

British Columbia Mining Critic.

"I am Nothing, if Not Critical."—Shakespeare.

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NOTICE.

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EDITORIAL.

GOOD NEWS.

It really seems as if at last responsible metal industrialists, possessed alike of wealth and practical experience, may undertake, with advantage to themselves and profit to British Columbia, the increasingly necessary work of establishing an ore smelter and refinery at some convenient point on the southern mainland coast—probably on or near Burrard Inlet. The chief metal men of South Wales, the millionaire Vivians of Swansea, have for some time been represented by a purchasing agent in Vancouver, and have thus extended the range of their business dealings to British Columbia. The Vivians have thus also incidentally ascertained that there are apparently on the British Columbian mainland coast and adjoining islands ample and readily procurable supplies of copper-gold-silver gold, copper, silver-lead and other ores, together also with coal, fuel and lime and other fluxing materials for a successful local beginning of ore smelting and refining. The Vivians, having ascertained this, have associated themselves, as it seems, with the Elliotts of Port Barry, near Swansea, another strong body of metallurgic industrialists, and the two concerns are sending to Vancouver a special representative, charged with the duty of fully investigating coast smelting and refining opportunities in situ, and, if sufficiently favorably impressed, entrusted with the inception of practical measures having as their object the early building and operation of a smelter and refinery. The firms interested are not financial adventurers of the Selover type, nor are they company promoters seeking large bonus and other profits in return for introducing British or American capital into a coast smelting enterprise. They are concerns literally with millions sterling behind them, and no doubt mean business, if only they find a good business opportunity, which we confidently believe they will, greatly to the benefit of the promising if as yet infantile

precious metal and copper mining industry of the Coast and Gulf Island districts of our Province.

THE PROPOSED INCREASED DUTY ON LEAD.

It would appear from trustworthy statistics, that Canada's present yearly consumption of lead and lead products amounts to under 10,000 tons, whilst the British Columbian output of 1897 came to more than 19,000 tons, such output representing most of Canada's lead production for the year. Hence already the home supply of lead is more than double a home demand, not likely largely to increase with great rapidity, whilst Canada's yield of lead is likely to increase very greatly in the course of the next few years. Hence the imposition of the proposed import duty on lead, of which so ample a home supply is available, would increase the consumer's price of lead by no means largely, though giving a little useful encouragement to home silver-lead smelting, especially in our own Province. In fact, as Mr. Wm. Braden of Pilot Bay puts it in an interesting letter which appears in the present issue of the Canadian Mining Review, the securing of most of the Canadian home market by means of the duty would simply give Canadian silver-lead smelting "a leg to stand on." But as Mr. Braden adds: "The surplus lead could be marketed in the Orient, where in China, Japan and Corea there is a market for several thousand tons per annum of lead and lead products. Lead ore from the Kootenay district has up to now largely benefitted American railways. With smelters, refineries and factories in Canada, and to get the full benefit of the great Crows Nest coal fields, a market must be made for the coal and coke. Thus would this duty directly or indirectly benefit laboring classes and merchants all over Canada, enabling Canada to assert to the United States and to the world at large her independent commercial policy in this respect at least, and become a large exporter of lead to the no small gratification of the hearts of loyal Canadians."

Under such circumstances the experiment of imposing a higher duty on lead imports into Canada would seem at least to be worth a trial. The United States are by various fiscal arrangements, doing their utmost to secure for their country's industrialists almost a monopoly in regard to the smelting and refining of Canadian precious metal, copper and silver-lead ores. It therefore seems opportune for our Dominion rulers to take countervailing action in defence of seriously threatened industrial opportunities of our country.

The Con. Cariboo Hydraulic Mining Co., Limited, is now opening the ditches on its property at Quesnelles Forks and has purchased from Schaw, Ingram, Batcher & Co., of Sacramento, Cal., a large quantity of 40-inch heavy pipe for carrying the water across the ravines. Mr. Wm. Schaw, the head of the firm, was in Vancouver a few days ago on his way east.