

ASBESTOS.

Under the name *asbestos*, there are several fibrous minerals used in commerce; *anthophyllite*, *amphibole* or *hornblende asbestos*, and *chrysotile* or *serpentine asbestos*. The last of these three is the best in quality, and is of most importance to Canadians, since the product of the mines of the Eastern Townships of Quebec is of this variety.

It occurs in reticulating veins up to 4 or 5 inches in width, in serpentine rock, the fibres being arranged at right angles to the walls of the veins. These fibres, which are easily separable, are very fine, of a silky appearance, and flexible to a high degree. Asbestos is unaffected by heat, except on continued exposure to high temperatures, and is noncombustible. It is a poor conductor of both heat and electricity, and is not attacked by the common acids.

The above characteristics make this mineral an important raw material in a number of manufacturing industries.

Asbestos fibre may be spun into yarn and rope, and woven into fabric, in which forms it finds many uses where a fire-resisting fabric is required. For these purposes a long fibre, both strong and very flexible, is desired. At present there are no factories in Canada weaving asbestos.

In this country the principal manufactures of asbestos are mill board, paper, and shingles, for which purpose a short fibre is used.

In the making of certain mineral flooring short fibre asbestos enters into the mixture, where it acts as a binder.

On account of its low electrical conductivity it is used as an insulator in electrical instruments. While asbestos paper and mill board are principally used for this purpose, considerable long and short fibre are also employed.

Short fibre is mixed with paints to produce a fire resisting paint.

It is also used in making stove cement, pipe covering, etc.

Long fibre, besides the uses referred to above, is used in making gaskets for packing glands and pipe joints where high temperatures or acid solutions are encountered, making of chemical and water filters, and as a surfacing of gas grates.