

# ENGLISH MINERS AND THEIR ANCIENT CUSTOMS

Of the many classes of toilers by means the bitterness of Zion, they land, there are none who endure more hardships than miners, or whose lives are spent under more peculiar circumstances.

It is impossible to overestimate the value of their labours, without which the welfare of the country could not be maintained, nor those industries be pursued on which the comfort of our homes almost entirely depends. The risks they incur are at least as great as those incurred by sailors, perhaps even greater, and the sympathy which has been liberally bestowed upon the one should not be withheld from the other.

In European countries it appears that mines are said to be the favourite resort of ghosts and fairies. This, indeed, is no matter of surprise, when we consider the many weird and unearthly noises to be heard in them, such as "the dripping of water down the shafts, the tunnelling of distant passages, the rumbling of trains from some freshly explored lode." The apparitions too which frequent mines were said to assume a variety of forms one being that of a black dog. We may note here another class of Cornish apparitions known as "knockers," so named from the noise which they were in the habit of making beneath the ground.

The late Canon Kingsley, it may be remembered has given an interesting description of these Cornish "knockers" in his "Yeast." "They are the ghosts, the miners hold, of the old Jews that crucified our Lord, and were sent for slaves by the Roman emperors to work the mines, and we find their old smelting-houses, which we call Jews' houses, and their blocks at the bottom of the great bogs, which we call Jews' tin; and then a town among us which we call Market Jew, but the old name was Marazion—that

guardian of the mine, who, on being accosted by a neighboring shepherd, promised to tell him, at a specified time, and on certain conditions, where "the gowd mine is in Largo-Law," especially enjoining that the horn sounded for the housing of the cows at the adjoining farm of Balmain should not blow. Every precaution having been taken, the mysterious stranger was true to his promise; but unfortunately, when he was on the point of divulging the desired secret, Tammie Norrie, the cowherd of Balmain, blew a loud blast, whereupon the fairy instantly vanished, uttering at the same time this denunciation:

"Woe to the man that blew the horn. For out of the spot he shall ne'er be borne."

The unlucky horn-blower was struck dead, and as it was found impossible to remove the body, a cairn of stones was raised over it.

Referring to the fairy festivities in mines at certain seasons of the year, it was in former years popularly believed among the miners in Cornwall, that on Christmas Eve the "small people" or "the Spiggans" would assemble together at the bottom of the deepest mines and have a midnight mass. Many a miner on this night of the year walked some miles for the purpose of hearing the fairy music swell from beneath the earth.

Among the numerous superstitions which entered into the miner's daily life, may be noticed his dislike to hearing whistling underground, a rule which, we are informed, was rarely infringed by even the youngest boy. Great faith was attached by the miner to the horseshoe, which he not only regards as a preservative against witchcraft, but as a safeguard against evil influences. It was considered, too, the height of ill-luck for a miner to meet a woman either on his way to work in the morning, or on leaving the pit-mouth; and should he on his return home at night meet a stranger, and receive no answer from his return to his customary greeting, "Good

night—" it was considered an omen of misfortune.

Indeed, like sailors, miners firmly believed in warnings, and asserted that colliery explosions were generally preceded by a foreboding of some kind. Thus, among the colliers of Leicestershire were the "Seven Whistlers", birds sent purposely, as they affirmed by Providence to prepare them for a coming danger. A correspondent of "Notes and Queries" states that during a thunderstorm in the neighbourhood of Kettering on the

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## The Part the C. N. R. Plays in Marketing Canada's Crops.

So essential to the trade, commerce, and general welfare of Canada are the various classes of freight carried in the course of a year by Canadian National Railways that it is difficult to give pride of place to any particular one, but in their all-round importance to every section of the community, agricultural products must rank very high. They form the backbone of the nation's business activities and contribute directly and in large volume to its industry and employment everywhere.

During 1934 the C. N. R. carried over eight and a half million tons of agricultural produce, being an increase of 6.44% over 1933. In this total are included 134,700,000 bushels of wheat, 14,000,000 bushels of corn, 35,700,000 bushels of oats, and 15,500,000 bushels of barley; the aggregate of these commodities showing an increase of 4.1% when compared with the preceding year.

It is interesting to note that the average haul of each ton of wheat was approximately seven hundred and fifty miles.

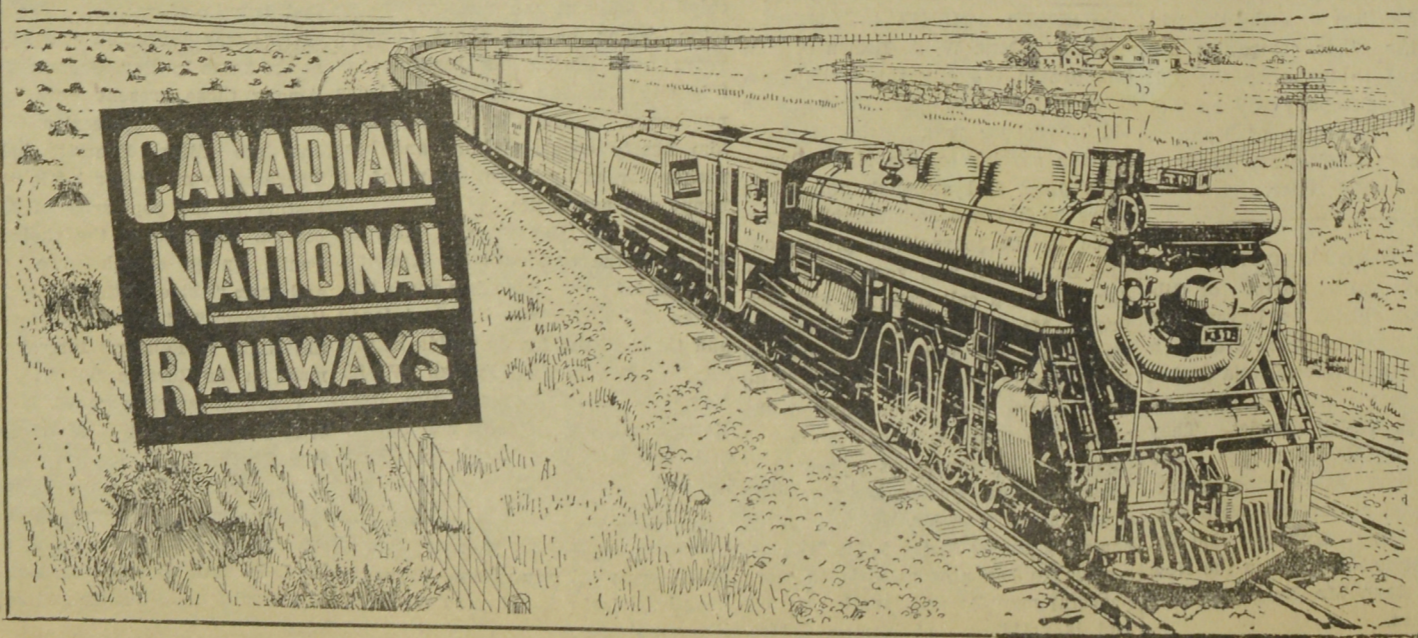
Without the rail facilities of the C. N. R. no doubt some of this agricultural produce might still have reached a market, but it could only have done so at a much higher cost to the producer, and the quantity would necessarily have been negligible . . . for practically all the crops which enter into the figures above enumerated were placed in freight cars at points where the only rail transportation obtainable was that provided by Canadian National Railways.

These crops come from far scattered districts . . . in many cases from sparsely populated communities . . . but they are the result of the labours of men and women who each year create millions and millions of dollars of new wealth for Canada. In this work the C. N. R. is their partner and helper.

As is well known the crop movements of recent years have been much below normal . . . much below the standard of productivity of our prairies and agricultural areas, and much below the volume which the C. N. R. is equipped to handle. The figures quoted should, therefore, be considered in that light.

The carriage of agricultural produce is, of course, only one of the activities of the C. N. R. In every branch of rail transportation it is equipped to give the best of service . . . all the year round . . . under all conditions . . . economically, courteously, and competently. Your patronage is respectfully solicited.

During the present Summer season the C. N. R. is providing special fares and excursions between points throughout Canada. These are exceptional travel bargains. The nearest C. N. R. Agent will be glad to give full particulars.



## NEW REGULATIONS FOR CIVIL SERVICE

OTTAWA, August 15—Detailed regulations respecting promotions, permanent appointments and the payment of salary increases in the civil service are embodied in three Orders-in-Council promulgated today.

It is provided among other things, that recommendations for salary increases shall be submitted by the branch heads to the deputy minister who must satisfy himself that they are warranted and so report to the Auditor-General, the controller of the Treasury and the Civil Service Commission.

At the same time, when an increase is held back the commission must be advised. Only members of the permanent staff are to be eligible for increases.

The regulations as laid down have released for payment statutory increases within the meaning of the Civil Service Act. Cheques for retroactive payment of statutory increases dated from April 1 last have been prepared by the Finance Department, which now awaits release orders from the Auditor-General's Department.

It is estimated that from 2,500 to 3,000 civil servants in Ottawa will benefit from the payment of statutory increases.

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