

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENCE

NOVA SCOTIA.

Glace Bay, 10th June, 1907.

The Dominion Coal Company have just acquired a Dräger breathing apparatus, and are purchasing nineteen more, making an equipment of twenty sets, with the various oxygen cylinders, refill pumps, and the necessary accessories. Their intention is to erect a rescue station on European lines, and they will train men in the use of the apparatus. This is, we believe, the first modern apparatus of this kind that has been imported into Canada for use in mines. (A full description of the apparatus is to be found in the issue of this JOURNAL, dated 15th April.) The matter of the provision of life-saving apparatus of this kind is at present engaging the attention of a Royal Commission in England, and very recently the United States Government sent over a representative to study the German and French stations on the ground. There is without doubt a pressing need for some such provision in the mines of this continent, and the Dominion Coal Company are to be congratulated on their wise initiative. Many lives have already been saved in European mines by the use of breathing apparatus, and although at the memorable catastrophe of Courrières the Westphalian Rescue Corps arrived too late to save any lives, yet they rendered very valuable assistance in reopening the mines and removing the dead. Since then breathing apparatus of several types have been used in mine explosions, and one doubts whether any modern mining company can afford to be without them.

The work of reopening the Hub Mine is progressing satisfactorily, in spite of the delay which has been occasioned by the destructive nature of the mine water. The mine is being cleaned up underground, and very little damage appears to have resulted from the flooding. The fire affected mostly the upper workings, which are old and practically exhausted, and did not travel to the deep. It is hoped that hoisting will be resumed towards the end of August. The surface erections are rapidly nearing completion, and the re-screening plant for the central banking station is already in operation. Considering that the fire made a clean sweep of all the surface buildings, with the exception of the boilers, the Coal Company's officials are to be congratulated on the expeditious manner in which they have gone to work.

At Reserve Colliery also the new bankhead replacing the old structure that was burnt to the ground last October is in operation, and is a very decided improvement on its predecessor, which was one of the things that "just grewed," and looked it.

The new shaft to the Emery Seam is also completed, and hoisting coal. This mine has now 500 feet of longwall face, and is putting up about 500 tons per day.

Having now got rid of the ice blockade, which so restricted operations in Cape Breton during the month of May, the Dominion Coal Company, along with all the other operators in the Island, are being hampered by the disinclination of their workmen to descend the mine after pay day. This condition of affairs appears to be getting worse, and augurs badly for the output during the "picnic season." How serious a drawback this habit is to the mining companies may be gauged from the fact that during the week preceding the pay day of the first of June the average output of the Dominion Coal Company's mines was 14,800 tons daily, whereas in the week following the pay day it dropped to 12,600 tons. This means a dead loss of tonnage to the operators of at least 20,000 tons a month, a very serious matter when the limited season of navigation is taken into consideration, together with the fact that the fixed charges of the mine and the organization necessary to produce the larger tonnage is in no way reduced to correspond with the post-pay-day yield. What the remedy is for this state of affairs is not at all clear, but

that a remedy is needed is very obvious. This is further a reduction in wages that the Provincial Workingmen's Association might well take under advisement, as 20,000 tons per month additional output would mean quite a little in the pocket of the Cape Breton miner.

STELLARTON.

How easily some folk allow themselves to fall into the blues! Any temporary impediment to their progress sends them to the verge of collapse. The backward drop of the shipping season led some to give utterance to the belief that we had lost so much in coal shipments, that 1907 would show a falling off. It will need a good deal more than a week or two's lateness to supply sufficient ground for any such belief. We have been told, for instance, in the papers that the unfavorable weather conditions mean a loss in shipments to the Dominion Coal Company of some two hundred thousand tons. Nonsense. One cannot judge from the shipments of five months what the year will bring forth. Let me take a glance at the shipments of the Dominion Coal Company for the first five months of seven years, and see what they declare. The smallest shipments in five months for seven years were in 1905, when only 824,000 tons were shipped. The heaviest shipments in the first five months of any year was in 1903, when the large quantity of 1,111,700 tons were shipped. And yet what happened before 1905 was out? Though handicapped by short shipments in the first five months of nearly 300,000 tons, it beat 1903 by over 100,000 tons. The shipments for the five months of 1907, of the Dominion Coal Company, are 68,000 tons behind; but if 1905, badly behind, beat in the long run its predecessors, why not a similar thing happen again? The coal trade is a peculiar business. It is stated that some of the managers are eagerly on the lookout for new customers, while they have booked more orders than they can, to use a common phrase, "Shake a stick at." How is this, I wonder? The reason presumably is that though the managers are at times very neighborly bodies, each is careful that the other does not get ahead in any way. Our managers are good fellows; yes, and diplomats to boot. When in meeting all are chivalrous. Not for worlds, for the life of him, would one hint that some other had been poaching in his precincts. After the meeting, however, one or two, it is said, give relief to their feelings in a foreign language. This may be idle rumor only. I believe the I. C. R. contract will not be awarded, as expected, in the beginning of July. It is hinted that some of the agents of the Coal Companies have asked for delay.

Scarcity of labor is still the cry at many of the collieries, though a few immigrants are dropping in occasionally. Skilled labor is not quite so scarce as unskilled. A large proportion of the skilled labor which finds its way into Nova Scotia from Britain does not, it seems, easily adapt itself to conditions in this country. Many men after being a time in the country hie away to the United States, where they think work is easier and the conditions similar to those to which they have been accustomed. At some of the mines it takes an old countryman fully twelve months to cut as much coal and as easily as a native born. We will never have again in Nova Scotia a sufficient supply of native labor to meet the increasing requirements of our mines. Therefore we shall be forced to look abroad. From what I had read in the United States papers, I had come to the conclusion that it might be as well that the progress of the coal trade be retarded, than that it be furthered by the importation of Huns, Poles, Slavs, etc., as in the United States. I have since, however, been induced to believe that the men of Poland are not a bad lot when rightly treated. It is said they are more amenable to the discipline of the mine than natives. Their ignorance of our ways and of our language may lead them into serious faults, as was the case the other day, when two Belgians were found quietly smoking their