

## AROUND THE COLLIERIES

With the death of Henry Mitchell there passed away the one who, above all others, had much to do with the beginning of the biggest town in the province, Glace Bay. When Henry Mitchell opened the pits called the "Roost" there was no Glace Bay Harbor, nor Glace Bay town. There was a few houses on the present site, and a row of two near the pit, and, later, the famous Log Row, now wholly departed. No man in the portion of C. B. county where the coal mines are was better known than Henry Mitchell, and no man was more highly respected. He was superintendent of the Glace Bay Coal Co. for years. Later he, in company with others, secured from the G. M. A. the mines at Old Bridgeport. When the Dominion Coal Co. came along Old Bridgeport was bought, and from that time Mr. Mitchell was not employed directly in coal getting. At the time of his death he was the oldest coal mine manager in the province. C. J. Mitchell, formerly of Dom. No. 6, is a son. There are other sons, but "Charlie" is best known to the Record. The sons have every reason to be proud of their father, and to be pleased at the many and hearty tributes paid to his memory. The Record editor need not pay a tribute now, as that was paid when Mr. Mitchell was still with us.

When the announcement was made of the loss of the North Slope, Springhill, by fire, one was inclined to wonder whether Pictou County was to forego to another the notoriety of having more fires than any other in the province. That was set at rest by the announcement, a few days later, that fire had once more broken out in the Albion mine. The fire in the Springhill slope was found to be of a much more serious nature than that at the Albion. The former slope is sealed off for an indefinite period, while the Albion was idle for a few days only after the sealing off of the fire. Springhill is in a sore plight as it can ill afford the loss of a slope, having no immediately available reserves to fall back upon. In the case of Stellarton it is different. There are several other available sources of supply besides the Albion mine. It is most unfortunate that the fires should have broken out at a time when the demand, for domestic and industrial purposes, far exceeds the supply. What the Dominion Coal Co. may do in the way of development at Springhill depends on a variety of circumstances, and, let it be added, assurances. The company—it is an open secret—are not enamoured of its Cumberland possessions as remunerative propositions. The company is easting about for a plan whereby the output can be doubled. That solved, Springhill may again assume a position of first importance.

The following from the Manchester Guardian shows that absenteeism is as big an evil in Britain as in Nova Scotia:

I have received a statement about a North country colliery which suggests that the figures on which Mr. Asquith based the case against the miners last week were a heavy underestimate. Taking all the

coal mines of the United Kingdom, he put the average of absenteeism at 10 per cent, of which 5 per cent was admitted to be unavoidable. But my northern authority would, for his mine at least, more than double those figures. The total amount of absenteeism recorded there among the actual coal getters in September, 1915, was 17 per cent., and 22 per cent. in the same month of 1916. Among dattallers and surface men it was very much lower. Of these totals, taking the men at their word, 10 per cent and 14 per cent in each year were unavoidable. This is a much more serious amount—if we are to take it as more or less general—than Mr. Asquith suggested, and it will be seen how immensely the output would be increased if unavoidable absenteeism were reduced, as it is suggested it should be, to 5 per cent. The colliery in question, I may add, has some 5,000 miners, and it is admitted that the chief cause of absenteeism is the prevailing high rate of pay.

Chiozza Money, in the British Weekly, says: I am glad to say that the report on mines and quarries, just issued, shows that there has not been such a serious increase in the number of deaths in getting coal as might have been anticipated in view of the shortage of labour and the consequent fall in efficiency. The following figures show the number of miners above and under ground and the number of deaths in the last two years:

	Persons Employed	No. of Deaths
1914, January-July.....	1,133,746	1,219
1914, December.....	981,264	
1915.....	953,642	1,297

There has been a real increase in the rate of accident because the number of deaths has risen a little, while the number of workers has fallen considerably. Nevertheless, it is good to think that the time of war has not been marked by large scale disasters.

Nova Scotia mine managers, and mine workers should give attention to the figures and seek out the reasons why the percentage of fatal accidents in Britain is about 1.3 per 1000, while in Nova Scotia it is more than twice that rate. Can any valid reasons be given for the great disproportion? The Department of Mines may be unable to give us first hand information, but are there not numerous employees at the collieries, who have worked in British mines, who could throw some light on the subject? Of course any one can say the unfavorable showing, in Nova Scotia as compared with Britain, is due to dissimilarity in conditions, but that is not explicit enough. Are accidents more frequent here because our seams are steeper, our coal, as a rule higher, and our roofs more tender; or is it due to our less improved methods of mining or to the inclination of our workmen to take greater risks. The Record would like that some one with experience of mining in Britain and Nova Scotia would show why it is to be expected that fatalities here should be more frequent and in larger proportion than in Britain.