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PEAT.

Self-appreciation is a virtue which we attempt to encourage in ourselves. Yet we feel that it can be overdone in others.

For more than two years the CANADIAN MINING JOURNAL pressed upon the attention of the Federal Mines Branch several pertinent matters. Chief amongst these were the investigation and control of explosives, the encouragement of mine rescue work, and investigation of mine accidents. Within the last few months the Mines Branch has diverted its energies to these subjects. It has made a fair beginning in that it has stimulated public interest. But, quite naturally, any efforts it can put forth must but feebly compare with the requirements of the case until such time as an effective addition be made to its present staff. In thus alluding to matters already worn threadbare, one object is to correct what we consider a very serious mistake in the policy of the Mines Branch. The organization has got on the right track in the matters mentioned above. Life saving, whether indirectly by the prevention of accidents or directly by salvage appliances, eclipses all else in importance. It is, then, with pain that we observe that part of the staff and much of the appropriation of the Mines Branch are being used for the solution of the peat problem. Both staff and appropriation are limited, very limited indeed. This disposition of its energies may be compared to the case of the man who insisted upon finishing weeding his garden, the while his house was burning.

Further to illustrate our point let us consider the present position of Canada in regard to mining accidents. Great Britain, the leading European nations, and the United States have adopted enlightened preventive measures. We have alluded so recently to these that iteration is not necessary. The Canadian government, despite the representations of many employers and our own humble but pointed remarks, has rested upon its oars until the pressure was so great that it could not be resisted. Meanwhile many lives have been lost, and, as alluded to before, the United States authorities had to be called upon for assistance in the most distressing Extension colliery catastrophe.

Now, whilst we thoroughly approve the beginning already made, we do not hesitate to state that the Mines Branch has but two courses to pursue. Either it must secure large additions to its staff, or else it must drop its interesting, but not invaluable, work in peat and such things. Peat can wait. Human lives must not be wasted.

Lest any of our readers question the fairness of our reference to peat let us here and now survey the facts, denuded of their garb of shimmering fancy.