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CIRCULATION.

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THE INFLUENCE OF THE RAILROADS OF THE UNITED STATES AND CANADA ON THE MINERAL INDUSTRY.

To that distinguished philosopher, Dr. James Douglas, the mining world acknowledges a large debt. He is one of that small class of thinkers who can infuse life and meaning into the dry bones of statistics. A sane advocate of the conservation of natural resources, his writings are inspiring and illuminating.

In his latest essay, a part of which appears on other pages of this issue, Dr. Douglas dwells instructively upon the inter-relation of railroads and the mineral industry. Many of the facts that he adduces will be new to our readers; his conclusions are momentous.

It is surprising to learn, or to be reminded, that the first transcontinental railroad, that across the Isthmus of Panama, was built to satisfy a mining craze. This line, connecting Navy Bay on the Carribean Sea with Panama, 48 miles in all, constituted a short cut to California, and for a time the road depended almost entirely upon mining traffic.

The extent to which the development of mining in the Western States depended upon railroad building, and the present dependence of many of these railroads upon freight derived from mining, have hardly been recognized until recently. And Dr. Douglas has done more than any other writer to bring about this recognition.

We have referred before to the comparative proportion of freight attributable to mining in the United States and in Canada. These figures are given by Dr. Douglas as 53.09 per cent. of the United States in 1906, and 35.92 per cent. for Canada in 1908. The total mining freight hauled in Canada in 1907 was 56,497,885 tons, and in 1908, 63,019,000 tons. The corresponding figure for the United States (1906) was 435,450,476 tons. In the latter country coal and iron ore are the two most important commodities. Literally, traffic in these articles is the fundament of many thousands of miles of railroads. Conversely, these lines would never have been created but for the industries based upon the manufacture of iron and steel.

Similarly, the metalliferous mines of the United States support largely or in part many individual lines. These facts are pregnant. Dr. Douglas, while referring to the notable work done by such Canadian lines as the C. P. R., the Canadian Northern, and the Quebec Central in developing the mineral resources of Canada, remarks that our railroads have had less influence in this direction than have those of the United States.

There are several causes underlying this condition. One is, obviously, the relatively sparse population of