

Province. As indicative of the general prosperity of the Province it is well to notice that considerably more than a third of the total sales was disposed of in the Province; if lumber coal be included then three-sevenths of the total sales were marketed in Nova Scotia, a record I believe, so far as home sales, in comparison with exports, are concerned.

Complaints are heard at times as to the alleged high price of coal in Nova Scotia. At the present time, if the United States be excepted, I know of no country where the price is lower. As a consumer in a small way, I am not going to say that the present price of coal is not a trifle stiff, but I will say that many would not rail at its being excessive if they realized all the cost entailed in the production of a ton of coal. In Nova Scotia coal could be sold at a much less rate were it not for the water that has to be drawn up and the timber that has to be sent down. The weight of coal being drawn daily from the collieries is not once to be compared with the weight of water. Taking the commonly accepted specific gravity of pit water at ten pounds to the gallon, the weight of water raised in a year is sixteen million tons as against say seven million tons of coal. If this water could be raised and stored in reservoirs it could be sold for power purposes at say five cents a thousand gallons, representing a yearly value of some \$165,000. Of course, according to location and strata formation, the cost of raising water adds to the cost of a ton of coal, it may be five cents at some collieries, and forty-five cents at others. I am assured that at one colliery where the output was comparatively small the steam pumping of water added to the cost of production forty-five cents a ton. Then there is the item of timber. There were received at the various collieries last year over 3,305 million lineal feet of lumber. At two cents a foot this would mean a value of say \$400,000. This means about six cents a ton for every ton of coal sold. But here again, as in the case of water, the cost to one colliery for timbering is far in excess of that to another. For instance, there is one colliery in Cumberland County where the timber adds only a cent and a half to the ton of coal sold, while the timber cost to another colliery in the same county is high twenty cents a ton. At several collieries in Cape Breton the timber cost is not four cents per ton; and, at least, at one colliery on Cape Breton Island the cost is four times that; and, be it remembered that to the timber cost has to be added a rather formidable labour cost in assembling and setting the timber in the workings.

An interesting table to one familiar with coal mining is that on page 161. While interesting to the expert it possibly is a difficult table for the lay mind to grasp. Taking the first line in the table we read: "Average days work a month 19" — "Total workmen 9,813; and the total days 1,695,987." The layman takes it into his head to verify the tables and divides the total days by the total workmen and to his surprise finds that his count makes the days worked 145 and not 19. He then multiplies the 9,813 by 228, being twelve months at 19 days per month, and much to his surprise finds the answer to be, not 1,695,987 but 2,237,364, a difference of no fewer than 541,377 days. He is puzzled, and here the expert steps in and attempts

to make matters clearer. The statement that the pits worked 19 days and the number of workmen and the days worked must be accepted as correct, having been attested to. Though the pits worked 19 days, the men absented themselves from sickness and other causes, more particularly and emphatically other causes, four and a half days a month, or fifty-four days on an average in a year. There was a loss of time amounting to about a quarter of the time that could be worked. Among them the men in the employ of the company, through sickness or other causes, lost say half a million days in the year. The subject of absenteeism is as perplexing as it is aggravating.

A few words as to the fatal accidents, reference to which is made on pages 112 to 115. The number of fatal accidents last year was 41, which gives a disappointingly high fatality rate. It has been asserted that 90 per cent. of the accidents in the United States are preventable, and I incline to the opinion that the statement is not exaggerated. How many of the 41 accidents in Nova Scotia may be placed in this class it is impossible to say as while how or what occasioned the accidents is given, the "why" such accident occurred is not. Glancing at the table you will notice that the verdict of the coroners is invariably accidental. Are we to infer from that word that in every case except two the accidents were not preventable. I cannot accept that theory. My opinion is that as a rule the coroners in the case of mining fatalities have not a proper conception of what their duty is. The coroners tell us in their verdict "Killed by a fall of stone;" "Killed by a fall of coal;" "Killed by a runaway box." Now, everybody before the inquest knows what killed the man, no need of an inquest for that, but all interested want to know "Why was there a fall of stone?" "Why did the coal fall?" "Why did the box run away?" was it for want of timber or spragging in the first two cases, or from negligence of a workman, or from bad rope or material in the case of the third. Unless we know the "Whys" and the "Wherefores" of the accidents, we may shout "Safety first" till we are black in the face without any practical beneficial results. As the law now stands, the Mines Department are practically powerless in the matter. It is in a way bound to accept the verdict of the coroner's jury. As the fatal accidents in mines form a large proportion of those occurring in this Province, I have for some time been advocating a change in the mode of holding inquests. The prevailing opinion may be that a physician is a proper person to appoint a coroner. That may be correct so far as concerns other industrial accidents. For inquests on accidents occurring at the collieries, men only with a practical acquaintance with coal mining should be appointed. My idea is that one coroner should serve the four mining counties. Do you say that would involve a new expense? What of that? When we speak of the value of an able bodied man to a country, is it all pure profit? If we can properly ascertain "Why" certain fatalities occur, and can thereby enforce prevention, what is the saving of a couple of thousand dollars in comparison with the saving of a number of lives? It has been suggested that possibly the large number of fatalities from falls of stone is due if not to the cupidity, to the overzeal for economy on the part of the oper-