

We cannot refrain from citing here an instance that was brought to our notice not long ago. A young man, who can claim membership in several institutes, was engaged to write a report upon a cobalt-nickel property. That report was the most complete demonstration of ignorance and ineptitude that we have ever seen. We believe that it was written in all honesty; it is impossible to think otherwise. But as an exhibit of crassness, carelessness, and unfitness this precious document was the limit. This is precisely the kind of malpractice that is most disastrous to the profession. The fakir can be explained; the unfitness of the respectable practitioner cannot.

#### A PERENNIAL PARADOX.

Attention has been drawn frequently to certain anomalies that exist in the methods of valuing the mineral products of Canadian mines and smelters. An outstanding example of discrepant methods is afforded by a comparison of the returns for Ontario nickel, as given respectively by the Ontario Bureau of Mines and by the Dominion Mines Branch. This discrepancy is noted annually in the Report of the Bureau of Mines; but, so far, there has been no attempt to reach a common basis.

As explained in the Bureau's Report, the Dominion statistics are based upon the average price of refined nickel in New York, while the Bureau's figures represent the value of the nickel in the form of matte at the point of production, "as given by the producers." The last phrase is significant.

The net result is that the Bureau's returns are little more than 20 per cent. of those of the Dominion. For 1908 the Bureau reports the value of nickel produced in the province as \$1,866,059; while the Dominion Mines Branch sets the value as \$8,224,180—a difference of \$6,358,121.

We have no reason to think that the former evaluation, \$1,866,059, is excessive. It takes account only of the nickel as matte, at point of production, and sets a value of about 9 cents per pound of nickel. On the other hand the Mines Branch calculates the nickel at 43 cents per pound. In other words, nickel ore mined and smelted in Canada gives a product worth approximately one-fifth of the price obtainable after the matte has been refined on the other side of the border.

The industrial magic, whereby the metallurgical product is enhanced five times in selling price by means of operations incomparably less costly than mining and smelting, arouses our interest. It is obvious, of course, that a restricted market may have much to do with fixing the price of refined nickel. But that difference of more than six million dollars can hardly be referred to market exigencies.

Certain international aspects of the nickel industry we are tempted to touch upon. But we shall refrain.

It will be sufficient to suggest that we would like to hear a just reason why part, at least, of the nickel produced in Canada cannot be refined here. Several Ontario manufacturing centres would welcome the opportunity of helping to produce that odd six million dollars.

#### KENORA MINING NEWS.

Our Kenora correspondent, on another page, gives an interesting account of his impressions concerning the decline of gold mining in that once flourishing country. The usual causes, incompetent management and unlimited gold stealing, are believed to have been at the bottom of Kenora's failure. There appears to be ample evidence to warrant the statement that gold stealing assumed shockingly large proportions.

It is difficult for one who has no experience in gold or silver mining camps to credit the stories that are told.

But the history of rich camps is everywhere the same. Enormous quantities of Yukon gold were stolen under the very eyes of employers. Lurid tales, many of them amply substantiated, came from Goldfields, Tonopah, and Rawhide. Systematic and extensive high grading is practised in certain Australian camps. In South Africa, the misappropriation of amalgam and bullion is by no means uncommon. Hence it is not unreasonable to assume that there is a foundation in fact for the Kenora stories. As in Nova Scotia, where "high-grading" prevailed to an astonishing extent not long ago, the ores of the Kenora mining division contain frequent patches of beautiful specimens of native gold. Native gold makes a notably direct appeal to the wage-earner.

Undoubtedly gold stealing has been a serious drawback to the Kenora mines. But competent supervision should, and can, reduce to a minimum the possibilities of this illicit habit.

It would be an instructive experiment to place one of the old mines of the district in qualified hands and watch the results. An Ontario gold mine, run on its own merits, would be something of a novelty.

#### PARLIAMENTARIANS AND FACTS.

It is unfortunate that the mineral industry has no representation in the Dominion House of Commons. Recently a Liberal member, Mr. Ralph Smith, in the course of a speech advocating the cause of technical education, made a wild reference to the number of fatalities in Canadian coal mines. Although Mr. Smith's statements were partly corrected by the Hon. W. L. Mackenzie King, they are calculated to leave a totally wrong impression upon his hearers.

Mr. Smith asserted that the rate of fatalities in Canadian mines is greater than in any other civilized country. This is incorrect. Nova Scotia coal mines,