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### THE MONTH.

THERE is a pleasing delusion widely prevalent in Great Britain that the investor in mines can be protected against loss and fraud by the *ipse dixit* of a mining engineer, provided only he relies on a "real" mining engineer and not upon a spurious one. At the same time he is becoming dimly conscious that he is not being so protected at the present time, and that the

number of letters after a man's name is not a guarantee of technical knowledge, ability, or reputable character; but merely of a certain advertising pushfulness by which the individual has introduced himself into certain societies, by no means distinguished for exclusiveness, but all betraying a certain eagerness after fees. The matter has even reached the phase of public discussion. It was recently taken up by Mr. Moreing, president of the Institute of Mining and Metallurgy who said in the course of an address before that body the other day that if investors "saw a mining expert referred to in a mining prospectus they should look him up in the list of members of the institution, and if he did not appear there the odds were very great that he was not a qualified mining engineer, that he was not eminent, and that further enquiries were necessary."

With all due respect to Mr. Moreing and the Institute of Mining and Metallurgy, we consider that this statement is a complete inversion of the course which should

be pursued by investors. When they see an expert referred to in a prospectus who is designated as a Member of the Institute of Mining and Metallurgy there is a good *prima facie* case for further investigation of his career and capabilities.

The remarks of Mr. Moreing have drawn forth a letter from Mr. J. D. Kendall, who points out the inefficiency of the test of such membership and says: "What is wanted to place the mining profession on a proper basis is some impartial test of knowledge which all members must pass before they are allowed to practice whether they belong to a technical society or not."

How this test is to be applied Mr. Kendall does not say. But it is quite obvious that, as the mining investments of Great Britain extend over all the world it would be impossible to impose uniform regulations applying to the profession in different countries, and if promoters chose to quote engineers of Colonial or American standing, it would be impossible to prevent them doing so. It might be possible to create a body of engineers, membership in which would be such a guarantee of competence that investors would insist on having a member connected with every enterprise to which they would subscribe, but to do so would be a task of very great difficulty. Of course a test of knowledge and competence is highly essential, but in successful mining enterprise there are more factors involved than mere technical knowledge of mining engineering. There is first the acquisition of the actual facts about a mine and the lucid and comprehensible description of these facts. This is properly the work of an engineer. With all due deference to a learned profession this does not require nearly as much technical knowledge as is generally supposed, and it does require much more practical experience than is frequently obtainable. It involves questions of labour, freight, treatment, power and organisation which differ in every locality, and with regard to every mine, as well as those in respect to formations, ore in sight and values. It involves, in short, factors with which no amount of technical training will enable a man to grapple, unless he conjoins therewith practical experience and a clear head.

In the second place there is the necessity for a judgment as to the price to be paid for the mine. This is a judgment which should be founded on the engineer's report, not contained in it. It requires commercial, not technical or scientific, training and bent of mind. Yet wrong judgments upon this point are responsible for more loss in mining than incorrect reports. In the third place there is a judgment as to the capital on which