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MINING LEGISLATION.

BY THOMAS MIDDLETON.

In England as early as 1769 a law was passed dealing with mines. The act had simply reference to the damaging or destroying hoisting and pumping engines, and those that were found guilty of the offense were subjected to transportation. Mining legislation

from the year 1769 until 1800, was altogether one-sided. There was protection for the master or owner, but very little for the miner. In the year 1817 an act was passed that miners should receive every part of their wages in good and lawful money, but not thing was said or done for the deplorable state of ventilation. It was not till the Felling disaster in Durham county, when ninety-two lives were sacrificed by an explosion in the year 1812 that the public were aroused, and an association formed in Sunderland to investigate and try to avert such dreadful calamities. It had up to this time been the practice to take no notice of accidents in mines. The Sunderland Association demanded coroners' inquests held upon all killed in mines. Also a report was made at that time on the different modes of ventilation by Mr. Buddles, the eminent coal viewer of that day. He said that the ordinary accidents in mines occasion more calamity than explosions, and we can say the same thing to-day. In 1835, a committee of the House of Commons was appointed to examine the various laws and regulations under which mining was prosecuted. In 1839 the South Shields Committee was obtained and extended over three years. It gave valuable information as to mining accidents and their causes. In 1844 the Haswell explosion occurred, when ninety-five men and boys were lost. This misfortune caused the appointment of Messrs. Lyall and Farraday to examine and report on the explosion. These gentlemen suggested a better education among the mining classes, and more effective ventilation. In 1849 Messrs. Blackwell and Philips were appointed to examine the mines of England and Wales. They reported that the ventilation and working of coal mines was defective, and to prevent such disastrous explosions recommended that a systematic inspection of mines should be under the control of the government, and this was the beginning of coal mine inspection and progress of mining legislation, for in 1850 a bill was introduced by Lord Carlisle and became a law. We see by the reports of each and every committee that the ventilation and working of mines as a general thing was defective, and not until explosions had destroyed hundreds of lives, could the British Legislature be made to act upon it. By these recurring accidents the mine Regulation and Inspection Bill of 1860 was introduced. Although this bill was an improvement on all previous ones, it would seem that quite a change had come over the spirit of the legislature in looking to the interest of hav-

ing effective ventilation and management of mines. For 1872 an act was passed for the management of mines which practically supercedes previous enactments. Every coal mine is to be controlled by a manager who has passed an examination and holds a certificate of his competency. After many years of bitter opposition against mining legislation in Great Britain, coal owners now take an active part in framing the laws to govern and regulate mines, for they find it to be to their interest to have good and efficient managers.

In the General Assembly of Ohio an act passed creating a mining commission, (of which our Hon. President was one of three), to visit the leading coal mines in the State and inspect their condition and manners of working the same, and the ventilation. The report was received in 1872, and it showed that the ventilation of our coal mines was seriously defective, and anything else but in a healthy condition. After the report was received petitions from the miners by the hundred were sent to the Legislature asking for better ventilation and inspection of mines. In 1874 an act was passed to regulate mines and mining, and with it an inspector of mines appointed. In 1881 an act was passed for the appointment of an Assistant Inspector, also an amendment to the mining law. Now, let us see what inspection has done for Ohio by taking the number of fatal accidents to the number of tons of coal mined. I shall only call your attention to the years 1874 and 1881. In the former the number was 34, being one death to every 108,919 tons mined; in the latter the number was 29, which equalled one death for 283,621 tons, which shows very pleasing and good results. I believe reports show in Great Britain that nearly four times more accidents result from falls of roof and coal than resulting from explosions. Accidents from the roof or coal are, as a general thing, under the control of the miners themselves. But bad ventilation and grossly defective modes of working the coal is the fault of the underground boss or superintendent. We have seen by the reports of scientific and practical men in Great Britain that effective underground management is the best safeguard against accident. Meanwhile terrible explosions continue, which proves the necessity for more careful management and better ventilation. If they are not up to the standard in mining knowledge in Great Britain after so many years of practical and scientific knowledge and study, what

must be the state of things here? We have known at least two underground bosses who could neither read nor write, and had no more idea about the principles of ventilation than a digger Indian has about navigation. While explosions occur every now and again in Great Britain, we are fully convinced, had not the act been passed for inspection and the examination of colliery managers as to their competency, that the loss of life and limb by explosions and ordinary casualties in mines would have been at the least two-fold to-day, and valuable deep coal seams would never have been touched that are worked. We believe it to the very best interest of both the coal operator and the workmen, that the underground boss should understand the principles of ventilation and the best methods of working a mine. By practical and systematic working it would do away with the bad condition of mines, and the largest percentage of coal per acre would be got at the lowest cost. By understanding the general principles of ventilation we are enabled to produce the greatest quantity of air and properly distribute it to different parts in the mine. With good air and a sufficient quantity, the miner is able to produce more coal, day laborers, drivers and ponies to do more work at the least loss of power, which is alike a benefit to the operator and miner. In mining legislation we must not be one-sided. We must not increase the needless cost of coal where it can possibly be avoided, nor inflict too severe penalties on owner and manager, and let the miner go scot free for criminal carelessness. We desire to make Ohio the leading coal producing State in the Union, and increase her wealth by the development of her great mineral resources, and by good and efficient management of her mines.

What mining legislation and mining institutes in Great Britain have done towards making able and competent underground managers and mining engineers, so may the mining legislation and infant Mining Institute of Ohio.

Mr. Thomas Middleton's paper on Mining Legislation in Europe and America was ably prepared, and abounded with facts and figures as to the valuable results obtained by government supervision of mines. This paper was discussed briefly by Prof. Orton, Mr. Roy and Mr. Hazeltine.