

Mine-Rescue Work in Canada

INTRODUCTION

THE diagram facing this page shows that the fatality rate in the coal mines of Canada and the United States is considerably higher than that of any of the European coal-mining countries.

Hall and Snelling, in an article on the "Waste of Life in American Coal Mining" * state that the increase of loss of life in the coal mines of the United States has been due, in part, to the lack of proper and enforceable mine regulations; in part, to the lack of reliable information concerning the explosives used in mining, and the conditions under which they can be safely used in the presence of the gas and dust encountered in mines; and, in part, to the fact that, in the development of coal mining, not only is the number of miners increasing, but many areas from which coal is being taken are either becoming deeper or are situated farther from the entrance, where good ventilation is more difficult and dangerous accumulations of explosive gas are more frequent.

In Canada, the high death rate is largely due to similar causes and to the fact that the men generally employed in the mines are not, as a class, as careful as the miners in other countries where coal-mining has become a more specialized science.

The low death rate in all the European coal-producing countries has been due to the effect of mining legislation for the safeguarding and protection of the lives of the workmen, and has been made possible by Government action in establishing testing stations for the study of problems relating to safety in mining, including the use of explosives. With a view to reducing the loss of life incident to mine fires and explosions, Government Mine-rescue stations have also been established. These stations were not established for the purpose of training men for general rescue work, but that the government might have at its disposal, a number of trained men to supervise such operations and to demonstrate to the operators and miners the usefulness of such apparatus. Great Britain, France, Austria, Holland and Belgium, Russia, Germany and British Columbia have made it compulsory for all mines to have a certain equipment of mine-rescue apparatus constantly on hand.

*Engineering Magazine, Feb., 1908