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## WHAT I WITNESSED WHILE DISTRICT INSPECTOR OF MINES.

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MR. JOHN E. SHORT, CARBON HILL, O.

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What I witnessed while district inspector of mines would require too much time to relate if given in detail, therefore what I have to say must of necessity be briefly described.

I knew before assuming the duties of the position that economy on the part of the mine owners was the watchword, but I did not know that it had run mad, or to the extent of inducing mine bosses and superintendents to disregard the plainest of natural laws in order to get out the greatest amount of coal with the least possible expense. Too often the fitness of superintendents and bosses is fixed upon this basis. Mine owners have the cost per ton always before them, but frequently do not know where the cost came in, or whether future returns will justify an increased expenditure for any certain month. I have heard of cases where orders have been received from the general office hundreds of miles away from the mines, calling for a reduction of expenses, and I know of one case where this was carried out with disastrous results.

The mine in question was a machine mine, but a number of pillars were being removed by pick-work, owing to a squeeze, which prevented the use of machines advantageously. When the order was received the pick-work was stopped at once, from which I infer that it is more expensive than machine mining. The pillars had been drawn just far enough to invite a fall, but not far enough to insure a good one. The result of it all was that the rock failing to break, brought on a general squeeze or crepe, which extended across the manway, throwing it in, and rode over the pillar to the main entry, which was saved at a very great expense with cribs and heavy timber. For almost three months a night crew of six men was constantly engaged in keeping the roadway clear until another opening could be made, which was only accomplished at a very great expense. The gentleman in charge of the mine during this trouble informed me that the extra expense incurred amounted to more than six thousand dollars.

A few months later he was discharged, presumably for incompetency, but in reality for carrying out the instructions of his superiors. His successor made a record for himself by reducing expenses (after his predecessor had made all necessary improvements) and increasing the output of coal.

I am personally acquainted with both men and have visited the mine while under the management of each and am of the opinion that the discharged one was the most competent of the two. Had he disregarded the orders of his superior he might have lost his position, but would have retained his reputation. As it is, he is deprived of both by circumstances over which he had no control.

At another mine the cheap boss concluded it would be economy to "slab" the air course which paralleled the main entry, instead of putting in a track and cleaning out the falls of roof which had accumulated almost the entire length of it. By "slabbing" he expected to get an air course without cost, figuring that the coal would pay for all extra expense above mining. In this expectation he was correct, but he failed to note the size of his pillar, which was weakened to such an extent that it cost several hundred dollars in timber and labor to keep up his main entry.

In close proximity to this mine I found another in which the mine boss had ordered the day hands to unload all refuse into the main air course and they had carried out the order and filled it up within eighteen inches of the roof. When asked why this had been done, he replied that it was for the purpose of making the air stronger, for he had often noticed that the current was always much swifter in a small air course than a larger one. It took a night shift about a week to rid the air course.

A companion piece to this mine boss was found in the person of another one who had charge of a mine employing about one hundred men. He had occasion to drive about one hundred and fifty yards of entry to make a short haul and didn't wish to go to the expense of an air course or brattice. While passing through this entry I observed the solid walls on both sides of the entry and asked the question, "What did you do for air while putting this place through?" "Oh," said he, "I'll show you when we get up here a short distance." And he did—he showed me exactly how he did it. Laying at one side was an ordinary blacksmith's bellows, to which he pointed and said, "That's what we used, and you wouldn't believe how it helped us out." He told me how—after firing a shot—they would carry up the bellows and pump a while to make a little air, or freshen it. In response to his question of what I thought of the proceeding, I regaled him with the story of the man who attempted to lift himself over the fence by

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pulling on the straps of his boots, and then he looked thoughtful and we went on our way. He still holds his position and the same is true of the other gentleman who filled up the air course to improve the ventilation.

At another mine I found a man in charge who didn't possess the first rudiments of an education, in fact was unable to either read or write; but he knew how to manage and ventilate a mine, for I always found his mine in good condition with slight exceptions.

In marked contrast, I remember another gentleman who knew his business, but always had his mine in bad order. The reason I know he knew his business, is because he told me so himself. I never would have known it if he had not volunteered the information. There certainly was nothing in the condition of his mine to indicate it.

At the intake he had seventeen thousand six hundred cubic feet of air per minute, and when it reached the first of his work, a distance of fifteen hundred feet, there was but six thousand five hundred, or a loss of eleven thousand one hundred cubic feet. At one brattice there was a loss of two thousand one hundred feet, and it was a fair sample of his doors.

When complaint was made to the general superintendent and a request made for improvement, this man assured him that everything was all right, but he didn't think the inspector understood his business. What the general superintendent thought, I do not know; but after taking a look through the mine himself, his mine boss resigned. (Applause.)

PRESIDENT ORTON: We have all listened with pleasure to Mr. Short's paper. Is there anybody here who can contribute experiences in the same line in contradiction of his, or in sustaining them? It is a subject we can hardly afford to pass without some further discussion. Mining inspection has certainly done a great deal of good for this State.

(Calls for Mr. Roy.)

MR. ROY: My paper deals some on this same subject, and I will just read what I have and close it up to-morrow.