

IN THE NAME OF PEAT

MANY years ago it was all right for Old King Cole to make merry, but the time has come when we must stop fiddling about with the fuel situation. A few thousand of us are down to the bare boards of empty bins, whilst the commissioners, controllers, et al, are singing lullabies in concert to a tune which has conservation as the major motif. But all the fiddling in the world will not alter the fact that, as far as the central provinces of Canada are concerned, we may no longer depend upon Pennsylvania to keep our home fires burning. As to conservation, it is a mighty fine principle if applied in time, but with the mercury cuddling down into the bottom of the bulb and no coal in sight either for conservation or consumption, it amounts to just so much chatter—and the coal-less households shiver just the same.

We have been getting about seventeen and a half millions of tons of coal a year from across the line—and using every pound of it. No preparation has been made to shield us against a shortage. The hardships of last winter and this show plainly enough that it is a day-to-day proposition; and a boy's size snow-storm is sufficient to prove our abject dependence upon clear tracks between the international boundary and the home-town yards for the daily dole of fuel. Go out amongst the poor who keep body and soul together by hauling a bag of coke or a bucket of coal from the yards each day for from five to six months of each year and you'll learn something of a desperate situation. Complacent burghers with a cellar full of anthracite and the thermostat set at 72 may smile in blissful ignorance, but when a few million men, living on the safe side of the international boundary and hundreds of miles nearer the source of supplies, are forced out of work because coal supplies are dwindling, it is high time the complacent crowd joined the chilly throngs and set about to find a remedy.

How can we do it? Simply by signing a declaration of independence! There is no actual reason for our utter reliance in the product of the Pennsylvania coal areas for fuel. In Ontario alone, on lands that have been owned by the Provincial Government for so long they have forgotten about them, there are billions of tons of fuel lying neglected. It isn't a question of sawing wood, but of digging, drying and delivering peat. Peat is the factor which the fuel commissioners have so far scorned. Peat should solve the problem. Let Peat do it. Ontario has been blessed with an abundance of it and so have Quebec, New Brunswick and Manitoba. As a fuel, peat is superior to coal in some respects and quite as good in all the essentials. One ton of peat gives as much heat as about two-thirds of a ton of the best hard coal—and peat burns without cinders or clinkers and leaves very little ash. It makes less soot than hard coal, is cleaner in every way, and is less liable to deteriorate.

AS to the exact quantities available, the government surveys have been rather negligent about tabulating the deposits; but what few peat areas have been delimited, mapped and investigated by the Dominion Mines branch indicate that, by way of a beginning, we may be sure of 28,638,000,000 tons of peat fuel to start with. Within a few miles of Toronto alone seven small bogs are known to contain the equivalent of over 26,500,000 tons of peat fuel.

Let those who would pooh-pooh the name of peat pause for a moment to consider the potential of close on to thirty billions of tons of fuel hoarded away—forgotten, in fact—right at our back doors. It means that right where it is needed most, in the Central Provinces, that provident old lady Dame

COME to think of it, a carload of black stones hauled a thousand miles at a greater cost than it takes to get the stones out of the earth, is a ridiculous way for humanity to get heat. Some day we shall stop shovelling coal because we shall have no further need to make thousands of our fellow beings into cave-men in order to keep warm. Till we get into closer connection with the sun's heat than digging up coal full of gas, we shall need to make use of all we can get that has calories in it. The name of that near-by combustible is Peat.

By REX CROASDELL

Nature has laid by for us sufficient fuel to fill our present needs for over 150 years, which is a much happier condition than faces even the United States, with all its coal mines—that is, if the Yankees stick to bituminous and anthracite.

Then why have we not tapped this reservoir of comfort? Simply because coal was in vogue and peat but a vague memory of a few who knew Ireland, Russia, Italy and a few other European countries where peat is in general use and coal difficult to get. Peat, as it is in the bog, isn't obvious enough as a fuel factor. In its natural state it is usually associated with about nine times its weight of water, and the wet stuff must be removed before the combustible material has much of a thermal value. Coal came to us in hopper-bottomed cars or jute bags, and, so long as the supply seemed regulated only by the demand, it was too handy, that was all.

A few desultory attempts were made to develop a peat fuel industry, and one plant actually got started

shavings will start up a peat fire in an ordinary cook-stove in a couple of minutes, and it need not be kept burning continuously, as is the general case with coal, since a new fire can be easily started when required.

The case for peat has not nearly been completed when its fuel values have been exposed. Scientists have been tumbling over each other lately to announce the fact that peat has a remarkably high content of nitrogen in a form readily made available as fertilizer—at a time when nitrates have been pushed up to a fabulous price at that. As Dr. Haanel told the amazed members of the Conservation Commission the most accessible of the peat bogs of Ontario alone would supply, as a by-product, a few million tons of ammonium sulphate. In Italy they develop large areas of peat for no other purpose than to recover the valuable nitrogen content—and we, with a falling wheat yield and a fuel famine glaring at us to boot, let the stuff lay fallow to fester a crop of berries which nobody bothers about harvesting.



down in Prescott county. Machine peat was made there and shipped to Ottawa and Montréal, where it sold at \$3.25 per ton. The householders who used it found it an excellent fuel for cook stoves and fires, and they asked for more. But the war came along and for some reason or other the baby industry languished and finally lay down on the job. The trouble seemed to be that the natural peat cannot be dried out economically by artificial heat or machine pressure, and the natural method of spreading the stuff out to dry was so simple the scientific johnnies overlooked it. But, as Dr. Eugene Haanel pointed out to the Commission of Conservation, at Ottawa, a few weeks ago, the sun and wind, if let in on the job, will make machine peat without boosting up the pay-roll of the plant one penny.

The process used in Europe is, so far, the only practical one to be applied here. The peat is scooped

this commonplace, near-at-hand fuel that nature gave us when she denied the coal. If the United States puts its threatened embargo on all export coal not used for "war industries," we shall have a very immediate reason for talking in the name of Peat.

NEARLY twelve years the house had been to let, and the house agent was in despair. It was the old, old tale of its being haunted, and tenants simply wouldn't look at it.

At last the agent hit upon a brilliant idea. He equipped every room with elaborate gas-fittings, not only to make them look smart, but to frighten away the ghosts.

A week elapsed, and a rumor reached him that someone had been after the house. He hurried off to the house-keeper of the mansion.

"This is splendid!" he gasped breathlessly to the latter. "I hear that someone has taken the house."

"I'm sure I don't know, sir," replied the caretaker. "Someone's taken the gas-fittings and perhaps he'll come back for the house!"—Mail and Empire.