

PROGRESS IN NOVA SCOTIA MINING INDUSTRY IN 1913

By F. H. Sexton.

The present time may occasion some anxiety as to the markets of the immediate future, but none can deny that the year that has passed was a most prosperous one. According to the report of the Provincial Department of Works and Mines, the number of long tons of coal produced in Nova Scotia reached the grand total of 7,200,000. This is the high water mark so far in the history of coal mining in this province. The production exceeded that of 1912 by 400,000 tons, equivalent to an increase of 6 per cent. The coal output in 1913 exceeds that of a decade ago by nearly 2,000,000 tons, equivalent to an increase of nearly 40 per cent.

There are two regretted features in the mining industry of the province during the year that has passed. I refer to the recession in the gold production, and to the increase in the number of fatalities in the coal mines. The value of the gold won last year has dropped to one third of what it was in the first year, for which we have official returns, viz.,—1862. The reasons for this condition are not as clear as might be wished. We have an enormous area of gold bearing measures, nearly five thousand square miles. Much of this ground is virgin at the present time. From the beginning of gold mining in Nova Scotia in 1862, to the present time, over 2,000,000 tons of rock has been crushed, yielding over 915,000 ounces of the precious metal, an average of about \$9.00 per ton in value. Many large mines in the world have a long and profitable history where the amount of gold per ton extracted is less than a third of the average value of our ore. Our prospectors and miners are noted for their hardiness, intelligence, and ability, and have been placed in responsible and lucrative positions wherever they may have wandered away from their native province. The gold is easily extracted from our ores by the simple process of amalgamation. Our gold bearing districts, except in few instances, have never been prospected with even a small portion of the thoroughness of great areas of barren country in Ontario. It is common knowledge among our prospectors, that many trails of golden boulders in the glacial drift have never been followed to the rich leads from which the ore was torn.

A great portion of our prospectors and gold miners have followed the lure of distant fields, and are now in Cobalt, Porcupine, or other great silver and gold camps. One great successful mine attracts capital as honey draws flies, and we must admit that we have never had a gold mine whose name has become world-famous. Our gold veins are usually comparatively narrow where valuable ore shoots occur. The shoots themselves, although persisting in some cases to a depth of 1,000 ft., are often short along the strike of the vein. All the diagnosticians of the present depression in gold mining are not unanimous in their conclusions, nor do all propose the same remedies. Some say that a new era of prosperity will dawn with the advent of cheap power, some assert that drastic changes must be forthcoming in legislation concerning mineral leases, some maintain that provincial subsidies for development are essential, others declare that efficient management, and the application of the newer developments in mining machinery, and metallurgical processes

will solve the problem. It would seem that the whole question was in a state where it could profit by the intelligent study of a competent commission.

The case is not hopeless, and the future is not altogether gloomy. There is a general conviction among our gold miners that the most profitable form of exploitation of our gold deposits will be on a modest scale with a small company. The idea of treating vast low grade deposits in Nova Scotia on a huge scale has almost disappeared. There is a belief that there are many opportunities for handsome profits for the small company which will find the ore shoots and stick to them, if it is economically and efficiently managed. There is a much larger number of such enterprises entering upon extensive operations at the present time than there was a few months ago. The Halifax and Eastern Railway will improve the transportation facilities in a large gold-bearing district which it penetrates. A number of mine managers and miners have returned to the province from other mining camps, convinced that the possibilities in gold mining at home are quite as good as in many other places of much more general repute. Altogether, the outlook for a sane development of our potentialities in this branch of industry, is distinctly encouraging.

Of the increase in fatalities in our coal mines, I will have little to say, because a number of gentlemen, more competent to discuss this, will take up the matter fully in papers which they have prepared on this subject. Most of the accidents were individual cases, i.e., there was no explosion of gas or other serious calamity which involved the death of more than one person. It is perhaps noteworthy that nearly one half of the fatalities occurred to men who were not of Anglo-Saxon extraction. There was a larger percentage of deaths in the mine among those of Latin origin in comparison with the number employed, than among natives and British-born.

I wish to call attention to the fact that our vast riches in non-metallic deposits, such as gypsum, clays, barytes, limestone, and silica, are receiving more attention than has heretofore been the case. We have exported most of these products in the crude state, but with each succeeding year progress is made in erecting plants to convert these materials into various manufactured articles. Our rich heritage in deposits of limestones, gypsum, barytes, etc., will some day form the basis of an immense, staple and profitable industry. Speed the day when this consummation is manifest.

Last summer we were favored by a visit from many distinguished foreigners, who came to Nova Scotia on an excursion of the International Geological Congress. The arrangements of the trip to the Maritime Provinces had been exhaustively planned by the Canadian Geological Survey, so that everything slipped along to the casual observer like a smooth-working automatic machine responding to the plans of its inventor. We were delighted to entertain the visitors, and trust that their memories of this excursion be only half as pleasant as our own. We wish to commend Mr. Brock and his assistants for the truly admirable manner in which the whole affair was conducted, and especially for the wealth and utility of information of the guide books applying to this part of the country, which should be of great value for a long time to come.