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[Coal in] Peru

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Peru.—(By Benjamin L. Miller and Joseph T. Singewald, Jr.) Next to Chile, Peru contains the largest known deposits of workable coal of any of the South American countries. In fact coal is more generally distributed throughout Peru than in Chile but, unfortunately, for the greater part in inaccessible regions not yet reached by railroads.

Bituminous coal is reported from the departments of Junin, Cajamarca, Ancachs, Ica, Puno, and Moquequa, extending through the entire range of the Peruvian Andes; anthracite coal occurs in the departments of Piura, Cajamarca, Lambaveque, Libertad, and Ancachs; while extensive deposits of lignite are said to occur near Tumbes and also near Janja. Nevertheless, Peru does not produce enough coal to supply the demand and, at present, the bulk of coal consumed within the country is imported.

About 90 per cent. of the Peruvian coal production is credited to the Cerro de Pasco Mining Company that operates two coal mines in the Department of Junin at Goyllarisquisga and Quishuarcancha. The entire output is consumed by the company, which without such a supply of coal, could scarcely operate with profit. The two mines are reached by branches of the Cerro de Pasco Railway Co., the Goyllarisquisga branch 26 miles in length and the Quishuarcancha line 10 miles. The construction of these branch lines was very expensive and yet they are not adapted for heavy traffic as the grades are very steep, with a maximum of 5 per cent.

The coal is of poor quality. As mined it is approximately one-third fixed carbon, one-third volatile matter, and one-third ash. When washed the coal produces a fair quality of coke and the smelter now uses this coke exclusively thereby effecting a considerable saving as the transportation charges on foreign coke were excessive. The coal is burned in bee-hive ovens located near the smelter.

At Goyllarisquisga four beds have been worked averaging 3, 4, 6, and 10 feet in thickness. The third bed is the most persistent, the others disappearing in depth, and even this one varies greatly in thickness with a maximum of 12 feet. At Quishuarcancha there is only one workable bed with an average thickness of about 7 feet.

In both mines there has been considerable folding and faulting which renders the mining operations more difficult. Much timber is required and, as the region is destitute of forests, all this must be brought from a distance. Some eucalyptus obtained near Huancayo is used, but the greater portion is Oregon pine. The timber is said to cost about 50 cents (U. S. currency) for every ton of coal mined.

During 1915 about 480 men were employed at Goyllarisquisga with a daily production of about 600 tons while at Quishuarcancha 80 men were employed and the output was approximately 100 tons a day. Both mines are capable of increased production but unless the transportation facilities are improved there is little likelihood of the production being materially increased or that any coal will be sold to other countries.

In several other places in Peru small amounts of coal are produced

but the total amount is not large. The vanadium mines at Minasragra utilize for roasting the sulphide ore, a semi-anthracite which is brought in 100-pound bags on the backs of llamas. The output of such mines is necessarily limited.

Until other railroads are built to the various coal fields of Peru, the country will not materially increase its coal production.