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Brown's Early History of the Coal Trade From the discovery of the island of Cape Breton by Sebastian Cabot in 1498, to the year 1672--a period of nearly 200 years--although numerous voyages were made to the coast by intelligent enterprising navigators, there is no mention whatever, in any of their narratives, of the existence of the coal seams which, being plainly visible in the cliffs of almost every bay or headland, could not possibly have escaped observation. Captain Strong of the Mari? gold, who visited Cape Breton in 1593, has given us an account of the chief productions of the island, including the various kinds of trees and even small shrubs, but has not once mentioned the coal seams; and Captain Leigh, of the Hopewell, who spent several days on the coast in 1597, and landed, as he tells us, at five different places, all in the middle of the Sydney coal-field, is equally silent upon the subject. Both of these navigators--evidently, judging from their narratives, intelligent and observing men--must have been well aware of the value of coal as an article of commerce, as the English coal trade flourished greatly in their time (the reign of Elizabeth), and was considered an important source of national revenue. It is still more surprising that Champlain, a man of education and a keen observer of natural phenomena, who circumnavigated the island in 1607, and has given us accurate descriptions of the chief harbours, and some account of the productions of the island, does not make the slightest allusion to the coal seams, although he notices such small matters as the abundance of oysters; adding, which by the way is not true, that they are of very poor flavour. Joan de Laet, in his history of the New World, is equally silent about coal in his enumeration of the natural productions of the island; but he does not forget to tell us that such "small deer" as crabs and lobsters are found "in almost incredible abundance in the harbour, which the savages, in their language, call Cibo" (Sydney). The first printed notice of the existence of coal in Cape Breton is met with in the Description géographique et historique des géographi 'Amerique Costes de l'Amerique Septentrionale, by Nicholas Denys, published in Paris in 1672. According to the historian Charlevoix, Denys was appointed governor of all the eastern part of Acadie, including Cape Breton, in the year 1637. He subsequently obtained a concession (in 1654) from Louis XIV of the whole island, with full powers to search for and work mines of gold, silver, copper, and other minerals, paying to the king one-tenth of the profit. In the preface to his book, he says, "There are mines of coal through the whole extent of my concession, near the sea-coast, of a quality equal to the Scotch, which I have proved at various times on the spot, and also in France, where I brought them for trial." He adds, "at Bale des Espagnols (Sydney) there is a mountain of very good coal, four leagues up the river," and "another mine near the little entrance of the Bras d'Or Lakes;" also, that "at Le Chadye, on the north-west coast (probably Mabou), there is a small river suitable for chauloups, where there is a plentiful salmon fishery and a coal mine." Being almost exclusively engaged in the fisheries and fur trade, Denys, during his long residence in Cape Breton, made no attempt to work the coal seams, for want, probably, of a



market. After his departure, in 1672, it appears that unauthorised persons helped themselves to whatever coal they needed from the cliffs, without permission from his sons, whom he left in charge of his property, as an ordinance was issued on August 21, 1677, by M. Duchesneau, the Intendant of New France, recognising and establishing Denys's right to exact a duty of twenty sous per ton from all persons taking coal from Cape Breton. Denys's patent seems to have been revoked in 1690. The importance of the coal of Cape Breton was fully recognised in a memoir, submitted in 1708 to the French government by M. Raudot, intendant of the finances, and his son, intendant of the marine of Canada, recommending the establishment of an entrepot on the seaboard, open at all seasons of the year, where the productions of Europe and the West Indies could be stored ready for shipment to Canada. The Messrs. Raudot recommended that a port in Cape Breton should be chosen for this purpose, "as the island could furnish old France with coal, codfish, oils, plaster, and timber, of its own growth and produce." The next notice of the coal of Cape Breton occurs in the Journal of Admiral Hovenden Walker, who commanded the unfortunate ex- (31)