

are called upon to pay royalty paid as much for their grants, as those permitted to mine ore free. By the imposition of a royalty on all mineral, wherever gotten, a few might be disadvantaged, but to the profit of the many. In some cases compensation might justly require to be given—in cases where operations may have been commenced on the assumption that the ore or mineral belonged to the soil—but these cases where bona fide operations had really begun would likely turn out to be surprisingly few.

#### THE EVOLUTION OF THE "PLUCK ME"

From time "immemorial" well on into the nineties, the coal company's store on the north side of Sydney harbor was familiarly styled the pluck me. By whatever name the store may have been designated in the company's book—whatever its official cognomen, colloquially among the workers it ever and always was referred to as the pluck me. The title did not extend easily to the company stores on the south side of the Harbor. If one wished to use the title here, he was expected to put the word surrounded by quotation marks, whereas on the north side all such embellishments were considered unnecessary as if the nickname was indigenous to the locality. That, it was not, however, but a transplantation from across the seas. In former years the appellation may not have been inappropriate, but of late years it has lost any significance it may have had as applied to the stores of the coal companies. Wonderful to say the stores which were designated, in the reddest Anglo Saxon, as a bane, are now considered as a boon, if not actually a blessing without a blessing. Why do we say "wonderful." Because it is a wonder that that which was violently denounced a dozen years ago is now applauded.

In 1897 there was a fierce outcry against the company's stores on the south side of Sydney Harbor, or to be exact in the Glace Bay district. The then Secretary of the P. W. A. was by a faction denounced as an abettor of the stores and therefore a betrayer of the workmen. Though the stores were used as a cry more against the P. W. A. secretary than against the company, the latter who had been losing hand over fist by the stores, declared they would give them up if a majority of the workmen so desired. A ballot was taken. The non contents childishly took umbrage at some supposed informality in giving notice of the ballot and refrained from voting, by their action making the majority in favor of the stores larger than otherwise it might have been. The Dom. Coal Co. had then twice the number of stores it has now, which has opened the eyes of the men to the fact, that they may not, after all, be great money makers. There is now no outcry against Company stores in Cape Breton; the sentiment is indeed the other way. There is a demand that the companies should take part in reducing the cost of living. How are they supposed to be able to do this. There can be one answer only; 'go into the supply business.'

Some years ago a paper published in Glace Bay was very active in its opposition to, and bitter against company stores. It declared them to be a nuisance, carrying on a trade against legiti-

mate dealers. It almost went the length of saying, in fact it did say—that the measure of the prosperity of a community was the number of its stores. The party mainly responsible at that time for the outcry in the press against company stores, has veered round evidently, at least he is on a different tack. In a paper now published in Glace Bay, of which the party referred to is one of the proprietors, we find the following:—"If the wages paid their employees appear just and reasonable, the employers ought to apply themselves to the lessening of the cost of living to their help." Just so. And how are they to do it? We are not given the least suggestion as to any line of procedure the employers might adopt to bring about the desired aid. Probably the writer of the article from which the extract is taken could only make bald and not practical suggestions. We will relate an incident which carries with it a very plain moral:—

A committee of the workmen at Sydney Mines waited upon Manager Tom Brown in reference to wages. The men complained that living was so high that they could save nothing. A zealous member of the committee in course of the conversation exclaimed, "Look at the price of meat, eighteen cents a pound; cannot the company do something for us in the way of cheaper meat."

'Would you like me to do something,' Mr. Brown asked.

'Of course we would' was the unanimous reply.

'What,' asked Mr. Brown, 'would you have the company go into the meat business as well as the grocery and dry goods business. If I did I would have the three or four butchers and all their friends in the community down upon me.'

The answer of the committee man was quick, emphatic, and almost startling:—"To —, the bottom of No. 1, with the butchers and their friends in the community." Mr. Brown laid the committee's suggestion before Mr. Cantley; he approved and the result is that the workmen are getting prime beef at less cost than the workmen in the other mining localities. The writer a short time since went through the store of the N. S. S. & C. Coy, at Sydney Mines, the store that formerly went by the name of pluck me, and was surprised at the variety of articles exhibited and the trade done. In the meat department there were 200 or so neatly and cleanly done up parcels of fresh beef ready for distribution by the three—sometimes four—delivery waggons the store has for the purpose. There is also a fresh fish department. The meat and fish department is fitted with a refrigerator. Those serving at the meat tables had clean white aprons, the floors were well sprinkled with sawdust and the air was pure. Taken as a whole this 'Company' store will compare favorably as to quality and price with any in the province. It is suggested by the Glace Bay paper that the Dominion Coal Co. extend its stores business in order to reduce and keep down prices.

The workmen do not now regard the Dominion Coal Co.'s stores as an evil. Under the management of Mr. McCann the stores do only a legitimate business. No man is asked to deal with the company, and no credit is given. The large cash sales testify to the fact that there is now no ex-