REVIEW OF COAL MARKET FOR 1868.

THE immense known deposits of coal in the United States occupy upward of 200,000 square miles or about one fifteenth of the entire superficial area. This is much greater in proportion to territory than in any other country that has been fully explored.

Great Britain has one square mile to every twenty square miles of surface, Belgium one to 22½ square miles, and France one square mile to every 200 of territory. Of these enormous deposits of coal in our own country there are only known to be 470 square miles of productive anthracite coal fields, which anthracite basins are confined to Pennsylvania. Their present available value is estimated to be greater than the entire area of the bituminous coal. These are the only large bodies of coal east of the Alleghanies, excepting the small and valuable Broad Top, and a few other scattering patches of semi-bituminous, which are accessible to the eastern markets.

The past year has been an eventful one in the anthracite coal trade. The winter of 1867-8 was one of extreme severity. Navigation was closed longer than in any winter for 15 years. The stocks of coal at all points depending for a supply by water communication became extremely small, and in some places the supply was entirely exhausted. It was estimated that the markets from Virginia to Maine had not their usual quantities by a million of tons, and prices ruled very high. Navigation by river opened in March, and by canal early in April, when the immediate wants were of course quickly supplied, and the prices rapidly receded. It is notorious that buyers seldom make their purchases on a falling market. The quotations soon declined to about the cost of production. The transporting companies reduced their charges to rates unprecedently low, and the wages of miners and laborers were equally depressed. In short, coal was offered on board of vessels at prices that yielded but little if any profit to producer or transporter. Coastwise freights were equally unremunerative. Coal cannot be stored in large quantities at the mines or on the shipping wharves, and to stop a colliery temporarily incurs a large loss. Producers were, therefore, eager to sell even at the current low rates, which anxiety, so apparent, increased the indifference of buyers, and thus the consumers neglected the opportunity to procure supplies at prices which did not afford fair remuneration to any interest engaged in the trade.

This was the condition of the market till early in July, when the miners and laborers endeavored to avail themselves of a law of this State, enacted at the last session of the Legislature, making eight hours a day's work, and demanded the same pay for eight hours' labor as they had previously received for ten. With the extreme low prices for coal then ruling this addition to the cost was refused. A strike on the part of the miners and laborers followed. It was of short duration in the Lehigh and Luzerne districts, as the employes soon resumed ten hours' work. The strike in the Schuylkill region, however, continued for about seven weeks, during which time the laborers resorted to violence and intimidation to carry their point. Those who were willing to work were prevented by threats and intimidation. Mob law prevailed, and thus a conflict between capital and labor ensued, which has continued, the injurious results of which cannot now be foreseen. The miners and laborers in the Schuylkill region have formed a "Union," which we learn they are attempting to extend to the other coal regions. This organization not only attempts to dictate and control the rates for wages, but to adjust and settle all differences between employers and employes, and in general to pursue a most arbitrary and dictatorial course. It is well known that we have always been earnest advocates for proper wages for labor; but such result cannot be attained and maintained by these illegal and unwarrantable combinations, which must result most disastrously to those engaged. The miners and laborers in the Schuylkill region will learn, perhaps too late, that their employers cannot continue to pay higher wages than their competitors in the neighboring regions.

Work was resumed at ten hours in the latter part of August. The demand for coal became very active and increased in urgency until about November 10. During this period the buyers were as madly anxious to procure supplies at maximum rates as they had been foolishly indifferent about shipping at minimum prices in the spring. At that time we constantly reminded our readers of the folly of the course pursued. We stated to them that the increased price would so stimulate production that the transporting companies would be taxed to their utmost capacity, which would, however, be fully equal to the demand, if fairly distributed through the remainder of the season. This prediction was fully verified. Our advice, however, was unheeded, and the demand was intensified by the great advance in price at each succeeding auction sale of Scranton coal. It may suit the owners of that coal to thus dispose of it at public sale monthly, but it may well be questioned whether the general effect is not pernicious. In a dull market such forced sales depress prices; but the greater injury is when the market becomes excited. A large dealer, or a combination of smaller ones, may first make large purchases for future deliveries, and then run up the prices at auction by active bidding for small quantities, as the amount thus sold is only about 5 per cent of the monthly product in a period of activity. The prices for such small quantities can therefore be, we repeat, readily controlled by small combinations. These sales are extensively reported by telegraph, and wonderfully influence the whole product. With a large advance in the auction prices, the miners immediately increase their demand, which are at once yielded, as the producer is ready to share with the laborer, the enhanced profit. The transporter, too, advances his charges, and the consumer is the sufferer. This was palpable last fall, the auction price for stove (the size most required by those who cannot afford to lay in supplies early) being at the sale in August $5 45, and in October $9.15 per ton. In two weeks the market weakened, shortly after prices breaking, and it was evident that every market had all the coal required at such cost, as coastwise freights had correspondingly advanced. It is not for us to suggest a remedy, but one seems to be much needed.

We have made this lengthy reference to the past to see if such results, and even worse, may not be avoided in the future. The high cost to the distant consumer which prevailed at the close of last year naturally prevented any accumulation between a mere winter stock. The market will therefore be bare again next spring. The quantity of anthracite produced in 1868 over 1867 was about 1,200 tons, which is not beyond the average increase. It may be safely assumed that the same additional quantity will be wanted in 1869. Many reasons could readily be given why the consumption this year should exceed the usual average.

We have now to consider, can such a quantity be mined and transported. It may prudently be stated that any increased production by the Delaware and Hudson, Pennsylvania Coal and Scranton Companies will be required for the Northern and Western markets. Any increase must therefore come from the Lehigh and Schuylkill regions. The supply from the Lehigh district for Eastern markets has been restricted by the want of vent across New Jersey. In all these districts, except the Schuylkill, much regularity in working was maintained during the past year. The Schuylkill region has demonstrated in the three months of September, October and November, that there is a capacity of production and transportation which, with a steady business from the early spring, and with a similar regularity from all the other sources of supply, will render needless any apprehension of a short supply if the coastwise transporation is equal to such a rapid growth in the trade. This branch of the business has not been profitable for several years, except for some months last year, and it therefore may be well doubted whether the supply of coasting vessels will be equal to the demand even if constantly employed from spring till winter, as there have been but few built since the close of the war.

The history of the trade demonstrates, we think, that there is a capacity of production and inland transportation equal to any probable increase of consumption. But it is equally clear to our judgment that if obtaining supplies is deferred, and more especially if any serious accident should occur to any of the prominent transporting works, there would be a well-founded panic about obtaining this article of necessity. It is here proper to remark that consumers can hardly expect to obtain supplies at the prices current last spring. The cost of production is steadily augmenting, and in the near fields expensive machinery for hoisting pumping, &c, is required as the openings necessarily become deeper. As the area enlarges the cost of transportation to market increases correspondingly. Producers and transporters then knew that the capacity of both then exceeded the demand. Minimum prices were the natural consequence. They knew that the excessive prices and enormous profits during the war stimulated the erection of collieries in excess of the requirements. They know that the unremunerative prices since the war have prevented the erection of collieries, with but few exceptions. They have predicted for several years, and now know, that if the increased consumption in 1869 equals the usual average, and many think it will be exceeded, the natural demand has about overtaken the production.

A full supply of coal at moderate cost is a subject of vital importance to all interests. Hence we have given the subject much reflection, and present to our readers the foregoing conclusions. The true and permanent interests of the transporter, the proprietors of collieries and of the miners and laborers, require steady and constant employment, at fair but moderate charges. Excessive prices stimulate production, and reaction and loss follow. If, in the present nearly equal condition of supply and demand, the consumer neglects to secure his supplies when offered on reasonable terms, and thus production is curtailed in the early part of the ensuing year, we feel assured that the other interests will take advantage of his necessities at the close of it. This conclusion has for its basis the history of the trade.—*N. Y. Bulletin.*

RECIPROCITY.

THE restoration of a reciprocity treaty between the British Provinces and the United States, has become a fixed desire with leading parties and interests on both sides the border. The old treaty went into operation in 1854 and expired by limitation in 1864. The prejudices on our part against renewing it grew out of occurences during the "Rebellion," but happily, through good counsels, these prejudices are wearing away, and now the object to be attained seems to be, how far can we unite the interests of the two sections so as to make them mutually beneficial. All remember the general feeling of satisfaction that followed the ratification of the first treaty—Boston especially has reason to remember it. In examining the statistics of trade and commerce with the Canadas, and the Provinces anterior to 1854, and comparing them with those of the ten years included in the treaty, we can hardly fail to notice the beneficial results of reciprocity. Extend this still further, and see how damaging, at least to New England has been the effect of abrogation. While, during the existence of the treaty, our interchange of trade and commerce had increased more than three-fold, since the abrogation it has fallen off to nearly an absolute nothing.

There is one fact that seems to be particularly favorable to this restoration of a treaty of some kind and one which, we think, will not be lost sight of by our national legislators, and that is, the desire for it so thoroughly and generally expressed by the people on the seaboard and at the West. The objections urged against it, so far as we have heard them expressed, are not tangible; one being a feeling of bitterness against our colonial neighbors for their supposed sympathy with the rebels during the war,—the other that the restoration of free trade will prejudice the markets of the West. Neither of these objections can hold ground upon sound reasoning. As we are engaged in negociation for the settlement of the Alabama claims, in the light of policy is it not well to extend the olive branch, when and where it can be done without the sacrifice of dignity, and would not this approach on our part to the former relations with the Anglo-American Provinces aid greatly in bringing about the desired result? As to the second objection, it would be difficult to show a detriment to our Western States by placing the Canadas and the Provinces on their former commercial footing with the United States. We are in every essential sense the legitimate market for the agricultural, mineral, and commercial products of the Canadas and the Provinces,—for their grains, their flour, their coal and their fish.—*Boston Traveller.*

CHEAP OCEAN POSTAGE.

THE British Parliament has lately been memorialized on the subject of lower rates of transoceanic postage. The petitioners ask that the benefit of penny postage shall be extended to letters sent across the ocean. A proposition of this kind is likely to meet with favour in this country. The argument against the present rate is that considering a letter as so much freight, the charges for transporting it are so much greater than for money, valuables, or any other kind of matter sent as freight or by express. The reason why these rates are so much higher is mainly due to the fact that such extravagant sums are paid to the steamship companies for carrying them. For all European mails, except those sent by the Bremen and Hamburg line, the amount received by the companies for transporting them across the ocean and delivering them to the proper authorities in waiting to receive them, is 15c an ounce. By a little calculation it will be seen that, as there are 35,840 ounces in a ton the amount paid for carrying a ton of mail matter is $4.376,000; and as the mails by a steamer often exceed a ton in weight, it is easy to see that far more money is paid by the Government than the service is really worth.

A contemporary, who has gone into this matter with earnestness, calculates that while one may have a ton of bulky goods transported per steamship from England to the United States, for about 20s. or $5, a ton of half ounce letters is transported, at present sea postage rates, at considerable more than $5,000 allowing each letter to way fully the half ounce; but estimating for letters weighing less, and yet post-paid at the half-ounce rate, a ton of correspondence, it is believed, usually nets to the ocean steamship companies about $8,000. On the same theory, it is estimated that eight passengers per steamship, with their baggage, are equal to a ton in weight, and they are carried on some steam lines for $135 in currency, in which is included the cost of maintaining them during the trip, which ought to reduce the actual receipts for passage or transportation to from $90 to $100 each, making the cost of carrying a ton of passengers and baggage from $720 to $1,000. Reckoning thirty-two half-ounce letters to the pound, and 64.000 to the ton, the result at two cents per letter would be $1,280, at least; and, taking the letters of less than half an ounce weight, much more. These are all arguments to prove that the ocean postages are too high, and they are sensible and unanswerable.—*New York Bulletin.*

GOLD RETURNS.

NOVA SCOTIA.—The returns received at the Mines office show the quantity of quartz crushed, at the various mills, with the yield of gold, in the month of December, 1868, to have been as follows:—

Dominion Company's Mill, Sherbrooke — Quartz crushed 320 tons; yield of gold, 129 oz. 9 dwts.

Glencoe Mill, Sherbrooke—Quartz crushed, 168 tons; yield of gold, 72 oz. 8 dwts.

Wellington Company's Mill, Sherbrooke—Quartz crushed, 207 tons 14 cwt.; yield of gold 232 oz 16 dwts 12 grains.

Meridian Company's Mill, Sherbrooke — Quartz crushed, 100 tons; yield of gold, 18 oz 8 dwts. 18 grains.

Chicago Company's Mill, Sherbrooke—Quartz crushed, 50 tons 5 cwt.; yield of gold, 1 oz.

Union Mill, Sherbrooke—Quartz crushed, 8 tons 10 cwt.; yield of gold, 3 oz. 5 dwts.

Palmerston Company's Mill, Sherbrooke — Quartz crushed, 200 tons; yield of gold, 41 oz. 10 dwts.

Wentworth Company's Mill, Sherbrooke—Quartz crushed, 194 tons 16 cwt.; yield of gold, 22 oz 15 dwts.

Lake Major Company's Mill, Waverley — Quartz crushed, 11 tons; yield of gold 39 oz. 11 dwts. 14 grains.

Boston and Nova Scotia Company's Mill, Waverley —Quartz crushed, 146 tons; yield of gold, 52 oz 2 dwts.

Indian Path Mill, Indian Path—Quartz crushed, 27 tons; yield of gold, 5 oz. 13 dwts 22 grains.

Atlantic Company's Mill, Ecum Secum — Quartz crushed, 44 tons; yield of gold, 10 oz. 19 dwts. 4 grains.

A. McG. Barton's Mill, Tangier—Quartz crushed, 37 tons 16 cwt; yield of gold, 24 oz. 8 dwts.

Walter H. Brown's Mill, Montague—Quartz crushed, 62 tons 10 cwt.; yield of gold, 1 8 oz. 3 dwts.

Victoria Mill, Wine Harbour—Quartz crushed, 59 tons 12 cwt.; yield of gold, 32 oz. 14 dwts 11 grains.

Machias Mill, Wine Harbour—Quartz crushed, 78 tons; yield of gold, 24 oz 1 dwt 9 grains.

Orient Mill, Wine Harbour—Quartz crushed, —; yield of gold, 7 oz. 19 dwts. 7 grains.

Eldorado Mill, Wine Harbour—Quartz crushed, 202 tons; yield of gold, 49 oz. 5 dwts. 6 grains.