

against a wooden wall; you imagine you see the scores of implement factories carefully fitting these pieces of ash and maple and elm to their casts of steel.

Surely, you say, this is an age of *wood*. What railway could move, what farmer could sow or reap, what townsman could more than eke out an existence without the helping hand of forests?

You are on the train again. That thought about the wood supply of the Western Provinces for farm, for home, for transportation, has temporarily been laid aside. The engine whistles shrilly. Here evidently is a coal mining town. Hundreds of homes are spread about; there is a winding street of stores.

#### *More Than a Localized Question.*

A mine manager steps aboard. He is an old acquaintance and you soon have him in conversation. It does not take long to announce your speculation about the need of wood to carry on the business of Canada West.

"Of course," you say, "this is a farmer's and a merchant's question. You mining men doubtless see nothing to get alarmed about."

"Nothing, eh?" his face lightens up with surprise. "Let me tell you. To get a single ton of coal out of the ground requires two lineal feet of timber for pit props. Where do we get it from? Right at the doorstep of the mine, so to speak, for mine timbers cannot be hauled long distances, or the price of coal would be prohibitive.

"Thirty years ago Alberta and Saskatchewan turned out about 1,600 tons of coal. By the last returns, Alberta alone is producing yearly over three million tons and Saskatchewan over 175,000 tons. *That means we need about six and a half million lineal feet of timber a year.* Do you know where we're going to get it?"

You confess that you hope the country has sufficient to keep the coal mines running.

"But that is not meeting the problem fair and square," opposes the mine manager. "The Geological Survey says that Alberta possesses a million million tons of lignite coal, Saskatchewan over 59 billion tons, and Manitoba 160 million tons. Wonderful resource, say you? But wonderful and valuable only as it can be set to work. What sets it to work? an abundant and cheap supply of mine timbers in the neighborhood of the mines. The biggest perplexity of many of our Western Canada coal mining companies is not market or transportation or tariff, but the future supply of near-at-hand mine timbers."

#### *New Industries Demand More Coal.*

"The huge increase in coal consumption in our Western Provinces is due not only to the advancing population but to the incoming of new industries and extension of railways. Indeed the coal production is out of all proportion to settlement. In thirty years, population in Alberta and Saskatchewan multiplied over twenty-three times, while the output of the western coal mines multiplied 2,000 times. In a very few years the present coal mining plants will be taxed to their utmost capacity. What follows? They add to their plants, of course. But can they lay their hands on local supplies of mine timbers as easily as they can get boilers and conveyors? I very much doubt it. The mine managers and shareholders and workmen also doubt it. This business of mine props is staring the West in the face. What are we going to do about it?"