

EN PASSANT.

On another page of this issue will be found an account in detail of the third Annual Meeting and Dinner of the Gold Miners' Association of Nova Scotia, held at Halifax, on the 10th inst., at which the REVIEW was a participant. The occasion was one of unanimity and good fellowship, and was thoroughly enjoyable.

This Association has now rounded out three years of active, useful life; it has trebled its list of members, and has, in a quiet, unobtrusive, but effective way, accomplished a very creditable amount of good work for the gold mining industry of Nova Scotia. The need of such an organisation has been shown by its continued existence and increased prosperity, and the REVIEW wishes it many annual meetings of as happy a nature as the one just passed.

At the business meeting, held in the afternoon, some important amendments and additions to the existing Mines Act were fully debated in a most interesting manner, and it is opportune for the Quebec Government to note that they were chiefly in the direction of obtaining a more liberal as well as a more secure title. The deficiency of the Nova Scotia Act in this respect was well set forth in the paper "On Titles," read by Mr. B. C. Wilson, at the October meeting, which we reprint elsewhere.

Measures looking to the establishment of a permanent base line marked by stone or iron monuments in every gold district, and also providing for a barrier of unwrought country rock between lands owned by different and diverse owners, were also debated, and were committed to the Council to secure enactments of the same.

A pertinent query comes from a Cape Breton miner with regard to the cause of the Springhill explosion. He asks: "Why was the air not split to ventilate sections separately, and thence direct into return air-way? Does it not seem strange that the air having first passed over safety lamps should be returned over naked lights? What was there to prevent a fall of roof in any of the balances, forcing gas down on the main trolley-way, 1,900 foot level, or through on to No. 6 balance?"

Copies of the following resolution, passed at the last regular meeting of the Canadian Institute, Toronto, have been mailed to the mining men of the province:—

"The Geological and Mining Section of the Canadian Institute are of opinion that until a Provincial Department of Mines is established, the mining and metallurgical interests of Ontario cannot receive that attention which their importance demands, and therefore recommend that a Mining Convention be called to meet in the city of Toronto, at the Canadian Institute, on March 31, at 10 o'clock a.m., to consider measures for the advancement of the mining industry and the advisability of establishing a Provincial Department of Mines. The Institute is hereby requested to give notice calling upon the various mining localities throughout the province to send delegates to meet the delegates appointed by the Institute for the purpose of laying their views before the Provincial Government."

It is requested that representatives be sent to this convention, and the invitation is made general to all interested in mining in Ontario. We are heartily in accord with the object of the meeting, and trust that good will result.

We are very much pleased, and so will be all our Canadian readers, to learn of the election of Mr. John Birkenbine, M.E., of Philadelphia, as President of the American Institute of Mining Engineers. Mr. Birkenbine, who is well known in the Ottawa Valley for his papers on iron and its possibilities of manufacture at Ottawa, has at present charge of the iron ore statistics of the Eleventh Census. Mr. Birkenbine is also the mainstay of that excellent periodical the Journal of the Charcoal Iron Workers of the United States.

The trouble at the Wellington, B.C., collieries has assumed a serious aspect; there have been what verged very closely upon riots, and it is feared that the conduct of the strikers may go from bad to worse. The original difficulty seems to have been almost lost sight of in the later issues, and affairs have reached a stage when any settlement has become exceedingly difficult. The situation is much to be regretted, not only on its own account, but also from the fact that an important coal producing centre has become in great part inoperative, and has lost ground that it will take long to recover.

Considerable prominence is given in some of our western papers to the reported sale to an Anglo-American Syndicate of the Badger, Porcupine and other well-known silver mines in the Port Arthur district. These properties having given substantial proof of their ability to produce in paying quantity are unquestionably of great value, but in view of the absolute silence maintained upon the subject by those interested, the report that \$10,000,000 have been realised should be taken with a strong pinch of salt.

To all appearance the first Quarterly General Meeting of the General Mining Association of the Province of Quebec promises to be a notable one. Papers will be read by Dr. R. W. Ells, Ottawa; Rev. Abbé Laflamme, Quebec; Dr. J. F. Donald, Montreal; J. B. Smith, M.E., Glenalmond, and A. M. Evans, M.E., Black Lake. The subjects promising a lively discussion will be those by Messrs. Evans and Smith on "The Responsibilities of the Mine Manager," and "Mine Inspection," respectively. The Meeting will take place in the Windsor Hotel on Thursday 30th April, and in all likelihood will be celebrated with a dinner.

A new boring apparatus for mines has been brought out in England, which is especially designed for use in places where there is a possibility of breaking through into old workings or places in which gas or water may be pent up. With this invention the hole in the coal or other mineral is made gas and water tight from the insertion of the boring tool, and the pressure of either is indicated on a gauge attached. The tube proper is inserted in an outer casing which is placed in a hole two or three feet in depth, and secured to a timber frame as a fulcrum, at the outer end, and beyond has bolted to it a sleeve nut tapped to receive the screwed length of the feed screw of the boring bar, which is

operated by manual or other power. At some convenient portion of the casing tube outside of the "face," a downward branch is provided, which is closed by a straight through valve, which, being opened, allows the debris from the boring tool to fall downward to the floor of the seam.

The patent cure-all man, the life insurance agent, and others of that ilk, have gained a well deserved reputation for unmitigated cheek and cool impudence, and their names will go down to posterity. But a new rival has appeared in the field who bids fair to rob them of some of their laurels. This formidable competitor is actively engaged in pushing an article known as "Shaw's Gas Testing Machine," and the calm impudence of his methods of business almost rise to the height of genius. The following is an extract from a letter written by him to the manager of a large Nova Scotian colliery: "Unless you do avail yourself—and soon too—you may live like Cowans to regret that it was ever your misfortune to be a mine superintendent. You know the responsibility—I know the condition of your mines. Deliberate." In the face of such assurance we are speechless!

From the report of the annual meeting of Bell's Asbestos Company, reproduced in another column, it will be seen that although a large dividend, 15 per cent., was paid, yet it has decreased materially from the percentages paid in the last two or three years. The Canadian business is not responsible for this—that has been as productive as ever—but the English trade has fallen off very considerably, owing to the disclosures regarding the "gratuity system," which appears to have prejudiced the public against the company. How far this sentiment is justified is not for us to say; the modes of doing business vary greatly on different sides of the Atlantic, and what would be severely condemned in one country may be "winked at" in another; the unpardonable crime is to be found out. The financial position of the company is strong, however, and the present disfavor in which it is held should result in greater purity in the future, when it may regain the ground lost in the past year.

At the present time, when the Springhill disaster is fresh in our minds, the conclusions reached by the Prussian Firedamp Commission, elsewhere reproduced, are of especial interest. It may be remarked, however, that these experiments, while of undoubted value, did not show such uniformity of results under similar conditions as would warrant the drawing of anything more than inferences as to the explosiveness of coal dust. In some instances, with the same charge of dust, an explosion would follow in the one case and not in another, without any visible cause for the difference. Moreover, the conditions of an artificial test and an actual explosion in a mine are very different: in the one the atmosphere is charged with dust to a very appreciable extent, such as no miner would fire a shot in, and in the other, the dust is lying for the most part on the floor.