present condition of the phosphate market in Great Britain and Europe, and by using the press for this purpose, the would-be manipulators hope to alarm producers to such an extent as to induce them to dispose of the output of their mines at a price much lower than they could get for it by shipping direct to buyers across the Atlantic. This movement has been inaugurated by a few of the middle men in Montreal, who played their first card in an article which they caused to be published in the *Gazette* of that city on the 8th instant, which read in substance as follows:—

"COMPLETE BREAKDOWN OF THE PHOSPHATE MARKET—Latest cable advices report that the phosphate market is so overstocked that business is impossible at any price. Offers of Canadian phosphate of 80 per cent., at one shilling per unit had been declined by manufacturers; that continental orders have all been cancelled on this market, as English manufacturers are trying to dispose of their surplus on the continent, and a further decline is expected."

The incorrectness of the above statements were only too apparent to all those who had had an opportunity of posting themselves on the condition of the trans-Atlantic phosphate market. At the time of the publication of the article in the *Gazette*, from which we have quoted above, this office was in possession of the most recent information concerning the condition of the English market. A general

dullness characterized the fertilizer trade, but, notwithstanding this, there was no falling off in the demand for Canadian apatite, and the price quoted for it was more than sufficient to warrant owners of mines in working their properties to their greatest capacity. Though early in the season, one sale of 1,000 tons had been reported at 1s. 3d. for 80 per cent. mineral and a standing offer for 2,000 tons additional at same price was left with seller, who retains it under consideration. About the middle of the present month, a letter was received at this office from a firm in Great Britain, who deal extensively in Canadian phosphate, expressing a readiness to enter into contract to purchase 20,000 tons of our mineral, for delivery during the next twelve or fifteen months, and on the 14th instant, an offer was received by cable for 5,000 tons of 70 per cent. Canadian phosphate at 1s. per unit with one-fifth of a penny rise. These facts should be sufficient to completely upset the Montreal bear movement, and to prove that the statements made in the *Gazette*, in its issue of the 8th instant, and reiterated in the same paper on the 19th instant, are unfounded, and totally at variance with fact. Let the phosphate producers of Canada avoid middle men who thus attempt to bring about a serious injury to this important industry for their own selfish temporary benefit. It has been stated that the miners who can forward but a small output are at the mercy of buyers on this side, as they cannot ship direct in small quantities, but such need not be the case if the larger producers will but co-operate with them, and pool their outputs for direct shipment. A letter recently received from Montreal from a well-known authority on phosphate mining and shipping, contains the following:—"Our miners need to pay special attention to maintaining the quality of their product, and they should be cautioned not to ship it before sold, as open consignments have a bad effect on prices."

This is good advice, and we publish it for the benefit of the phosphate miners of Canada.

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE

*In his Annual Report for 1888
thus speaks of*

CANADA'S PHOSPHATE INDUSTRY.

"It is not many years ago since Canadian phosphate began to attract notice in the United States and Europe. Of late years Americans have kept a steady lookout for property in Canada which they could work themselves for the requirements of their own factories. The importance of the fertilizer trade in its present condition, and the proportions it promises to assume in the near future, are the principal causes of this diversion of interest.

When Canadian phosphate first came on the market, some eight years ago, practical men shook their heads at the hard and unpromising looking material. Many of the mills then in use in fertilizer-works were the bhrstones used to pulverize coprolite and other comparatively soft material. The difficulty of grinding has now been overcome, and it is no longer a source of danger to workmen and of perplexity to manufacturers. Instead of using it as they did coprolite, it is mixed largely with other softer materials, which enables the operating chemist to first saturate the raw phosphate with sulphuric acid, and use Canadian phosphate as a drier.

Being a more concentrated phosphate than any other in the world, it has very naturally been sought for to bring up the acid phosphate fertilizer to high percentages of phosphoric acid.

The amount of phosphate shipped from the Port of Montreal during the past calendar year was, in round numbers, 19,000 tons. This industry, in its production, materially benefits the country generally, as the men employed at the mines, the teams that haul it from the place of production, the freightage of it by rail or boat, the transshipment at the seaboard and ocean freight, all represent a certain amount of capital expended by its agency. It is expected that 21,000 tons will be shipped from Canada to Great Britain during 1881.

I have in previous reports remarked that the removal by crops impoverishes the soil and prevents it from yielding as abundantly as formerly, unless the loss is compensated by supplying phosphate fertilizers. In the districts where cattle raising is not carried on the absence of ordinary manure must be compensated for by some artificial stimulant, and experience goes to prove that for the production of cereals of every description, as well as for the strengthening and renewal of worn out lands, no available fertilizer is known that can produce such beneficial results as phosphate when subject to a chemical process, and known to the trade as super-phosphates.

The grain exported from the Port of Montreal in a single year has been estimated to contain 2,574 tons of phosphoric acid, which implies the total exhaustion, so far as phosphates are concerned, of 75,000 acres, the renewal of which necessitates the application of some 6,000 tons of phosphates.

United States statistics of commerce and navigation for 1882-83 show that 1,264 tons of raw, and 7,766 tons of manufactured phosphate were imported into that country from Great Britain direct; whilst only 254 tons of raw phosphate were imported into the United States from Canada, and it is thought highly probable, by a mining engineer who has had long experience in the phosphate industry, that much of the material

which was mined in Canada and exported to Great Britain, is returned either in the raw or manufactured condition to the United States. This circumstance points to the fact that the utmost confidence is placed by American buyers in the thorough system of inspection of the raw material in England, which guarantees the standard by careful analysis, and is the only true means by which can be avoided the substitution of inferior for higher grades, when the raw material is purchased in bulk. A reliable authority on phosphates informs me that raw Canadian phosphates contain 89-91 per cent of tribasic phosphate of lime, according to the most authentic analysis that we have on record from picked samples selected as being the most free from admixture with foreign mineral matter. Cargo samples analysed in England have returned 85 to 86 per cent. from Canadian phosphate mines. As capital increases, and the consumption of fertilizers becomes more general, competition will be keener and our phosphate bearing districts will be worked to a larger extent than at present, naturally tending to further cheapening of production. In a comparative table of the analytical composition of phosphate from the various countries producing it recently published in the *New York Mining Journal*, with the exception of three deposits in the West Indies and one in Spain, Canada ranks the highest. Such a fact as this should have the effect of causing our phosphate producers to open up a direct trade for the raw material with the United States, and show the advantages which would accrue from the establishment in our country of works for the manufacture of super-phosphates."

Phosphate Quotations.

The existing state of the market in England and Europe renders it difficult to quote any definite value, at present, for Canadian phosphate, though the most recent advices from the former country are of an encouraging nature. The latest sale reported is 1000 tons, at 1s. 3d. per unit for 80 per cent mineral, with one-fifth of a penny down, and an offer from same buyer for 2000 tons additional at same price, which is yet under consideration of seller. An offer was received by cable from England, on 14th inst., for 5000 tons of 70 per cent. mineral, at 1s. per unit with one-fifth of a penny rise; this is equivalent to about \$28.25 per ton for 85 per cent phosphate in Liverpool, or \$23 in Montreal, with latest reports that the market is strengthening. One thousand tons have been placed at last mentioned figures, and miners should be cautioned not to dispose of their output until they are made aware of the tendency of the market abroad during the next two weeks.

Riviere du Lievre Improvements.

The plans for the lock and other works to be constructed at the Little Rapids have been completed and are in the hands of the Chief Engineer for approval. They have been designed so as to provide for the ample accommodation of such vessels as the navigation of the river will demand, and all necessary facilities for the driving of saw-logs.