

MARITIME MINING RECORD.

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THE INVERNESS COUNTY COLLIERIES.

INVERNESS MINES.

To one who has more or less closely followed the progress of the Inverness, or as they were formerly called the Broad Cove, mines, for the past six or eight years, the most prominent and the most pathetic object to arrest his attention, on a visit to the place is the William Penn Hussey, stranded in the harbor, in the very harbor she was intended to dredge out and make the biggest and the best harbor on all of the northern side of the Island. Her scows are stranded with her and if the boat is not soon put on an even keel she may be engulfed in the shifting sands.

A mighty change has come over the place since Hussey's time. Then there was no railway and Hussey had to ship by water or not at all. He built a tramway two miles long or more from the mines to the harbor, where he had erected a pier with chutes, etc., and many a small schooner he loaded there. But as the mode of working the mine was the most primitive, and as costs all round were high, no profit could be made and the project collapsed, until McKenzie and Mann appeared on the scene, bought the areas adjoining Hussey's, and afterwards these areas also, and built a railway some sixty miles long from Inverness to Point Tupper, and also erected a splendid shipping pier at Port Hastings, seven miles from the terminus.

There are those who say that coal was shipped from the river, about two miles from the village, during the time of the American war. The coal was taken by tramway to the beach and then scowed. The writer has no records at hand of these shipments. In 1865 some fifty tons were shipped by Blanchard and McCully. An effort was made at that time to organize an English Co'y to work the mine and make a harbor at McIsaacs' Pond but the project fell through, probably on account of ignorance as to the large field at Inverness. It was at one time thought the field was limited consisting only of a square mile or so, instead of scores of miles landward and seaward. In these days submarine working of coal was not considered.

Since my visit of last autumn the bank head at the collieries has undergone a great change which must be conceded to be a wonderful improvement. A description of the changes in detail would occupy too much space, but it may be noticed that the full rake does not now run over the weigh scales necessitating a shoving back by

hand, as formerly, in many cases, but after being freed from the rope runs down an incline where the boxes in turn are caught by a creeper and carried up to where there is, let me say, an anti-inclinal. Here each box runs down swiftly and up inclines and coming back by gravity runs to the tipples of which there are two. There are ample means for freeing the coal from the slack, but if the output should be increased in the future, another picking table, a third, may be necessary, as no matter how many pickers there may be, they cannot work to the best advantage if 500 tons passes over the table in nine hours or so. There is a noticeable improvement in the coal, but it would be no kindness to say that the 'brass' has entirely disappeared. Great pains are taken to free the coal from this objectionable material and with encouraging success. An item that adds considerably to the cost per ton sold is the considerable quantity of duff that has to be wasted, but it seems there is no present help for it. At the same time there is a bigger demand for the slack than formerly.

The daily output from the mine,—hoisting is all from one slope—is about 950 tons. This is certainly most creditable to the management. In addition fifty tons are hoisted by night. This coal comes from the leading places, as development work is not allowed to fall behind. The rooms in the mine are worked 17 feet wide, the balances and back-heads ten or twelve feet. Fortunately the per centage of slack to round is remarkably low. At some collieries operators complain of having fifty and in some cases sixty per cent of slack, at Inverness twenty-five per cent only of the total product is slack. Conditions in the mine are satisfactory. The slope is down some 3300 feet, and the sinking of an additional lift say 500 feet will soon be commenced. The main level is 3000 feet long. In the mine there are 420 men and on the surface 80—a total of 500 men a comparatively small force for the output. To the concentration of work, and to the reduction in number of men employed may be attributed the decreased cost of production of recent months. The reduction has been material though the cost is not yet down to a dollar,—so far that has only been accomplished in one place, Halifax, and in this respect Halifax can defy competition.—Costs might further be reduced if the men worked with any degree of regularity. The summer picnic is the bane of Inverness as of most of the other mining localities. It is perhaps a reflection on Nova Scotians, and English speaking miners generally, that the Belgians at Inverness head the tonnage, and, of course, the wage list monthly. Picnics do not allure them from work. Nor do picnics allure a native of whom I heard. This man has to walk four long miles over roads innocent of macadam every morning going to work and the same when his days work is done, and he rarely if ever fails to turn up. He is making provision for old age with never a thought of looking beyond his own exertions for a pension. Pensions are for those who would work if they could, not for those, surely, who can work but won't.

The company has three steamers running regularly this summer with coal. A coaster, which carries 300 tons, the Rennick, capacity 900 tons and the Turret Bell 3800. These with the occas-