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Editor:

J. C. MURRAY, B.A., B.Sc.

Associate Editor, H. MORTIMER-LAMB, Secy. C.M. Inst.

Business Manager - - - J. J. HARPELL, B.A.

Circulation Manager - - - A. P. DONNELLY, B.A.

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SPECIAL CONTRIBUTORS

GEOLOGY: Dr. Frank D. Adams, McGill University; Dr. A. E. Barlow, late of Geological Survey of Canada; Professor Willett G. Miller, Provincial Geologist of Ontario; Dr. J. E. Woodman, Dalhousie University, Halifax, N.S.

CHEMISTRY: Dr. W. L. Goodwin, Director School of Mining, Kingston, Ontario; Milton Hersey, M.Sc., Official Analyst Province of Quebec.

MINERALOGY: Professor W. Nicol School of Mining, Kingston, Ontario.

MINING: S. S. Fowler, M. E., Nelson, B. C.; Fred erick Keffer, M.E., Anaconda, B.C.; A. B. Willmott, M.E., Sault Ste. Marie, Ont.; J. C. Gwillim, M.E., School of Mining, Kingston, Ont.; J. Bonsall Porter, M.E., McGill University; John E. Hardman, M.E., Montreal; Fritz Cirkel, M.E., Montreal; Dr. E. Gilpin, Department of Mines, Halifax, N.S.; George W. Stuart, M.E., Truro, N.S.

METALLURGY: Hiram W. Hixon, M.E., Mond Nickel Company, Victoria Mines, Ontario; Stafford F. Kirkpatrick, School of Mining, Kingston, Ontario; A. P. Scott, Dominion Iron & Steel Co., Cape Breton.

COAL: Hon. Robert Drummond, Stellarton, N.S.

NATURAL OIL AND GAS: Eugene Coste, M.E., Toronto, Ont.

CEMENT: Manley Baker, M.A., School of Mining, Kingston, Ont.

CONTENTS

	PAGE.
Editorial	353
Reflections on Secrecy in Arts.....	355
Westphalian Collieries.....	358
Ankylostomiasis	362
Mischief of it	364
Copper Deposits of Nevada.....	365
British 8 Hour Bill.....	366
New Dept. of Mines	367
Mining Laboratory, School Mining, Kingston	369
Reviews	372
Miscellaneous	373
Correspondence	375
Mining News.....	381
Statistics	383

FOLLY

The Canadian public is now being edified by the spectacle of two large corporations fighting out a quarrel in court. Until very recently it was hoped that the Dominion Iron & Steel Company's offer to settle the squabble out of court would have been accepted by its powerful antagonist. But the proffered good offices of would-be mediators were rejected and litigation was resorted to.

It is patent to all those who have followed the history of the Dominion Iron & Steel Company, that it is unable to stand the enormous expenditure entailed by such a suit. Nothing but sheer desperation could have justified its Executive in seeking the arbitrament of the law. An adverse decision will assuredly cripple it for many years to come.

With the Dominion Coal Company the case is different. It is a rich and successful corporation. It can survive total defeat, but not without feeling it severely.

These considerations, however, have nothing to do with the equity of the case.

Some months ago, or even at the initial stage of the disagreement, it should have been, in all reason, quite possible to have arrived at a compromise satisfactory to both of the contending parties. But apparently the actual outbreak of hostilities was precluded by a series of petty personal encounters. In the preliminary interchange of ultimata, decorum and moderation were forgotten and the difference at once became dangerously akin to a personal quarrel. The subsequent course of events has not weakened this impression.

Here, then, we see two of Nova Scotia's most important industries, each the natural ally of the other, engaged in a costly and dangerous struggle, because two or more of the chief officers of each could not sacrifice their personal pride.

We have freely condemned the labour organizations when they have recklessly precipitated industrial warfare. In what terms shall we characterize the men whose lack of the spirit of good citizenship has made possible this lawsuit?

The Federal Government is elaborating legislation which will, when perfected by experience, largely dispense with strikes and lock-outs. If such legislation is necessary to protect the country, all the more necessary is a law which will prevent the owners of public utilities, the operators of subsidized industries, from indulging in internecine war at the expense of the community.

We still pray that, even at the eleventh hour, the feud will be patched up. It is a hopeful sign that one of the litigants has voluntarily offered to submit the matter to any disinterested referee.

Thousands of dollars have been absolutely wasted,