

CANADIAN IRON INDUSTRY.

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(Continued from last issue.)

In considering the progress made it is well to remember the various Acts of Parliament enforced from time to time by England to protect her national iron industry, by preventing the emigration of her skilled artisans to other countries, by guarding against the sale of her inventions to competitors, and lay the imposition of customs duties upon foreign products.

For instance, while the growing scarcity of wood for the supply of charcoal convinced the Government and the people of England as early as 1750 (before mineral fuel had come into use) that it would be to their advantage to allow the free admission of iron in its rudest form from the American colonies, and that as a matter of fact they passed an Act in that year setting forth that it would be of great advantage, not only to the colonies, but also to the kingdom, that the manufacturers of England should be supplied with pig and bar iron from the colonies free of duty, yet they so tully believed in protecting their own home industries, that the same Act that made the rudest forms of iron free of duty (because England was unable to produce the material herself) contained the following clause:—

"That pig and bar iron made in Her Majesty's colonies in America *may be further manufactured in this kingdom*; be it further enacted . . . that from and after the twenty-fourth day of June, one thousand seven hundred and fifty, no mill or other engine for slitting or rolling of iron, or any plating forge to work with a tilt hammer, or any furnace for making steel, shall be erected, or after such erection continued in any of His Majesty's colonies in America, and if any person or persons shall erect or cause to be erected, or after such erection continue, or cause to be continued, in any of the said colonies, any such mill engine, forge or furnace, every person or persons so offending shall for every such mill, engine, forge or furnace, forfeit the sum of two hundred pounds of lawful money of Great Britain, and it is hereby further enacted . . . that every such mill, engine, forge or furnace so erected, or continued contrary to the directions of this Act, *shall be deemed a common nuisance, etc., etc.*"

By the Act in question Great Britain undoubtedly encouraged the production of pig and bar iron in America by exempting them from duties to which like commodities were subject when imported from any other country, but she did this simply because she had not until that date found a fuel substitute for charcoal. A glance at the Act will moreover show that she imposed an absolute prohibition upon the erection of steel furnaces and slit mills in any of her American colonies.

Various other restrictive Acts of Parliament were passed in 1781, 1782, 1785 and 1795 to prevent the exportation to foreign countries of machinery and tools used in the manufacture of iron and steel, and to prevent skilled mechanics from leaving England.

A glance at the protection afforded to the British manufacturers of iron from 1782 to the close of 1825, will demonstrate to Canadians the fact that England owes her greatness in the iron industry very largely indeed to the protection granted to her native industries in the early years of the trade.

Mr. James Mavor, the present Professor of Political Science in the University of Toronto, quoting from Conrad's "Handwörterbuch der Staats Wissenschaft-

ter," vol. 3, page 45, and also from various other authorities, gives the following data in regard to duties imposed at various times by Great Britain in the interest of her iron industry:—

"The duty imposed on pig iron in 1787 was 67s. 2d. per ton. Duty increased 1819 to 130s. per ton on pig iron. Duty raised 1825 by 10s. per ton. Duty altered 1842, 25 per cent. ad valorem on pig iron. Duty abolished 1845.

"Duty on manufactured iron altered 1845, 15 per cent. on manufactured iron and steel; this subsequently reduced to 10 per cent. Duty on iron wholly abolished 1860."

Among other measures quoted by this authority are special rates for carrying coals to iron works, embodied in the earlier railway acts.

The period of protection by high customs duties extended from 1787 until 1860, giving to the iron industry protection of a permanent character for upwards of 73 years.

The restrictive measures cited, although they were in many cases harsh, undoubtedly resulted in building up an industry of great value not only to Great Britain, but to the world at large.

UNITED STATES.—Great as has been the progress made in the iron industries of Great Britain, still more marvellous has been that of the United States, especially when we consider that the development of the American iron industry has been made very largely within the past forty years, and a full consideration of the facts will show that the rapid growth of this great industry has been due almost altogether to the fact that during that forty years the Government of the United States has stood firmly by the policy of protection to the native industry, and that the greatest progress was undoubtedly made when the protection was at its highest point.

In an able article, "From Mine to Furnace," Mr. John Birkinbine, past president Am. Inst. M.E., recently said:—

"In 1866 the United States had reached the production of Great Britain in 1835, that is to say, she was then thirty-one years behind the latter country. In 1884 she was about twenty-one years behind England, and at the same rate of increase for both countries the United States will be about fifteen years behind England in the year 1900, and will reach and pass her in 1950. The production of pig iron of each country for that year, as determined from the equation of their respective curves, being a little over thirty million tons.

"The facts are that in 1890 the United States passed, and has since that time led, Great Britain, as a producer of pig iron."

In a paper read at a meeting of the American Institute of Mining Engineers, in October, 1890, by its then president, Hon. Abram S. Hewitt, he showed a comparative rate of increase in population and pig iron production in the United States for six decades, and brought out the striking conclusion that the production of pig iron has always increased more rapidly than the population, and that the ratio is an increasing one.

Between 1830 and 1860 the production of iron increased twice as fast as the population. Between 1860 and 1890 it increased four times as rapidly, in reality over four times, thus proving that the national wealth continues to grow from decade to decade, at a rate of acceleration of which the world affords no previous example.