

Around the Collieries.

The output of No. 1 Mine—Princess—and of No. 3—Florence—of the Nova Scotia Steel and Coal Coy. are remarkably close. The output of each was 175,000 tons odd, for 1917. And the difference in the number of men in each of the two mines was negligible. People who think coal is high might figure out what coal costs on cars at the pithead, by taking the average net output at 650 tons a day, and the average labor cost \$3.00 per man. Then add cost of material, feed, etc., transportation to pier charges, overhead charges and incidentals, and then they may express little wonder when some operators declare they would as soon allow the coal to remain in the mine. In the United States it is not so much a question of price as the question of getting the coal at any figure.

Though the spokesman of the executive of the A. M. W. said two or three weeks ago that that body had said the last word on the wage question, many more words have been said since. Senator Robertson and James Watters were sent to Cape Breton by the Minister of Labor, who had refused an application for a Conciliation Board with Watters as a member, to confer with the parties to the dispute. Conferences were held and a compromise agreed upon subject to approval of the coal company's directors. Another conference is to be held this week, and it is likely an arrangement will be reached which will apply to the several companies in Cape Breton. The executive of the A. M. W. plucked at a gown o' gold and should be content that they get a sleeve o't. The Cape Breton papers are to be commended in running with the hares and holding with the hounds.

A HINDERANCE TO INCREASED PRODUCTION.

The following is from the Herald. The story may be believed as the like has happened before. The one point which is vague and possibly an error is the word "checkweighman." If the checkweighman was away getting married the overman should not have interfered in any way as the checkweighman is elected and paid by the miners. Possibly "company's weighman" is meant:—

"Illustrating one of the difficulties of production at the mines, a Dominion Coal Company official who was in Halifax yesterday cited to The Halifax Herald one instance of the effect the Amalgamated Mine Workers of Nova Scotia are having on production. 'To keep production going well,' said this man, 'it is necessary to have good workers on the bankhead and surface as well as in the mines. No matter how good a miner may be, or how hard he works, his product depends upon how it can be taken away from him. At — mine a checkweighman went away to get married. The overman placed a man in the cabin to weigh the coal; but the boy who was looking after the tippie demanded that he should be the checkweighman. The overman could not spare him from the tippie and would not give him the job of weighing. The boy quit work altogether, and others quit with him, tying up the whole mine. The Union

supported the boy and eventually, owing to the urgent demand for coal, the management had to give in. In the meantime the output of the mine was lessened just that much.'"

ORIGIN AND IMPORTANCE OF COAL.

Having stated in general terms what constitutes a mineral it may now be in order to narrate in detail the several useful minerals of which the province is the possessor, their characteristics and the purposes they serve.

Of all the minerals the province has been endowed with coal takes the premier place. Comparatively few people it is suggested have, with even their every day contact with coal in one way or another, begun fully to recognize the highly important part this mineral plays in modern life. There is nothing over, on, or above the earth's surface that equals, not to say transcends, it in importance and from which so many and diversified articles of commerce which play a momentous part in present day civilization can be extracted and utilized. Some of these shall be enumerated in subsequent articles. Meantime, let the topic be "What is Coal?"

A hundred years ago, or in or about Hugh Miller's time, the idea was clung to in many parts of Great Britain—one may not be able to deal with the idea prevalent in other countries—that the history of coal was coeval with that of creation, as so grandly described in the opening chapter of Genesis. It was then a common belief that, surely, coal was a creation, and not a formation through the action of the forces of nature continued through numberless years. At that time the common people had not been convincingly instructed by scientists that "a day" in Genesis was far other than our division into one of twenty-four hours. In many parts of Scotland—England might be believed if included—a century or so ago, the one who countered, when told that coal was beyond doubt a creation, was looked upon by staunch presbyterians, who believed in no other kind of inspiration than verbal, as being as unorthodox as an Unitarian, and as soft-hearted as a Universalist. Hugh Miller, in his "Testimony of the Rocks," shook, if he did not shatter, many of the old time beliefs, and from that time coal, as a formation, became by slow degrees the common belief. Just why a gradual formation, an evolution, should not be considered as wonderful a thing as a creation is somewhat puzzling at times. To many the impression of every detail of a fern in a fossil creates a sense of keener awe and wonder, gives, so to speak, far deeper pause than does the study of a living fern leaf. How was coal formed? There were formerly varying opinions but these now have been resolved into one with, mayhap, diversity of opinion on one or more unimportant points. The characters of coals—there are several kinds,—are at times rather hard to define. This is proven by the fact that not only in Europe—not only in Scotland, as in the case of the Torbanehill mineral—but in certain of the American courts there has been important litigation involving the determination of "What is coal?" The word coal with us in Nova Scotia means bituminous coals. Coal shale is called simply shale, and

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