

THE TRUCK SYSTEM AT THE NOVA SCOTIA COLLIERIES.

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AN agitation now in progress down in Eastern Nova Scotia deserves the attention of all interested in capital and labor. The truck system of paying workmen in "dry goods and groceries" is exciting great discontent, and is encouraging, by its demoralizing influences, all sorts of social backsliding. This system—to borrow the language of a delegate to the Workman's Convention held at Truro, Nova Scotia, in 1895, forces the workman to give his labor in exchange for dry goods and groceries. The mine owners in Cape Breton keep stores open; and moral suasion, intimidation by petty officials and even direct coercion, are used to induce the workmen to go into these stores. The laboring man is thus cut off from the advantages of outside competition among private storekeepers; and cannot finance himself on his own money. The high prices absorb his income; and in frequent cases, as another delegate to the convention referred to above stated, the workman is "kept in the thrall of debt." Slowly but remorselessly the wages of the great industrial population of the Sydney coalfield—the "life blood" of eastern Nova Scotia—are being absorbed and taken completely out of circulation. In the midst of industrial developments unprecedented in the history of the country, an acute money famine is distressing the people and demoralizing outside trade. It is becoming increasingly difficult to support the churches and education because money is so much an unknown quantity; church and education taxes cannot be paid in "dry goods and groceries." These mine stores enable the operators of the mine to: 1, make a lawful profit out of the labor of the

employee; and 2, an unlawful profit out of the food, etc., of the workmen. On the 15th of October, 1831, the British House of Commons passed a piece of most stringent legislation against this sort of thing. On the 16th September, 1887, this legislation was called up again for reconsideration and extended to Ireland. The disgusting system of remunerating British workmen in "dry goods" and groceries has consequently become obsolete over there. I went over to Great Britain last winter and thoroughly investigated the old system as it once existed. I found that all classes admitted that the abolition of the system was one of the foundations of Great Britain's greatness; that money became free; labor was freed and raised to an independent status, and that the wealth formerly tied up in the purses of the "classes" now flowed and ebbed among the masses with the regularity of the tides which ebb and flow around their island home. The extermination of the truck system of paying labor in "dry goods and groceries" brought into existence a great and influential class of merchant traders and shopkeepers which, as history teaches, has built up the empire during the past half century as no other class has? Taking their small capital derived from the industrial sections of the country—capital be it remembered which once through the truck system never saw daylight—these merchant traders and shopkeepers of the British Isles threw it into innumerable industries, especially steam-shipping, and created that vast mercantile marine which is at once the wonder and convenience of the world. The abolition of the British system of paying labor in "dry goods