

NICKEL.

Ores of nickel were observed many years ago in connection with the copper ores of Lake Huron, but no deposits of value were found until the C. P. R. penetrated the wilds north of that lake in 1882, disclosing the great masses of copper pyrites and magnetic pyrites in what is now the Murray mine, near Sudbury. Before long these ores, first valued for their copper, were found to contain the more valuable metal. Nickel is first mentioned in our statistics in 1889, but the amount produced is not given, since the Canadian Copper Co., the only producer, refused to make its returns public. In 1890, 718 tons of the metal are reported; in 1891, 2,303; in 1892, 2,082; in 1893, 1,642; and in 1894, 2,570½ tons.

We have only one important rival as a producer of this metal, the French island of New Caledonia in the Southern Pacific, which provides an output about one-third greater than ours. The New Caledonia ores are of a totally different character from ours, consisting of garnierite, a green magnesian silicate; while ours are sulphides, chiefly pyrrhotite and pentlandite. There seems no doubt that our ore exists in unlimited quantities, and the only question to be considered is the amount of the metal which the world can consume. At present the supply seems to equal the demand, and, since the initial plant is costly, there is no object in new companies going into the mining of nickel. The price has been steadily falling, and, as satisfactory methods of refining it are perfected, this splendid new metal must take a more important place in the world. The use of nickel steel comes slowly into favor, and the great saving in weight for a given strength should bring this alloy into use for structural purposes, especially in shipbuilding. If the British government could only be convinced of its value in armor plates we should soon have a boom in nickel mining.

With refined nickel quoted at 45 and 47 cents per pound one would suppose there ought to be a market for solid nickel table-ware and kitchen utensils. Imagine a set of silvery kettles and frying pans replacing the present black utensils in the kitchen!

It is most desirable, however, that we should refine at least a part of our nickel in Ontario, instead of shipping all the matte to the United States or the Old World.