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The Leader.

For the cause that lacks assistance,
For the wrongs that need resistance,
For the future in the distance,
And the good that we can do.

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 3, 1909.

THE SASSAFRAS MINE.

It is now nearly two years since the discovery of a large body of complex ore was made at Sassafras, and, so far as appearances go, the property has been tied up ever since. It will be remembered that the discoverers of the field laid great stress upon the value of the ore in sight, not to speak of what was probably hidden in the ground below. Mr. Chaffey would think only in millions, and no reasonable figure, it appeared at the time, could effect a purchase, assuming that investors were at hand. As a result of the sensational statements made, several areas adjoining the original lease were pegged out. Even the Exploration Company or those associated with it was not satisfied with the first 320 acres taken up, and additional land was measured off under prospecting leases. Also the coal area at the head of the Clyde was pegged out by others in anticipation of the mine at Sassafras being developed within a reasonable period of its discovery. But there has been no apparent attempt at serious development. The discovery was made about October 1907, and we are now within one month of October 1909, and all that has been done by the syndicate is to secure a couple of suspensions from the Warden at Milton. One of the reasons advanced for asking for a suspension on the last occasion was the alleged fact that the mine was worth £5,000,000, and a company was necessary to develop it. The statement of value may be true or not. Every person in the community would like it to be borne out by results, since we have all to gain by the development of a mine of such extraordinary value. The Warden, without accepting the figures as gospel, thought there was reasonable ground for the application for a suspension, and it was granted. But development seems as far off as ever, and in the meantime a big area of mineral land is held up. Surely, if the mine is worth £5,000,000, something should be done to develop it within two years of its discovery. The alleged value of the mine furnishes the best reason why this community should not permit it to remain idle in the hands of speculators. It is also a reason why a genuine attempt to work it should be made at once. Nobody is anxious to harass a syndicate which is unfortunate enough to be carrying the burden of a £5,000,000 mine on its back. Indeed, every sympathy and encouragement should be offered to the discoverers to reap the reward of their enterprise. The people generally are glad of their luck, but they are growing tired of their procrastination. The advantages to be reaped by the district by the development of a mine of this character are very important, and therefore all

are concerned in the acceleration of work. To the town of Nowra, especially, the opening up of this field will mean a great deal. It would be some compensation at the present time for the loss to business occasioned through bad seasons. There is scarcely a man within the environs of the town who would not feel a benefit direct or indirect from the development of Sassafras. Therefore, while fair play should be extended to those controlling the destinies of the mine, no undue advantage should be permitted to be taken because the people have, up to the present time, not taken action. Other leases have fallen in because it would not pay to observe the labor conditions. This lease has been allowed to circumvent the labor conditions by extravagant statements as to value and the necessity for time to float a huge company to deal with a huge proposition. It seems to us that if the mine is of the value stated, its owners can easily afford to observe the labor conditions after one or two years' respite. If they cannot afford to do it, then their statements are pure moonshine, and the sooner they are compelled to abandon their hold on the ground the better it will be for the community generally.

Political Notes.

Joe Cook, owing to an offensive manner in debate, is about the best hated man in the Federal Parliament.

Mr. Fuller does not appear to be doing too badly as Minister for Home Affairs. His actions in connection with the Federal capital are at least understood. Wade seems to be growing tired of the subject.

It is claimed that Illawarra Laborites will vote more solidly than before at the next Federal election. Very doubtful. Bulli, especially, is always liable to split on some paltry side issue. In any case, a labor victory would be very doubtful.

It is probable that the Shoalhaven, Berry, and Kangaroo Valley divisions of the Illawarra Federal electorate will show a big falling off in voting strength at the next elections. The number of departures since the first election have been very great, due to the attractions north, and the amalgamation of farms south.

Fleming goes for New England. The seat should be won from Labor, but a strong man has not been chosen.

South Coast Railway Service.

The Mayor of Wollongong has issued invitations to all the Mayors of municipalities and Presidents of shire councils, together with the town clerk and shire clerks of the area between Waterfall and Nowra, to a meeting to be held in the Town Hall, Wollongong, on Monday next, 6th September, at 11.30 a.m., to discuss the railway service for the South Coast, and to recommend additions and improvements in the present conditions.

ALLEGED SLANDER.

AN ALBION PARK CASE.

The case in which Annie Rafferty, widow, of Albion Park, claims £2,000 for alleged slander from John Russell was proceeded with before Mr Justice Cohen in Sydney on Tuesday.

Mr. Reid, K.C., and Mr. L. Armstrong (instructed by Mr. A. A. Lyaght, of Wollongong, by Mr. A. McBride, his agent) appeared for plaintiff; Mr. J. C. Gannon and Mr. W. A. Walker (instructed by Mr. E. R. Abigail) for the defendant.

Constable S. D. Clark produced the deposition of Russell in a case McDonald v. O'Gorman and Ernest Rafferty, and it was read. In this case the alleged slander was referred to, and Mr Russell said it was public house talk; not to be taken seriously. "I do" (with the word "not" obliterated) "remember slandering Mrs John Rafferty in the presence of a man named Stapleton," appeared in the deposition.

Mr. Gannon: In our copy, supplied by the Crown, the "not" is put in.

Mr. Reid: You can question the constable about it.

Mr. Gannon: Is the erasure initialled?

Judge's Associate: No. There are a lot of corrections right through the depositions.

His Honor: There is no doubt about the "not" being obliterated; but it is a pity it is not initialled. Who was the deposition clerk?

Witness: The assistant at Wollongong.

His Honor: All erasures should be initialled.

Mr. Reid: The magistrate is a man of great experience.

In reply to Mr. Gannon, witness said that defendant was a well known and well conducted old resident as far as his experience went.

Mr. Reid: My friend has made a remark that his copy of the deposition has the "not" in it. Is his a different copy to ours?

Witness: If I did put it in it was my mistake.

Mr. Gannon: You made no mistake; there was a blotch in it.

DEFENDANT'S STORY.

John Russell, farmer, defendant, 75 years old, residing in the Illawarra district, since 1840, said he knew plaintiff, and had always been good friends with her, and also on friendly terms with Missingham. He went into Gorman's Hotel in August last, and remembered the names of the persons who were there when the alleged slander was said to be uttered. He was perfectly sober. Gorman brought in a testimonial subscription list for Missingham. He said: "He's going away, and Mrs Rafferty will be lonesome now." Witness denied all allegations of slander. He did not say any of the words attributed to him.

Defendant, continuing his evidence, said that in the other court he had said, "I did not slander Mrs John Rafferty." He had said, "All the talk was only public-house blather." He had subscribed to Missingham's testimonial. He had bought a house from Mrs Rafferty in March last year, and up to that time there had been no unpleasantness between them. He had never at any time made any reflections on the characters of either Mrs Rafferty or Missingham.

Mr Reid: Do you never joke about the character of women?

Witness: I never do.

Mr Reid mentioned some expressions that, he said, had been used.

Witness: The beer was in, but the wit was out. It would have been better if it had not been said. There was nothing more suggested in the remark about Missingham being at Mrs Rafferty's than that he was there in a friendly way. He might have heard certain things about another woman when he was a bit groggy. He had heard things and repeated them, but he did not believe them. It was all a joke, and everybody laughed.

Mr Reid: Do you think that in a public house men should joke over the characters of married women?

Witness: No, I do not. It is not right.

Mr Reid: Do you remember saying nothing else except a harmless joke, not a joke even, a mere remark about a man calling at a house?

Case proceeding.

ATTEMPTED SUICIDE.

LATE MASTER OF THE PETERBOROUGH.

William Wilson, 74, an old seaman for many years skipper of the South Coast steamer Peterborough, appeared before the chamber magistrates on Tuesday on a charge of having attempted suicide at Auburn.

The aged skipper resides with Mr. John Scott, of Highgate street, Auburn, and on Monday afternoon a neighbour, Mr. Moyes, heard the report of a gun in the outhouse. Going in he found Wilson sitting on a case, wounded in the head. The gun, which was beside him, had been charged with No. 2 shot, some of which was in his ear, which was badly burnt, as well as the side of his head. He was packing the gun, he said, to send to his son in the country. Constable Nelson evidently thought otherwise, and took the old man in charge. He was sent to the gaol hospital.

Co-operative Butter Factories.

CONFERENCE OF DELEGATES.

A conference of delegates from the numerous factories of the State will be held in the rooms of the Coastal Farmers Co-operative Society, George-street, Sydney, on the 7th and 8th of this month. The gathering will be an important one—each factory is requested to send two directors, delegating them power to act with some authority. The principal subjects to be discussed are:—Fixing a price at which the export season will open, and regulation of Sydney market values; to decide upon a policy (Direct Consignment v. Spot Selling); to consider definite suggestions for the betterment of the average quality of New South Wales butters; one universal brand for all butter made from cream graded second on factory platforms. Australian committee in London: It results and future work for the protection and advancement of producer's interests. Margarine: It's increasing sale in New South Wales and the proposed no color legislation in Great Britain. As an earnest of its desire the Society will defray half the travelling expenses of delegates.