

MARITIME MINING RECORD.

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WABANA, AS IT STRUCK ME.

—BY THE EDITOR.—

I had long had a desire to see Wabana, with my own eyes instead of through those of others. So many accounts had I heard of the place and its iron ore, the one varying from the others that the conclusion forced upon me was that the whole truth could be reached only by personal observation. Rather unexpectedly, through the courtesy of Mr. Thos. Cantley of the Nova Scotia Steel and Coal Co'y, opportunity was offered me to visit the Island.

Wabana should be reached from North Sydney barring fogs in forty hours, but as fogs have a fondness for the Banks of Newfoundland, it is not safe to bank in accomplishing the distance in schedule time. But for the fog the ship could have made the run in thirty-eight hours; as fog followed us from a few miles after the start to a mile or two before the finish, the time from port to port was forty-six hours. The vessel is Norwegian and so is all the crew with one exception. All the passengers are Scots. I had been told that one could not sail with a better than a Norwegian captain and crew and I had been rightly informed. Captain Ellefsen of the Sommerstad is all that a captain should be from a landsman's standpoint, sociable, affable and considerate. And the steward was all right too, this also from a landsman's, with a fair appetite, view point. I had formed the impression that in order to run their steamers cheaply that the table fare was meagre and lacked variety. That was a huge mistake. If in all vessels flying the flag they live as in this, then they know how to live and do it. As to the accommodation, it was good and there was more of it than on a big liner.

And so this is Belle Isle. However in the world did it get that name. Where are its beauty spots. Certainly there are high and jagged cliffs and there is a nice little piece of shingle; it is wild not beautiful. Over and beyond the cliffs there may be something beautiful but there is little beauty about the Island viewed from the land. And the landing place, well it may be—to some picturesque—a trifle romantic and that is all. It was not built for beauty, and the builders stuck to their plans, and discarded ornamentation.

As soon as the ship was berthed Mr. R. Chambers, who in addition to his duties as chief geologist for the company is superintendent of operations of Wabana came on board and we arranged to visit the mine. The exit from the vessel is ac-

complished by a long step ladder, stationed on the land and which can be lowered to any desired angle. The pier is solidly built of, presumably, pitch pine. We walk on the ground floor and visit first the endless haulage engine. The plant consists simply of three or four upright boilers and an engine. This engine hauls the ore from the mines to the pockets, the distance being two miles. The engine is situated at the bottom of high cliffs. The ascent to the surface or table land is made by an open air elevator. The height is several hundred feet. The ride is a smooth and an easy one, and is attended with no more risk than the ascent in a mine shaft. The descent, the great length of it being visible, must be rather trying on weak nerves, more especially as the end of the platform, looking seaward, is open. Asked why there were no end guards the reply was that the hoist is for freight particularly and incidentally only for passengers.

Belle Isle is not a barren island. Though one might not expect it in proximity to minerals protruding on the surface, the soil is good and productive. There are numerous farm houses visible as one drives over the road leading to the mine. The roads are fairly good and the ground is hilly. There is strictly speaking no village small or otherwise on the Island. There are a half dozen, or more, well equipped country stores. Each of the companies working the ore mines have short rows of houses, but the number of company houses is comparatively small. The Nova Scotia Steel Co. are building a few, not more than half a dozen this summer. Labor is no more abundant here than at the Nova Scotia coal mines. A number of Italians were brought out in June, but there is still a scarcity. A sense of loneliness induces many to make a short sojourn at Wabana. There are few amusements and few society meetings. The Methodists, Episcopalians and Roman Catholics have places of worship; the Presbyterians are too few in number to support a preacher. Though Belle Isle may be a little lonely, it is not so far out of the world as some think it to be. It is only eight miles from Harbor Grace and nine from St. John's. A proportion of the workmen are Nova Scotians, and the bosses mostly come from there too. The miners are paid by the ton, but a majority of the men object. As an inducement to big outputs, the company pays a bonus on every ton of ore mined over and above a specified quantity. The ore until recently was quarried on the surface rather than mined. From this out a large percentage of the ore will come from the slopes which have been sunk to the deep. There is still a very large quantity of the ore near the surface which will gradually be worked away. The Nova Scotia Steel & Coal Co. has from fifteen to twenty million tons of ore on its land leases. The quantity in the submarine areas is a matter of conjecture. The hope that it may reach five hundred million or even a billion tons is not a foolish airy vision. The Nova Scotia Steel Co. is now driving to the submarine areas—there are a number held by the company—through the Dominion Iron & Steel Co's area; this by arrangement. The slope has been driven 1200 feet into the sea areas. Back at the crop 2800 feet the ore was only 6 feet thick. At the face of the slope the