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B. T. A. BELL, Editor and Proprietor.
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The Coal Trade in 1903.

Now that the full details are to hand, showing the output of coal and coke in the Dominion during 1903, we are able to note the satisfactory development of an industry, which is the basis of nearly all our manufactures. It is only necessary to state here that the total output of coal in the Dominion will reach 7,500,000 tons, an increase over 1902 of 1,000,000 tons. According to the most reliable estimates the price at the pit-mouth will be approximately 25 cents less than the previous year and as wages are about 10% higher, it is obvious that the margin of profit must be somewhat less, probably 35 cents.

The greatest development during the year has been in the Maritime Provinces to which the capital has been attracted by the prominence given to the operations of the Dominion Coal Company. The latter has been unfortunate in several respects, the principal one being the fire in Dominion No. 1, which reduced the output of that mine for the year at least five hundred thousand tons, and effectually discounted the increase in the other mines. The fire broke out in March, and in spite of the positive assertions made at time that in two or three months it would be extinguished and the mine producing as large a tonnage as ever, we find during the month of December, after the lapse of nearly ten months, that the output is only 18,936 tons, or about one-fourth of the normal capacity of the mine. A recognized expert who is familiar with the conditions, immediately after the fire broke out said it would take at least a year to repair the damage and would involve the loss of one million dollars. This information was given in our columns, and it is now certain that the estimate was a conservative one, as in the lower levels, which were flooded, the water still remains, and it is doubtful whether it will be all pumped out for many months to come. The principal offset of this disaster is the development of Dominion No. 2, which bids fair to be a large producer, but there is reason to believe that the present management will not attempt to realize the intentions of those who designed this enormous mine in the expectation of the output ranging from 5,000 to 10,000 tons per day. The enormous cost of equipment, which already stands at more than \$2,500,000, compared with the comparatively moderate results achieved, has no doubt served to convince the company's present advisers that an increased number of smaller mines is preferable to one of such gigantic proportions, where a single catastrophe might lay the whole idle, and have a serious effect upon the fortunes of the company. It has also been clearly demonstrated that coal cannot be produced as cheaply in a mine of this extent as in one of more moderate output, ranging from 2,000 to 3,000 tons a day.

The most notable feature in the coal industry of the Maritime Provinces is the very large increase in the production of the Nova Scotia Steel and Coal Company. Under the enterprising management of Mr. Graham Fraser, and his confreres, old Sydney Mine has indeed taken on a new lease of life, and the output of 480,000 tons, must be gratifying to the company. Incidentally we may remark that the Dominion Iron and Steel Company is to be highly congratulated on securing the services of Mr. Fraser, who is beyond peradventure the strongest and the most practical man in his line in the Dominion, and if the tide of success, which has attended his efforts during the last twenty-five years in building up the magnificent reputation of the Nova Scotia Steel and Coal Company attends him in his new venture the result will go far to counteract the regime of mismanagement and incompetency which has preceded him. In a quiet way, and without much blowing of trumpets, the Inverness Railway and Coal Co., at Broad Cove, has made splendid progress, and obtained an output of 1,000 tons a day. We have always expected this property to develop into one of the most important coal producers on the Island of Cape Breton, and if it had fallen into the more competent hands, which are now guiding its destinies, instead of having been exploited ten years ago by our volatile friend Penn Hussey, it would long ago have established a record, and we have no doubt that in the next five years it will be one of the largest and most profitable concerns in the trade. The coal areas in Mabou and Port Hood are slowly but surely developing and the same may be said of those at Port Morien, although the latter are moving somewhat slower owing to engineering difficulties. If the operations were conducted from South Head instead of from the Mainland this mine would become a large and successful mining proposition. With a total output of 5,000,000 tons for the year, the old mining district of the Maritime Provinces has done well, and the increase is only a faint earnest of what may be expected in the near future. Conditions for 1904 are in some respects not as favourable as last year notably in the decrease of American demand and the fall in selling prices. Now that the demand in the United States has fallen off so greatly it will be difficult for Canadian coal to find a market until trade improves. It is probable that the exports will fall at least five hundred thousand tons this year. The St. Lawrence will pay less for coal, and contracts will shortly be concluded at a reduction ranging from 25 to 50 cents per ton; the outlook therefore calls for rigid economy in production, and we believe that producers will be well advised if they call a halt in development, except such as is necessary to maintain the mine in an efficient condition, and content themselves with the profit to be realized upon a more moderate output. Any attempt to