

NEWFOUNDLAND

By P. B. McDonald.

There has long been talk of Newfoundland becoming part of the Dominion of Canada; but nothing has resulted from it and nothing is likely to. Newfoundlanders do not care for nor take to the idea, any more than they sympathize with the ideals of the other great country to the south of them the United States. Possessed of an island of 42,000 square miles (which is more than the area of Ireland), and with important privileges in Labrador, this quarter of a million people who have grown up mostly along their far-away east coast, desire principally to govern themselves, live their own lives, and continue undisturbed in the practice of the old-fashioned ways they like best.

It is realized in St. Johns that, in case of confederation, many of their present businesses and viewpoints would appear out-of-date; and it is not entirely clear that the sudden grafting of modern ways on a people devoted to other standards would be as satisfactory as the promoters claim. It must be understood that primarily and fundamentally Newfoundland is a coast line, four or five hundred miles from anywhere, out of touch with railroads and possessed of interests and knowledge only in fishing, shipping and the like.

Mineral Resources of Newfoundland.

Iron—In a mineral way, Newfoundland is of course famous for its two great iron mines under the storm-lashed waters of Conception Bay. Their product, a blocky, hard ore of excellent furnace qualities, is known in all the principal iron markets of the world. With a location on tidewater in the North Atlantic, shipping to America or Europe is equally convenient. It is these two great mines, owned by the Dominion Iron & Steel Co. and the Nova Scotia Steel & Coal Co., which German interests identified with Krupps were so anxious to acquire when, as they fondly hoped, the British colonies would fall to them. Both of the companies on Bell Island have developed their iron ore seams in the most up-to-date manner for the economical handling of large tonnages, and the long slopes extending under the sea for thousands of feet can produce immense quantities of ore for conveying across the little island to sheltered anchorage where the ore steamers are loaded.

Newfoundland's iron ore is accessible, developed, sure. There are many millions of tons in reserve and the various conditions of success, such as labor, transportation and cost have been worked out satisfactorily.

Other Minerals.—Aside from the Bell Island iron mines, whose accessibility is exceptional, the mineral wealth of the colony is locked up from lack of roads and by the general difficulties of doing business in a far-off barren wilderness where the expenses of development become prohibitive. In addition, much of the land liable to become valuable is held by individuals or companies waiting for the boom that never comes. Coal, oil, metals, are known to exist, particularly along the desolate west and south shores; but the combination of qualities necessary for their successful development has never materialized.

Copper ore and pyrites have been mined in Notre Dame Bay on the northeast coast, and several English and one or two American companies have made some profits. The Cape Copper Co. in particular, an English company which operated for many years around Tilt Cove, has been successful in its ventures and is

still working, though with reduced forces, at a new prospect farther north.

Operation difficulties.—Occurrences of valuable minerals of various kinds have been noted scattered over the island. A few attempts have been made at developing them. In the majority of cases the difficulties inherent in so doing are tremendous. A band of oil-drillers or miners set down on a lonely bit of coast with instructions from London or Montreal to proceed in a certain manner, soon run into complications which they find difficult to explain to far away directors. Back from the fishing villages there are no roads. Transportation is slow and expensive. Mails are tedious and the barren, desolate country gets on the nerves of the workmen. Due to peculiarities of the problems encountered, it requires an unusual combination of qualities in a superintendent or responsible head to achieve the initial results aimed at, so that when irregularities, which must be expected are met with in the geological nature of the deposits, it is usual to find disagreement among the directors as to the proper course to pursue. The entire undertaking is a venture requiring optimism and agreement in all matters to make the necessary difference between success and failure.

Undeveloped coal and oil—Thus, there remain undeveloped the important coal areas in the southwest section undoubtedly a continuation of the Cape Breton occurrences and the oil fields at Parsons Pond farther north along the west shore. The former have been withheld to a certain extent by landholding interests with exorbitant ideas as to their recompense for being there first, and the titles are a little clouded by litigation. The oil lands had a start at being drilled several years ago when a British company engaged some American well-drillers from the Pennsylvania field, but difficulties and disagreements arose and the work was finally stopped after a few holes had been put down and one small well discovered.

Other attempts at mining gold, copper, and miscellaneous minerals have not succeeded much better. It is not that the substances are not there in at least moderate quantities and values, but the extraordinary problems of profitable extraction and marketing have proved too great for the continuance of effort necessary for a final success.

At present there is talk of a big industry to employ between one thousand and two thousand men for the west coast at Bay of Islands. The company is known as the Newfoundland Products Co. with a capital in the millions, and the government is passing on water powers, land and mineral grants, in accordance with the company's intention to manufacture carbide phosphates, etc. It is possible that, as time goes on, the west coast, where are said to be the most attractive lands for settlement in the island, will build up to some comparison with the Nova Scotia side of the Gulf of St. Lawrence. The natural conditions there for varied industries are more favorable than along the other shores where fishing will undoubtedly continue to be the staple calling. The west coast has coal, oil, water-powers, the most attractive areas of real soil on the rocky backbone of the island, and is more adjacent to the mainland. As things are now, however, the great bulk of the colony's population lives in the numerous bays on the storm-beaten east coast. The west coast, like the south and north coast, is a vast, lonely expanse of desolation and solitude.