

ges being broad, even, and well lighted with electricity. Yet, as the Boston Transcript remarks, "the sacrifice could not have been more complete in the worst of the black holes in the coal country."

What at present seems to many papers the most plausible theory of the disaster is that the miners blasted their way into a chamber of natural gas. Says the Philadelphia Inquirer:

"The mine is situated in the natural gas region, but as a rule natural gas is found in porous rock and not in chambers. It may, however, easily occur that there are caverns in the bowels of the earth in which this gas has collected and it is possible that a blast may have ignited it with the resultant effects. It is a matter that will receive the closest scrutiny from Federal and State officials, to the end that a tragedy of the kind be forewarned by every possible means."

Senator Dick, of Ohio, addressing the American Mining Congress assembled in Pittsburgh on the general subject of American mining disasters, spoke in part as follows:

"The coal mines of the United States are killing more than three times as many men per thousand employed as the coal mines of France and Belgium, and two and one-half times as many as are killed in the coal mines of Great Britain. In all the coal producing countries of the world the output has increased greatly in the past ten years, but the United States is the only country where the number of men killed per each one thousand employed has also increased."

"In every European country there has been a marked and steady decrease in casualties in coal mines. This decrease has not been due alone to the inspection and supervision maintained by mining bureaus, but has been made possible because those nations have maintained splendidly equipped testing-stations such as the Federal Government is installing in Pittsburgh, where exhaustive experiments have been carried on to test explosives and safety appliances."

Further light on the same subject is afforded by a recent bulletin of the United States Geological Survey, in which we read:

"The prominence given by the press to descriptions of mine explosions when such disasters claim a number of victims has led the general public to believe that of the many perils to which coal mine workers are exposed the danger from explosions is the greatest. Statistics do not bear out this impression. Of the total number reported for the last calendar year, 947 deaths and 343 injuries were caused by dust and gas explosions, 201 deaths and 416 injuries by powder explosions and wind-shots, 1,122 deaths and 2,141 injuries by falls of roof or coal, 855 deaths and 2,416 injuries were ascribed to other causes. The figures for 1907 show, however, that explosions of gas or mixtures of gas and dust have comparatively fatal results, the number killed in this way during the year being three times as great as the number injured; in accidents from other causes the number of non-fatal injuries largely exceed the fatal ones. In accidents from powder explosions and wind-shots twice as many men were injured as were killed, and the same ratio holds in injuries from falls of roof or coal."

The only work at which a loafer perspires is to look at a buck saw, or to keep off the flies that mistake him for a goat that has given up the ghost.

COAL MINE DISASTERS.

By Harry E. Coll.

"During the four years, from October, 1904, to November 1908, there was eleven coal mine disasters in America and Europe, causing the loss of 2,646 lives and nearly half as many injured. People who enjoy the comfort of coal heating and grumble at the cost seldom think of the miners' risk, or of the sad record of disaster, death, maiming, suffering, misery and family bereavement that lies behind the coal bin, says the Montreal Witness. "There is no labor more dangerous than that of coal mining, and some of the brightest intellects since the days of Davy's invention of the safety lamp have sought means for lessening the chances of accidents in mines. But firedamp and other subterranean gases are so pervasive, elusive and extremely difficult of control that no really effective plan has yet been devised to overcome the dangers they menace. Scientists tell us that the era of coal is passing, that electricity will take its place, for they calculate that the exhaustion of the supply is already in sight, at least in Europe and America. Instead of being alarmed at the prospect, we should rejoice and pray that the time when we can dispense with the use of coal may be hantened."

The above is an average sample of the nonsense published in newspapers and magazines of to-day. In fact we find men, as did the Chief Inspector for the State of Pennsylvania, in his annual report, referring to the coal mining industry as being "notoriously dangerous." The result is that to-day the public have a false idea of the mining industry, and considers a mine as nothing more than a death trap, that, sooner or later, will close its jaws cruelly upon its victims. It must be confessed that the many regrettable explosions and accidents that have occurred, give only too strong a color to this belief. And yet with a full knowledge of the difficulty of his position the writer is tempted into making a few remarks in behalf of an industry that more than any other contributes to the progress of the country and the happiness and prosperity of the people.

The average man has a queer idea of a coal mine. He imagines a hole in the ground leading to all kinds of openings and unsystematic workings. He imagines these wet or filled with flying dust. He imagines the air foul and the whole mine filled with noxious gases. Then he reflects on the short life of the miner, it being popularly supposed that he dies off early from any and every disease in the calendar, all induced by the mining life. At night, ensconced in his big chair the average man digs into his favorite magazine and reads with breathless interest, 'A Mine Story' of the most impossible type, and then as he gazes into the glowing grate fire, thinks within himself what a terrible life mining is. For the average man there is some excuse for this ignorance, but when a man occupying the editorial chair of a widely read magazine or newspaper, makes himself responsible for an editorial or article of this type, there can be no excuse for an ignorance that is bereft of bliss, and is likewise without rhyme or reason. The mining of coal is really one of the safest occupations a man can engage