

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENCE

NOVA SCOTIA.

Glace Bay.

The management of the Nova Scotia Steel & Coal Company have not appointed their representative on the Board of Conciliation which was applied for by the P. W. A. upon this company's refusal of the men's demands for an increase in wages. The Nova Scotia Steel & Coal Company say they cannot afford to grant any increase in wages in the present state of the market, and their action in closing down their Sydney Mines steel plant should speak for itself, when considered in connection with the passing of the Scotia dividend. The fact of the matter is that the present state of the coal and iron market tends rather to a reduction in wages than any increases, and it was only the peculiar territorial conditions that attend the operations of the Dominion Coal Company that enabled that company to grant the increase they recently consented to under the Board of Conciliation held in March. It is evident that the Sydney Mines company cannot grant any advance in wages, and whether the leaders of the P. W. A. will have the courage to accept the inevitable, in the face of what will be urged against any such action by the fiery spirits who want to fight, remains to be seen. The fact of the matter is that the labor market is a shade too easy to warrant a strike in Cape Breton.

Mr. Graham Fraser's residence at North Sydney has been turned into what is now the Harbor View Hospital. The funds for the work of this much needed institution have been raised by the workmen of the Nova Scotia Steel & Coal Company, assisted by the company, and by a general public subscription at Sydney Mines. Everybody knows the crying need for proper hospital accommodation in colliery and steel towns, and the citizens and workmen of Sydney Mines are to be congratulated on their successful efforts in this direction.

The long agitated question of whether the P. W. A. shall amalgamate with the U. M. W. A. is to be decided by a general vote of all the members of the P. W. A. to be taken on the 24th of June and may the best men win. Like Josh Billings, we prefer to prophesy after the event.

So far the outputs of the Dominion Coal Company for the month of June have been remarkably good. To the 15th they aggregate 185,000 tons, and if all continues to go well the month of June, 1908, will be in every respect a record one. Indeed records are flying all over just now. All the mines from No. 1 to No. 12 are on the producing list, and new and old keeping up a steady average. In previous years June has shared with October the production of large outputs. The three summer months between are, however, fraught with uncertainty, it being the holiday and picnic season. Picnics are an institution dear to the heart of the Cape Bretonian, but they do not interfere dreadfully with outputs. We have often thought it would be better if men would take their vacation in such a way as not to utterly disorganize everything at one time. It is a scheme that has worked well elsewhere. Every man is entitled to his yearly vacation, but one can understand the language of a colliery manager when his outputs go down and his costs go up, coincident with a picnic. Still, it is pleasant out o' doors in Cape Breton when the wild iris blooms.

One of the Halifax papers contained an article borrowed from English sources, having reference to the influence of a legislative Eight Hour day on the price of coal in that country, which classes as fallacious all arguments forecasting an increase in the price of coal following the enactment of an Eight Hour day, and proceeds as follows: "Poor men ask why they who work much longer than the miners, and receive far less than the miners, should pay more for a common necessity of life in order that the

hours of a body of workmen much more fortunately placed should be still further reduced." This sentence is a gem of truth in the midst of a matrix of error, for the article goes on to insinuate that these same workmen are being designedly stirred up against their fellows by the bogey of dear coal. But leaving this aside, we consider the question asked is a very natural one, and a question moreover that many, very many, British workmen are asking themselves to-day. In conversing with an English emigrant recently the writer was told that the "British Workingman"—that favored person whose glorious possibilities and privileges are daily held up for the fatuous admiration of credulous workmen in this part of the Empire—was walking the streets of Sheffield, Manchester and other large manufacturing centres of England, thousands upon thousands of him, looking for work, asking nothing but work. This man expressed himself as being deeply grateful for the chance that had enabled him to leave his favored homeland to find a less favored spot where he could nevertheless find work and bread. He was a British workingman himself, but he expressed his views on radical legislation in terms that occasioned us some surprise, and led one to ask whether there were not many British workmen who were thinking along similar lines, and whether the day was for distant when there would be a distinct revulsion against the present craze for class legislation gone mad.

Kipling, in one of his "Letters to the Family" properly arraigns the soi-disant British workingman in the following unvarnished way: "England's weakness is an excess of voters who propose to live at the expense of the State. They pride themselves on being an avowed and organized enemy of the Empire, which as others see it, waits only to give them health, prosperity and power beyond anything their votes could win them in England." The fact is the true spirit of labor, the spirit that has made England and her family over the seas, still survives in England, and the blatant demagogue who preaches political economy according to his lights over the beery table of the alehouse, is not the British workingman. There are, to quote Kipling again, "millions of silent careful folk accustomed even yet to provide for their own offspring, to bring them up in the resolute fear of God, and to desire no more than the reward of their own labors. . . . It is one of their preoccupations to send their children to Sunday school by roundabout roads, lest they should pick up abominable blasphemies." And Kipling sums up the matter thus: "Meantime the only serious enemy to the Empire, within and without, is that very Democracy which depends on the Empire for its proper comfort, and in whose behalf these things are urged."

We have digressed from the main point at issue. Our writer states that the price of coal will not be increased by an Eight Hours Act, and he goes even further than this, in the following remarkable statement: "It would be possible to produce and distribute coal at a much lower price than that now ruling, though the workers labored for even less than eight hours, and though the wages were even higher than the trades union standard." After stating that there will be no increase in the price of coal, he states that any increase which may after all take place is explained by the fact that the coal owners "might artificially raise the price of coal to direct public opinion against the Eight Hours Bill." We find it hard to see why the coal owner, who has to pay a higher wage for a less labor return, should need to resort to artificial methods of raising the price of coal. His cost sheets will go up quite naturally, and we think the only thing artificial will be the dividends. At the risk of being thought unprogressive we still think the capitalist is entitled to some return.