Newfoundland Treaty Shore Question

An old Irish schoolmaster was once asked by a parliamentary committee to give his opinion on the fishery. "Man and boy," he said, "I have been engaged in the fishery for fifty years. I may be as ignorant as the novice, I give my opinion according to conscience, erudition and intellect." In the same spirit as my immortal Hibernian I propose to give my views on the most ancient unsolved problem in European diplomacy. Let me say at the outset that Canada's interest in the old question is not merely academic; the Dominion has a direct vital interest in its satisfactory settlement. It is an obstacle, though not an insuperable one, in the way of union between Canada and Newfoundland. Whilst the open sore remains, the Dominion also suffers a serious loss of revenue from the extensive smuggling connived at by the French authorities at St. Pierre. France allows every petty nation a representative in her colony and refuses to permit an English consul to reside at St. Pierre. She openly aids and abets the unscrupulous traders who rob the revenue of all British North America. No settlement of the dispute between England and France in Newfoundland will be, therefore, complete and satisfactory unless it also terminates this nefarious traffic. Canada has thus a direct material interest in any arrangement of the subject between the two nations.

It has always seemed to me very remarkable that Sir Wilfrid Laurier, who is known to be a persona grata in Paris, should not have made an effort to induce his French friends to stop their wholesale robbery of the Dominion revenue.

An eminent authority on English foreign policy and a distinguished French admiral both agree that this ancient dispute is the most dangerous question remaining between England and France. The material interests involved are trumpery; Rockefeller's or Andrew Carnegie's income for a week amount to more than the whole catch of the French for one season on the Newfoundland coast. Our gallant neighbors across the channel are proud, touchy and sentimental over this subject. These barren islets in North America and their old treaty right are the sole remnants of the great French empire in North America. Hence the excitement which any fiery Breton or Norman deputy can call up in the chamber when the subject is dismissed. In tracing its history most writers begin with the Treaty of Utrecht, but the dispute and quarrel between the nations began much earlier. Prior to the defeat of the Armada, France and England were more or less allies against Spain. The privateers from Rochelle captured more galleons even than the English pirates. When once, however, the mighty power which overshadowed Europe disappeared and Philip's navy sank into comparative insignificance, then began between the ancient rivals, France and England, that long contest for the dominion of the sea and the control of North America, which ended with Wolfe's victory at Quebec and Trafalgar. St. Pierre, Miquelon and the French shore are all that now remains to France after that long duel of two hundred years. The Treaty of Utrecht is the first modern phase of the question. In the negotiations for the treaty, which were long and protracted, France knew well that she must lose Newfoundland, so she offered to surrender the island and all fishery rights, as well as some islands in the West Indies, for Acadie (Nova Scotia). The voice of the continental colonies (now the United States) was firm and united in refusing to allow our opponents any settlement on the mainland. In giving up Cape Breton, the English insisted that the island should not be fortified, and that the fishery should be concurrent. The French pointed out that the two nations could not fish together, that it would involve perpetual quarrels. All the English merchants and Queen Anne were agreed that the French should have no fishing privileges in Newfoundland, yet in the face of these protests the treaty was made. Considering that our enemies had been completely vanquished and lay at England's mercy, this compact of 1713 is one of the most disgraceful in our history. The politicians of the day were venal and fierce partizans. The desire for French wines set many against Marlborough. The hard drinkers complained that they were poisoned by port. All the boon companions, lawyers, doctors, the inferior clergymen and the loose women were united against the Duke, Swift and Pope. Addison and Steele fought their fierce literary battles over the infamous treaty which to-day regulates the manner in which the French fisherman may build his temporary hut and erect his fishing stage. On one point this treaty, which still remains the law on the subject, is remarkably clear and explicit. The sovereignty of England over the island could not be stated more emphatically. "The island called Newfoundland, with the adjacent islands, shall from this time forward belong of right wholly to Great Britain. * * * Nor shall the most Christian King, his heirs and successors or any of his subjects at any time hereafter lay claim to any right to the said island and islands or to any part of it or them. Moreover, it shall not be lawful for the subjects of France to fortify any place in the said island of Newfoundland, or to erect any buildings there, besides stages made of boards, and huts necessary and useful for drying of fish, or to resort to the said island beyond the time necessary for fishing and drying of fish. But it shall be allowed to the subjects of France to catch fish and to dry them on land in that part only." Here the boundary line is described from Cape Bonavista to Point Rich, afterwards altered from Cape John to Cape Ray). By the Treaty of Paris (1763) this part of the Treaty of Utrecht is confirmed, and again by the Treaty of Versailles (1783). By Article 6 of the Treaty of Paris, "The King of Great Britain cedes the islands of St. Pierre and Miquelon in full right to His Most Christian Majesty, to serve as a shelter to the French fishermen, and his said Majesty engages not to fortify the said islands, to erect no building upon them, but merely for the convenience of the fishery and to keep upon them a guard of fifty men only for the police." The last Treaty of Paris (1815) confirms the Treaty of Utrecht and foregoing treaties.

From the wording of these old compacts three points come out very clearly. First, that England, as the sovereign power, can alone exercise coercive jurisdiction within her own territory. This principle, which is the very A B C of international law, has been for a very long time set aside by the French. British fishermen's nets and gear of all kinds have been taken up and destroyed by French naval officers, and they have over and over again been driven away from their own coasts. For a long time the Imperial authorities assented to these outrages. The late Lord Derby actually approved of them, and in every convention provision was made allowing French officers to carry out summary proceedings. Lord Salisbury was the first English minister to set down his foot firmly and give orders that the execution of the law should be confined to our own naval officers, and with a few isolated exceptions, this is now the practice. The second point—that England alone can execute the provisions of the treaties on her own coasts—is equally clear in law. The instructions to the naval officers and their reports are all kept secret, but they may be summed up in one word, always to keep on good terms with the French. Don't bother about the colonials—avoid all disputes with your naval antagonists. A very remarkable illustration of this rule was shown a few years ago. A Frenchman committed a most outrageous criminal assault on an English settler's wife. The husband complained to the naval officer, a justice of the peace. Commodore Bourke would not allow the man to be arrested. The criminal was afterwards tried by the French admiral and banished from the coast. Here was an opportunity of vindicating British authority, but the naval idea was simply, we have difficulties enough on our hands without mixing ourselves up with troubles of this kind. The gravity of the situation on the treaty shore was largely increased by the habit of the naval officers trying to keep on good terms with the French, whose object is to make trouble. It has been shown more than once that the prud'homme or master of the fishing establishments was set on by the naval officers to make bogus complaints. Happily there have been most prudent, sensible officers in command of both ships of war, and at last their instructions are based on the views set forth in the report made by the royal commissioners. Not to wound the susceptibilities of our antagonists, the report is still kept from the public. It sets forth, however, that when a complaint is made by a French officer against any British subject, the English naval authority, before acting on the matter, shall hold an investigation and satisfy himself of the proof of the wrongful act before applying any forcible measure. After nearly a century of mismanagement, common sense is at last applied to the carrying out of the treaties on the French shore. The report, which is based on evidence, is most complete and exhaustive. It is strong in our favor and a complete vindication of the position taken in Newfoundland. This is the reason why, at the instance of the French government, it is kept from the public.

Having laid down the law as regards the English rights on the foregoing points, the next and most important question arises, what are the French rights? I for one do not wish to state them unfairly or to minimize them in any way. They rely chiefly on the declaration of George III. Lord St. Helens, who arranged the agreement with Vergennes, told him flatly that they could not put any exclusive right in the treaty, but that they would promise it, "ministeriellement," and give instruction to the government of Newfoundland. So there was the first treaty.

Article IV.—His Majesty the King of Great Britain is maintained in his right to Newfoundland as by Treaty of Utrecht, except St. Pierre and Miquelon, which are ceded in full right to His Most Christian Majesty.

Article V. alters the limits of Cape John and Cape Ray. The declaration sets forth that in order to prevent the quarrels which have hitherto arisen between the two nations in the fishery to be enjoyed as by the Treaty of Utrecht; "the King having entirely agreed with the French King upon the articles of the definite treaty, will seek every means which shall not only ensure the execution thereof with his accustomed good faith and punctuality, but will besides give on his part all possible efficacy to the principles which shall prevent even the least foundation of dispute for the future." "To this end, and in order that the fishermen of the two nations may not give cause for daily quarrels, His Britannic Majesty will take the most positive measures for preventing his subjects from interfering in any manner by their competition with the fishery of the French during the temporary exercise of it, which is granted to them upon the coast of Newfoundland; and he will for this purpose cause the fixed settlements which shall be formed there to be removed. His Britannic Majesty will give orders that the French fishermen be not incommoded in cutting the wood necessary for the repairs of their scaffolds, huts and fishing vessels."

It is quite clear that the English envoy virtually promised to give the French exclusive rights from Cape John to Cape Ray, but the word "exclusive" is not used either in this declaration or in the act of parliament passed a little later. On two later occasions at the Peace of Amiens Joseph Bonnparte wanted the word "exclusive" inserted, and again in 1815, but the English government absolutely refused. Putting aside the fraud of the declaration and many other arguments that might be brought forward, the French contention that they have a prior and exclusive right to the fishery within these limits can hardly be denied. If they had been able to occupy every part of the fishing ground within those limits, no one could doubt their authority to hold it. There are over 700 miles of the coast on this so-called French shore. Our opponents only occupy an infinitesimal portion of it on the north-east coast, and the Straits of Belle Isle. Where they had once 100 fishing establishments, these are now reduced to one fishing room really occupied and another temporarily; where once they employed 3,000 hands there are now not more than 60. On the west coast they are similarly reduced to half a dozen small holdings and less than 300 fishermen. The intrinsic value of their catch of cod-fish for several years past has not amounted to $50 per head. On the other hand, during the same period there have grown up a great number of English settlements on the coast, and the population now numbers 14,000. This extensive population, be it remembered, grew up, not in opposition to the French, but with their tacit consent and encouragement. The colonial settlers were useful in many ways. They looked after the fishing stages, boats, etc., when the French left, they grew garden stuff, and most of their catch was bartered in an underhand way for liquor, sugar, tea, etc., passed in as the genuine product of French industry, and received the immense bounty. High duties produce smuggling, so these tremendous bounties naturally brought forth frauds. Having encouraged the growth of the population, which at first did not interfere with their cod-fishing operations, it is idle for the French to attempt now to dispossess them. (In the recent Venezuela and Alaska disputes modern diplomacy established this position as a rule of international law, that where territory had been continuously occupied without opposition by one nation for fifty years, or even where there had been undisturbed possession and actual occupation for twenty years, or thereabouts, such territory shall be deemed to be the settled property of the nation so in occupation, and shall not be the subject of international arbitration). It is sound law and common sense that when an owner grants a limited easement, like the present very limited grant of fishery privileges to the French, whatever is not included in such license to fish is retained by the owner. This is the position of England, the grantor and sovereign power. The privileges of the French by the treaty are strictly limited to three things.

First, they have the right to catch fish. The original draft of the treaty named codfish, but the French abbe who drew the document in Latin, considered cod an inelegant word, so he substituted fish. But that codfish, and codfish only, was contemplated, is shown by the text. It was the only fishery known and carried on at the time. The treaty says the fishery must be carried on in its accustomed manner, which at that period consisted of the fishing ship coming out from France, and on arriving at its station the vessel was laid up and the crew built up their temporary huts and stayed ashore. Moreover, as a clear proof of its meaning, cod is the only commercial fish that is cured by drying and salting. Only the catching and drying of fish on land is allowed. The Newfoundland contention on this particular contains strong points, though I for one would not limit the French to their strict interpretation. Their second privilege is to dry their fish on land in temporary huts and stages made of boards. They are distinctly prohibited from erecting any buildings. Thirdly, they are allowed to cut wood on land for the strictly limited purpose of repairing these stages and huts and their fishing vessels. Outside these limits they have no other rights. They cannot come to the island before the fishery season commences, or remain after it closes. They cannot barter or trade goods. It will be quite clear to any legal mind that England as the sovereign power retains the right to use this part of her dominion for every other purpose that does not interrupt or unduly prejudice this limited license to the French, and that where Frenchmen do not temporarily occupy the coast and do not fish, English subjects may occupy the coast and may utilize their own territory. To taboo this whole extensive shore, the most fertile and beautiful part of the colony, the richest in mineral treasure, to make the whole land into a barren wilderness simply because half a dozen old French brigs fish in six or seven harbors, is too absurd for discussion. Obsolete treaties of this kind must be interpreted reasonably and according to the existing state of facts. The presence of the French on the Newfoundland coast is not only an anomaly; it is allowed in defiance of all the laws of sound political economy; it is a decaying, wretched business, which no nation but the French would ever attempt to undertake with such restrictions and drawbacks. It is bolstered up, first, with a bounty on export amounting to the actual value of the fish, second with a premium of fifty francs to every French fisherman in Newfoundland, and as well, fifty francs is given by the municipality of St. Pierre to every petit pecheur on the coast, 4,000 francs having been distributed since 1900 by the department of marine inspection of St. Pierre amongst the St. Pierre fishermen who go to the treaty shore; and third, by drawbacks on everything used in the business. This latter premium comes to as much as the bounty. Every Frenchman sent out to the treaty shore costs the treasury of the republic $200. On these barren islets of St. Pierre and Miquelon and the poor decaying industry France has expended during the past fifty years, including cost of her warships, at least one hundred million dollars. It is only equalled by the German colonial policy that is annually expending seven million marks on a white population of 2,000. And the end of all this waste of the poor Frenchman's over-taxation is flat failure. Some fifteen years ago a French governor of St. Pierre boasted that their annual trade amounted to 30,000,000 francs. It has now come down to less than half that amount. Imports that were once 14,000,000 in one year recently declined to 6,000,000. The reason for this tremendous decline is partly bad fisheries, but most of all the decline of the smuggling trade and the increased vigilance of Canadian and Newfoundland revenue cruisers. What that illicit trade amounted to we can easily calculate when we learn that the imports at St. Pierre come to nearly $200 per head, whilst the average imports per capita in Newfoundland and Canada are $30. Making all allowances for legitimate business and for the increased consumption on a barren island, there remains clear proof that there is the loss of revenue of the duty on a million dollars' worth of goods, the larger part being spirits, which are annually smuggled into Canada, Newfoundland and New England from St. Pierre.

The most humorous thing for a patriotic Frenchman is the fact that the largest item in this smuggling business is German gin. Hamburg is well known as the centre of the great adulteration trade of the world. Here are forged all the brands of the best wines and cigars. Germany is not only the greatest outlet of Boer lies, but for the great supply of poisonous liquor, that demoralizes alike the negro in Africa, the habitant in Canada and the Newfoundland fisherman.

In discussing this question, we must always bear in mind that France carries on four distinct fisheries in Newfoundland waters. First the deep sea or bank fishery on the Grand Banks, etc.: 295 vessels are engaged in this industry—105 from France, the rest from St. Pierre—and 4,823 hands. This is the main industry. Second the shore fishery on the Newfoundland coast, with five or six vessels and about 300 men. Third, shore fisheries, "peche sedentaire" from St. Pierre and Miquelon. Fourth, of the small bank fishery on St. Pierre bank; mostly small vessels are engaged in this business, as it is within a few hours' run of the land.

In recent years the French treaty shore subject has been further complicated by the lobster question. This began about 1886. Newfoundlanders and Nova Scotians were carrying on this business on the coast without molestation from the French, until their anger was aroused by the Bait Act of 1888, which for the time almost ruined them, and from which they have never recovered. They not only attacked the English factories, but began to build themselves. Now it was clear enough that substantial erections with brick or stone foundations, brick chimneys and corrugated iron roofs were in distinct violation of the treaties. When the French commodore's attention was called to this anomaly he promptly ordered them to be taken down. Of course, this was only a blind. Next season more were put up, and finally in 1890 M. Jusserand, the accomplished English scholar, walked into the foreign office and suggested a little temporary arrangement. Like a good diplomatist, he had made a little note of an agreement as follows:

"The question of principle and of respective rights being entirely reserved on both sides, the maintenance of the status quo can be agreed upon the following basis: Without France or Great Britain demanding at once a new examination of the legality of the installation of British or French lobster factories on the coast of Newfoundland, where the French enjoy rights of fishing conferred by the treaties, it shall be understood that there shall be no modification in the position occupied by existing establishments of the subjects of either country on the 1st July, 1899, except that a subject of either nation may remove any such establishment to any spot on which the commanders of the two naval stations shall have previously agreed."

"No lobster factories which are not in operation on 1st July, 1899, shall be permitted unless by consent of the British and French senior naval officers of the station. In consideration of each new lobster factory so permitted, it shall be open to the fishermen of the other country to establish a new lobster factory on some spot to be similarly agreed on. Whenever any case of competition arises between the fishermen of either country, the commanders shall proceed on the spot to a provisional delimitation of the lobster fishery grounds, having regard to the situation acquired by the two parties.

"N. B.—It is well understood that this arrangement is quite provisional, and shall only hold good for the fishing season which is about to open."

This was about the cleverest diplomatic trick ever played upon the simple, confiding British government. It saved the French fishery from utter destruction and legalized factories, which, by their own admission were wholly and absolutely illegal.

It completely annuls for the time England's sovereign rights, and gives the French officers equal authority to adjudicate on British territory. The Newfoundland government protested against the arrangement as suicidal, but without effect. So year after year we have been passing this detested modus vivendi. In one way it has produced a certain amount of peace on the shore. The French lobster factories are few, the English are many, but the result to the poorer fishermen who have not licensed factories is deplorable. The royal commissioners, Sir John Branston and Admiral Erskine, must have been disgusted with the employment of English men-of-war sailors raiding poor settlers' premises and tearing away their small boilers at the instigation of French officers. To crown the absurdity of the situation, Commodore Bourke gave orders not only that the fishermen should sell their lobsters only to licensed canneries, but also fixed the price the canneries should pay for the crustaceans. During the season the whole coast is virtually under martial law. The hardy Newfoundlander, however, evades it and carries on his business in defiance of both the French and English navies. All the same, he is persecuted under an intolerable tyranny. The worst feature about the modus was the fillip it gave to the French industry; the codfishery had failed, and the foreigner would have had to decamp but for the privilege of putting up lobsters. These have risen to such an enormous price that the few thousand cases put up by the French exceeds in value their whole catch of cod, and thus enabled them to remain on the coast. Year by year, however, they are dwindling, and the inevitable failure must soon come. The wandering cod and the disappearing lobster are more effectually settling the French shore question than all the diplomacy of Europe. The patriotism of the Newfoundland people in passing the modus vivendi, at the request of Mr. Chamberlain, deserves the thanks of the Empire. For the season of 1902 the legislature will again renew the obnoxious measure, and the reasons for so doing are very obvious. The present administration is the best government France has had for years. M. Delcasse is the only foreign office minister with whom there is a chance of coming to an agreement. To stir up the question now on the eve of an election in France would be a suicidal act on our part. England can only play the diplomatic game in France by humoring our neighbor's susceptibilities, and we have a direct interest in assisting the present government. The negotiations between the two foreign offices are going on, and have progressed considerably. Lord Dufferin told me that he could not approach the foreign minister on the subject. Now there is a strong party in France among the armateurs who have declared their willingness to give up the French shore in return for a free supply of bait for their great banking fleet, which is twenty times as important as the meagre shore fishery. Compensation to the owners of the fishing premises could be easily settled either by arrangement or arbitration. The only difficulty I see in the way of a settlement is that French national pride may look for some exchange of territory. If so, we have plenty of spare land in Africa to satisfy the Gallic lust of territory, or we might give them Dominica, which is entirely French and between their own islands. The Newfoundlanders will grudge allowing them to get free bait, as their bounty-fed fish competes unfairly with our own in the Mediterranean. In all settlements of this kind, however, there must be a give and take. We can confidently leave the question in the patriotic hands of Mr. Chamberlain. He has shown himself a true friend to the colonies, and we feel assured that if the question can be solved he will spare no pains to add this crowning glory to his colonial administration—the settlement of the French shore question.

D. W. PROWSE.

St. John's, Nfld., Feb. 20, 1902.

SPION KOP DESPATCHES.

Full Text of General Buller's Celebrated Criticism on the Battle.

A parliamentary bluebook containing the Spion Kop despatches was presented to the Imperial parliament two weeks ago. These despatches, a short resume of which has already appeared in the telegraphic news, included some not hitherto published, and also portions of others which had been withheld. After reading these documents through, no one need wonder at the peculiar state of affairs immediately preceding and during that lamentable fiasco, which is so tragically described by Conan Doyle in his great "Boer War." Gen. Buller issued his orders to Gen. Warren, who was to make the attack on Spion Kop on the 15th of January (the battle took place on the 24th), and, writing a few days after the fight, Gen. Buller says:

"On the 19th I ought to have assumed command myself; I saw that things were not going well—indeed, everyone saw that. I blame myself now for not having done so. I did not, because I thought that if I did I should discredit Gen. Warren in the estimation of the troops; and that if I were shot, and he had to withdraw across the Tugela, and they had lost confidence in him, the consequences might be very serious."

Lord Roberts' comment on this, made on 13th February, 1901, is as follows:

"If he considered that his orders were not being properly given effect to, it appears to me that it was his duty to intervene as soon as he had reason to believe that the success of the operations was being endangered. This, indeed, is admitted by Sir Redvers Buller himself, whose explanation of his non-interference can hardly be accepted as adequate. A most important enterprise was being attempted, and no personal considerations should have deterred the officer in chief command from insisting on its being conducted in the manner in which, in his opinion, would lead to the attainment of the object in view, with the least possible loss on our side."

That there was lack of organization to an appalling degree is shown in Gen. Buller's last quoted despatch, which commences as follows:

"In forwarding this report, I am constrained to make the following remarks, not necessarily for publication:

"I had fully discussed my orders with Gen. Warren before he started, and he appeared entirely to agree that the policy indicated of refusing the right and advancing the left was the right one. He never, though, attempted to carry it out. From the first there could be no question but that the only practical road for his column was the one by Fair View. The problem was to get rid of the enemy who were holding it.

The arrival of the force at Trichard's was a surprise to the enemy, who were not in strength. Sir C. Warren, instead of feeling for the enemy, elected to spend two whole days in passing his baggage. During this time the enemy received reinforcements and strengthened his position. On the 19th he attacked and gained a considerable advantage. On the 20th, instead of pursuing it, he divided his force, and gave Gen. Clery a separate command.

"On the 21st I find that his right was in advance of his left, and that the whole of his batteries, six, were crowded in one small position on his right, while his left was unprotected by artillery, and I had come out to tell him that the enemy on that flank had received a reinforcement of at least 2,500. I suggested a better distribution of his batteries, which he agreed to, to some extent, but he would not advance his left, and I found that he had divided his fighting line into three independent commands, independent of each other, and apparently independent of him, as he told me he could not move any batteries without Gen. Clery's consent.

"The days went on. I saw no attempt on the part of Gen. Warren either to grapple with the situation or to command his force himself. By the 23rd I calculated that the enemy, who were about 600 strong on the 16th, were not less than 15,000, and Gen. White confirmed this estimate. We had really lost our chance by Sir C. Warren's slowness. He seems to me a man who can do well what he can do himself, but who cannot command, as he can use neither his staff nor subordinates. I can never employ him again on an independent command."

COAL DUST.

Times When It Is a Deadly Explosive.

From Mining Journal.

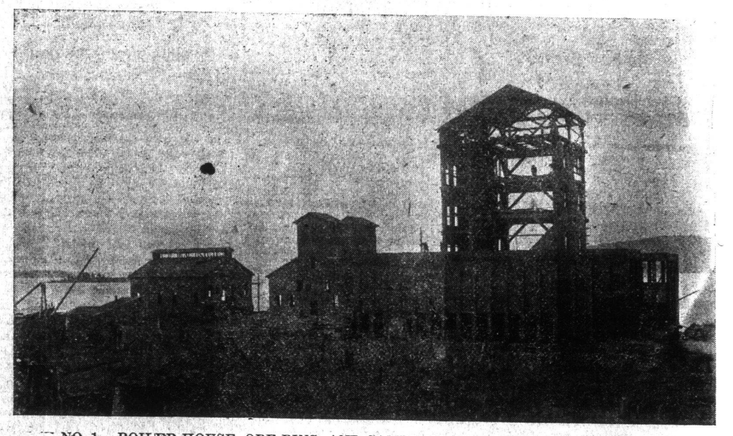
The report which has just been issued by the Home office on the explosion which occurred at the Universal Colliery, Glamorganshire, last May, is of very great importance, since it deals at some length, and in a definite tone, with the treatment of coal dust in mines. The disaster, which occurred on May 24 of last year, was a very disastrous one, and resulted in the loss of 80 lives. The Union pit was a new one, the colliery was well laid out, the ventilation good, and the engines and equipment generally were of a first-class description. The system of watering was probably superior to that to be found in many mines; pipes were laid along the main haulage roads for an aggregate distance of 1,450 yards on either side of the shaft, in which water-cocks were inserted every 40 yards, from which the roads were sprayed by means of hoses. In spite of these appliances, it is generally agreed that the whole of the workings at the Universal were dry and dusty when the explosion occurred. From the report of Professor Galloway, based on an exhaustive examination of the workings, two circumstances are clear—first that the explosion followed the course of the intake workings used for haulage, where there was dust and no fire-damp, scarcely touching the return air-ways; and second, that the explosion failed to affect those parts of the workings which were permanently wet from natural causes. The fact that coal-dust is far more dangerous in a mine than fire-damp has been more widely recognized of late than when Professor Galloway in 1875 demonstrated that fine coal dust plays the part of a quasi-gas when intimately mixed with air, and, as was apparently the case here, itself initiates and carries on the explosion. In the present instance nothing can be known as to the cause of the explosion, the whole of the evidence being circumstantial in character. But whether the originating cause was shot-firing or an explosion of fire-damp from a blower in some way ignited, it depended for its power on the presence of dust throughout the mine. When once an explosion has occurred in a confined space, the increased pressure and consequent rise in temperature greatly increases the intensity of combustion, so that coal requires wetting more thoroughly than would be the case in the open air. We question whether this fact has received as much recognition as it deserves. For instance, Mr. Hughes, in his text book on coal mining, states that only the smallest amounts of moisture are needed to prevent ignition, a conclusion hardly borne out by the evidence to the present case. It follows from the knowledge we now possess that a mixture of coal dust and air alone is capable of producing an explosion, that the practical question is how to eliminate dust. The use of dust-tight wagons would greatly minimize it, and supplemented by thorough watering would no doubt be adequate. Professor Galloway, however, considers as the result of long experience in the South Wales collieries, that thorough watering suffices to prevent the settling of dust upon walls, roof and timbering, which, if once allowed to accumulate there, renders watering of the roadways alone of but little effect, as the present case shows. The main difficulty lies in ensuring that the wetting is done regularly, though a more systematic inspection for dust on the roof and sides of the workings might correct laxness in this regard. If it were generally recognized by the miners themselves that the real danger of explosion, at any rate on a large scale, is due to dust, and not to fire-damp, greater progress would be made towards the fulfilment of Professor Galloway's hope that, with a better understanding of their cause, great colliery explosions will soon disappear from the record of disastrous events. We trust that his recommendations will receive speedy consideration.

The king of the Scottish gypsies, Charles Fa Blythe, has died suddenly in the royal residence at Yetholm, near Kelso. The monarch's reign lasted four years, and was marked at the outset by a dispute concerning the succession. Several of the tribes refused to recognize him as the lawful heir, and gave their support to a pretender.

CROFTON SMELTER RAPIDLY BUIL

Work on the Smelting Plant Shows Gratifying Speed in Construction.

Fine Showing Made Through Business Enterprise and Pluck of Promoters.



NO. 1—BOILER HOUSE, ORE BINS AND SAMPLING MILL, OSBORNE BAY SMELTER.

Rapid progress is being made in the erection of the smelter at Osborne Bay, and great interest is taken in Victoria in the completion of these works, which mean so much not only to this city, but to the mining interests of the Island at large. The photographs here reproduced show that no time is being lost, as but a few months ago the site of these buildings was wild land.

No. 1 sketch shows on the left the boiler house, with capacity of 600 horse-power, divided into three boilers of 200 horse-power each. These have been supplied by the Victoria Machinery Depot, Victoria.

The centre building, in which alone over 100,000 feet of lumber has been used, is the engine shed. A modern Corliss engine, 500 horse-power, will be placed in this building, also the electrical engine and the blowing engine for the blast furnace. The building to the right is the sampling mill, through which all ores brought to the centre will be put. The ore is first weighed, then crushed in rock-breakers, and by means of an automatic sampling mill a small percentage of the ore is thrown to one side: this is afterwards subdivided, until at last it is reduced to three small parcels, of, say, one pound each. One of these is assayed by the smelting company and one retained by the mine-owner, and the other held for reference, all being sealed. The ore bins on each side of the sampling mill have a capacity of about 1,800 tons. The sketch does not show the railway trestles which are now erected and which will allow locomotive and cars to run from ore bins and deposit ore in same.

No. 3 sketch shows the ore bins and sampling mill.

No. 2 sketch shows ore bins, part of the engine shed, and the foundation for the smelter and converter building. Timber for this is all framed and the foundations are completed. In this building at first one stack will be erected of 450 tons, also one of 75 tons, with a converter capable of treating the matte from furnaces. In addition, a new stack of about 400 tons will be erected; this will be finished before the above-mentioned two stacks. The last stack is an invention of Mr. H. C. Bellinger, and it is expected it will revolutionize smelting by its economical method of treating the ore, and will directly enable Crofton to have the largest share of the copper smelting of the coast.

NO. 2 — FOUNDATIONS FOR SMELTER AND CONVERTER AT BAY SMELTER.

NO. 3—END VIEW OF ORE BINS AND SAMPLING MILL, OSBORNE BAY SMELTER.