COPPER MEN RIDE FOR HEAVY FALL

Immense Over-Production Will Cause Rapid Decline And Vast Loss.

A VAIN EFFORT AT CORNER

Utah Mines Can Keep Up the Supply At Greatly Reduced Price After Butte Closes Down.

P. A. O'Farrell under a New York date line in the Portland Oregonian gives a most comprehensive review of the existing conditions in the copper world. Among other statements is one which is of interest in Utah inasmuch as he affirms that Butte has passed its zenith as a producer and that the mines at Bingham, Utah, and Ely, Nev., are capable of taking care of the output.

His article follows:

Three conflicting interests are at present uniting in hiding from the world the actual facts regarding copper metal:

First—The big selling agents who buy copper ores or copper matte and pay for the copper they contain on the basis of the quotations of the Mining and Engineering Journal. Three big concerns do this: The American Metal company, The Nichols Chemical company and the American Smelting & Refining company. For five months these three companies have been buying copper at current quotations, and have had practically no market for the refined copper. The prices for the five months average about 23 cents, and during that time they acquired probably 125,000,000 pounds, and have disposed of, say, 40,000,000 pounds. This would leave 85,000,000 pounds, bought at an average of probably 23 cents a pound. If this copper has to be sold at 17 cents, there will be a loss of $4,000,000. If sold at 14 cents, a loss of $7,250,000.

Second—The United Metal-Selling company sells on commission only, but it advances money to the mines on the unsold copper at a rate of 5 per cent. It has been doing this for six months, and it now finds itself with a load of probably 150,000,000 pounds, on which it has probably advanced $25,000,000 and which it must carry for the mining companies till sold.

Third—The brass and wire and copper-plate manufacturers, who bought copper at the average of 23 cents a pound and find that they cannot market the wares made out of high-priced copper, and they are desperately anxious to have high quotations for copper kept up until they have disposed of the wares made out of this high priced copper.

COMBINED TO KEEP UP PRICES.

The United Metal-Selling company is controlled by H. H. Rogers and William Rockefeller, and these have a most vital interest in keeping up the prices of copper metal as the chief owners of Amalgamated Copper.

Thus it follows that copper manufacturers, producers, refiners and selling agents combine to make believe that the price of copper metal can and will be fixed at 18 cents a pound. The copper mineowners of the world would naturally be pleased if an 18-cent copper market could be fixed and retained permanently. That would mean excellent dividends for the stockholders of copper mines. It is, therefore, of immense importance to discover whether an 18-cent copper metal market is possible.

The Spanish American war, the South African war and the Russo-Japanese war created vast and abnormal demands for copper. The effects of that abnormal demand lasted till the beginning of the present year. It gave rise to the theory so fondly cherished by copper men that the demand was greater than the supply. Abnormal prosperity in America and in Europe helped out the theory of over-consumption, and the producers marked up prices of copper till the metal was selling at 26 cents a pound.

CONSUMERS STOP CONSUMING.

The real consumers of copper at once called a halt. The telegraph and cable companies wanted no copper above 18 cents a pound. Galvanized iron wire was cheaper, and they returned to the use of galvanized iron wire. The telephone companies put off extensions and would buy no copper wire. Galvanized iron nails and galvanized iron sheets were substituted for copper in thousands of specifications till the copper manufacturers discovered that their business had completely dropped away from them. It is only half or a quarter what it was. The building of new electric power plants and new trolley lines has ceased. There is a stay in all attempts to electrify steam railroads. The high prices have demoralized the copper trade of the world, and the American producers of copper have about 300,000,000 pounds of copper on hand that they cannot dispose of.

VAST SURPLUS PILING UP.

Meanwhile, the copper mines of America keep on producing copper at the rate of 2,000,000 pounds a day and the rest of the world is adding another 1,500,000 pounds a day. In 1906 the world consumed 1,500,000,000 pounds of copper. At the present rate of consumption 1,000,000,000 will suffice for 1907. In other words, there will be a copper surplus of 500,000,000 pounds at the end of 1907 unless consumption can be stimulated for the last four months of this year. The world is now producing 4,500,000 pounds of copper daily. Since April 1 it has been consuming less than 2,500,000 pounds daily. There has been going on an accumulation of 2,000,000 pounds daily. It is still growing at that rate. It will keep growing at the same rate till Jan. 1, 1908, and in the 120 days till then we shall have added another load of 240,000,000 pounds of copper to the present stupendous accumulation of 300,000,000 pounds. Roughly speaking, there will be 500,000,000 pounds of surplus copper at the end of the year. Even if copper were dropped to 12 cents a pound tomorrow, it would not get rid of the present surplus. The world's copper manufacturing trade is utterly demoralized. The financial world is out of gear and it will take a year or two to set it right, and meanwhile the copper mines of the world will keep grinding out copper faster than the consumption.

CORNER WILL LOSE MILLIONS.

It is idle to blame any particular group of copper men for the present situation. The Guggenheims, the American Metal people, the Nichols Chemical people, while declaring the price of copper too high, were just as greedy for high prices as the Standard Oil crowd. The Standard Oil selling agency is probably carrying a load of 150,000,000 pounds for its clients, but the Guggenheims, the Nichols people and the Vogelstein folks must have 80,000,000 pounds of copper on hand that cost them an average of 25 cents a pound and is paid for. Eventually this immense load of copper must be sold at probably less than 13 cents a pound. That represents a loss of $8,000,000; and the other mining companies selling through the United Metal-Selling company will get $15,000,000 less for their product than they expected when they mined it.

Twenty years ago the Secretan Syndicate undertook to corner copper. It put it up to 18 and even to 20 cents a pound. In the process it accumulated about 200,000,000 pounds of copper. Then Secretan discovered that he was endeavoring to pile Pelion on Ossa; that he might as well try to drain the Atlantic with a soup ladle as hold copper at 20 cents a pound, and the name Secretan stands today synonymous for failure and bankrupt. The Secretan corner had a most disastrous effect on the copper world. When the corner burst, copper dropped to 8½ cents a pound, and it remained about 10 cents for the six years following the crash.

Notwithstanding that, H. H. Rogers, William Rockefeller and Thomas W. Lawson made a second attempt in 1906 and 1907 to corner copper and keep the price above 17 cents a pound. Mr. Lawson was the apostle and oracle of Mr. Rogers in that attempted copper corner. In October, 1906, they found themselves loaded with 285,000,000 pounds of copper and their mines running at full blast. All the independent copper producers were underselling the Standard Oil crowd and they could not dispose of a pound of their copper. Mr. Heinze was selling all the copper he could produce and all copper futures the London market would stand. Others were doing the same.

UNLOADED SURPLUS ONCE.

H. H. Rogers suddenly realized the folly of attempting to keep copper at 17 cents a pound and to get rid of his vast accumulation he had to drop it to 11 cents. The South African war was then raging and the Japanese war was coming and electrical development was forging ahead in every part of the world and it swallowed Mr. Rogers' 285,000,000 pounds at about 11 and 12 cents a pound.

After the failure of the second attempt to corner copper and put it above 17 cents a pound, it is little short of amazing to discover that Mr. Rogers' amazing to discover that Mr. Rogers' Selling agency, and the Guggenheims and the Nichols people and the American Metal people are loaded up with about 280,000,000 pounds of copper at a cost of 23 cents a pound.

It is one of the most extraordinary and perplexing industrial situations that ever confronted the business and financial world. The high prices actually drove the real consumers from buying copper, and the copper financiers are stranded with $50,000,000 or $60,000,000 worth of copper that they cannot unload at half that price.

The outlook is indeed, gloomy. The mines of the world keep producing 4,500,000 pounds daily. The consumption is only 2,500,000 lbs. The additional 2,000,000 daily must be financed by the Standard Oil people and the other selling agencies. It is hard enough to finance the surplus, but it will be still harder to finance in these days of stringent money the daily accumulations of 2,000,000 pounds.

CANNOT CHECK PRODUCTION.

And the remedy? Close the mines till the world uses up the 300,000,000 pounds of copper on hand? There are 100,000 miners, or, including their families, 500,000 people dependent on copper mining in America, an equal number are dependent on copper metallurgy. That is a million people dependent on this great industry, and some people would shut them all out of work for six months to hold copper at 18 cents a pound.

Every pound of copper now produced by the Amalgamated companies costs about 15 cents. The Greene Cananea copper costs 13½ cents. There are dozens of smaller mines whose copper costs from 13 to 16 cents a pound. And when copper drops to 12 cents and stays there for a year or two, the stockholders of such companies will have little cause for joy.

On the other hand, Calumet & Hecla can make 100,000,000 pounds of copper yearly at a cost of 8 cents a pound; Copper Queen, another 100,000,000 pounds at 8 cents, Utah Consolidated, 25,000,000 pounds at 8 cents; United Verde, 40,000,000 at 8 cents; Granby, 30,000,000 or even 50,000,000 pounds at 8 cents. Next year, beginning Jan. 1, the Bingham camp will make 100,000,000 pounds at 7 cents. The Ely camp will make 150,000,000 pounds at 7 cents. The Haggin mines of Peru will make 50,000,000 at 8 cents.

BUTTE HAS PASSED ITS ZENITH.

Suppose Amalgamated closes all its mines at Butte, the Ely and Bingham camps alone will make good the production thus stopped by the wisdom of 26 Broadway. There was a time when the Butte copper mines controlled the copper situation. In three years the Bingham camp will be producing as much copper as Butte and at a cost of 7 cents a pound, while copper will stand the Amalgamated mines above 12 cents a pound.

In other words, the world has outlived Anaconda and Boston & Montana. They were wonderfully rich mines in their day, but if an angel from heaven tell you they are rich mines now, don't believe him. They are good mines still, but frightfully expensive to operate and are past their zenith.

The output of the Amalgamated mines shows each year a lower and lower percentage of copper. In spite of immense metallurgical improvements, Anaconda, in 1906, produced 20,000,000 pounds less copper than during the last year Marcus Daly operated the mines. The tonnage of ore was larger, but the copper contents saved were 25 per cent less. These figures are startling in their significance. There are rich ore bodies still left in Anaconda, but only pockets where Marcus Daly mined bonanza ore chutes between walls. Anaconda will have to stop mining most of its ore with copper at 12 cents, and I cannot see how 12-cent copper can be staved off.

The only other mines Amalgamated has got that can keep going on a 12-cent copper market are the Boston & Montana. I remember when these mines used to make copper for 6 and 7 cents a pound. The costs now are 12 cents a pound and the ore, which used to average 7 per cent and 10 per cent, now averages less than 4 per cent. The costs of mining have doubled owing to higher wages, water, deep levels and shorter hours of work for all operatives. I believe Amalgamated owns some Butte Coalition and Utah Consolidated shares. How much has never been told, but the interest must be insignificant and not enough to affect the value of Amalgamated on a 12-cent copper market.

In October, 1901, when the Amalgamated people were holding copper at 17 cents a pound and Thomas W. Lawson was publishing frenzied advertisements to buy Amalgamated at par or better, I published a letter in which I tried to prove that Mr. Lawson and Mr. Rogers were entirely wrong in holding copper at 17 cents and I advised against the purchase of Amalgamated at 50 cents on the dollar. That letter was published far and wide and time has justified the arguments therein contained.

CHEAP COPPER GOOD FOR WORLD

I believe now as then that copper is the one great indispensable and almost paramount medium of industrial progress in this electrical age of ours. I do not know anything that can or will take its place. But I also believe that nature has stored in the mountains of the earth sufficient copper to supply all the world's wants cheaply. The world's real benefactor is the man who cheapens the necessaries as well as the luxuries of life. It is far better for the industry and commerce of the world to have copper at 10 cents a pound and pig iron at $12 a ton than copper at 18 cents and pig iron at $20 a ton. The cost of food and raiment and lodging is the basis on which labor must be paid and some agency is at work raising the cost of all things to the working people of the country with the ultimate result of forcing up all costs.

Since Mr. Rogers formed the so-called copper trust and tried to corner the world's copper and force consumers to pay 17 cents a pound and better for it, the copper industry of the world has gone far beyond his dreams. Vast copper deposits have been discovered in Nevada that can be mined and reduced at half the cost of the Butte ores. In three years at most Nevada will be making 300,000,000 pounds of copper at 7 cents a pound and Utah will be making 350,000,000 pounds at 6 cents a pound. Mr. Rogers never dreamed of that when he floated his Amalgamated Copper company and tried to corner copper at 17 cents a pound.

Mexico during the same period will get ready to produce 400,000,000 pounds of copper at 5 cents a pound. California, Alaska, British Columbia and Idaho are also developing great mines that will yield vast fortunes on a 10-cent copper market. Mr. Rogers 17-cent copper is what Ingalls would call an irridescent dream. So is a 14-cent or a 18-cent copper market. Nature has deposited too many vast storehouses of copper for man's use and benefit to allow any one to come in and corner the supply. Moreover, copper has the great quality of being as lasting as the eternal hills. It does not corrode or polarize or wear away. The copper cables that link Europe and America will keep working till the crack of doom. War and fire are the only real enemies of copper for then, so to speak, it is lost.

WATER IN AMALGAMATED STOCK

In the copper world, as elsewhere, a supreme law holds good: "The survival of the fittest." The Amalgamated mines were over-capitalized 60 per cent. They could only make good if Mr. Rogers could corner copper and sell it above 17 cents a pound. Anaconda was capitalized for $30,000,000, 1,200,000 shares at $25 a share. Daly and Haggin were always willing to sell it to the Rothschilds for less than $25 a share. In fact, the Rothschilds had a year's option on the control for less than $20 a share. They never exercised that option, but Mr. Rogers came along fresh from his achievements in gas and oil and he gave $40 a share for Anaconda and unloaded it on the Amalgamated Copper company for $60 a share. He thought he could do what the Rothschilds with their 100 years' experience of copper and finance could not do and that is, corner the world's copper supply and sell it at a price that would make Amalgamated worth $150 a share and Anaconda worth $100.

Mr. Rogers' attempts to corner copper and to make Amalgamated and Anaconda sell at two and a half times their cost to himself is a sorry exhibit in the industrial world. Mr. Rogers failed as Secretan failed and as Mr. Rogers, the Guggenheims, Vogelsteins, the Nichols people combined have failed. So will all or most all ultimately fail who essay to defeat the great laws of supply and demand.

These remarks are made at this time when Mr. Rogers and his associates, as well as the Guggenheims and Mr. Vogelstein and the Messrs. Nichols have undertaken to tell the industrial world that from and after Sept. 3 the price of copper will be 18 cents. The banks and trust companies who are financing these various concerns will soon find out that 18-cent copper is a wild, insane and impossible dream. They must ultimately force the liquidation of the mountain of copper growing in the hands of the smelting and refining companies and the selling agencies. Is there any doubt but the result will be disastrous to the people striving to keep copper at a fictitious and impossible price? That attempt, as in the case of the Secretan Syndicate, will drive copper below its real value.

CAN MAKE PROFIT AT 12 CENTS

Six years ago I compared 12-cent copper to $1 wheat, and 17-cent copper to $2 wheat; everybody knows the latter is impossible and the world will soon know that the other is. Copper at 12 cents gives the mine-owner legitimate and in a multitude of cases vast profits and 12-cent copper will allow the world to progress along natural and economic lines. The copper mineowners who cannot make ends meet on a 12-cent copper basis had better seek fresh fields and pastures new. There are thousands of virgin copper mines that can be made to produce copper at 6 or 7 or 8 or 9 cents cost. If Mr. Rogers and his associates had spent the past eight years rounding up such copper deposits from Mexico to Alaska, they could now calmly face the music of 10 or 12-cent copper. But they were too busy endeavoring to crush F. A. Heinze and creating fictitious prices for copper metal.

And to add to the dramatic interest of this whole situation Mr. Heinze has acquired vast copper mines in Mexico and in Utah, out of which in a little while he will produce 300,000,000 pounds of copper a year at a cost of less than 6 cents a pound.

From my point of view, the drop in copper to 12 cents a pound will be a distinct financial and industrial gain. It will stimulate the building of trolley lines, of telephone and telegraph extensions. It will hasten the building of electric power plants and release the $40,000,000 or $50,000,000 now tied up in carrying this dead load of copper metal. As far as the security market is concerned, it is time that it should be emancipated from the influence of Amalgamated. There is no reason why the security markets of Europe or America should be swayed by the antics of such stocks as Amalgamated, or Interboro-Metropolitan. Once these and such as these are at their proper level and the deluge of water squeezed out of them, the legitimate security market can take care of itself.

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TIMELY INFORMATION

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