

CORRESPONDENCE

EXPLOSIONS FROM FALLS OF ROOF IN MINES.

Editor The Canadian Mining Journal.

On returning to this city the writer finds your edition of the 15th inst., which contains voluminous extracts from a paper entitled the "Bellevue Explosions, Alberta, Canada; an account of and subsequent investigation concerning Three Explosions produced by sparks from falls of roof." This paper was read at the September meeting of the Institute of Mining Engineers in England. Although the writer has already sent on some notes on it to the Institute named, yet he thinks that a few further remarks may not be out of place in the columns of your Journal.

The authors appear to have been mainly bent on a campaign to refute the "views" of one mining engineer, who had the temerity to suggest that the disaster of Dec. 9th, 1910, was due to what is termed his "percussion theory." It may be pointedly remarked that although the authors, Messrs. John T. Stirling, Chief Inspector of Mines for Alberta, and Dr. Cadman of Birmingham, England, are so cocksure that that theorist was wrong, yet they cannot get along with their own theories without accepting his assumption, that the "originating" cause of all three disasters referred to was due primarily to falls of roof. Why the authors suppress the theorist's name is best known to themselves, but as he is well known to both of them his identity need not be hidden, and therefore he is glad to acknowledge himself as the active "father" of the "percussion theory."

Unfortunately, the plan accompanying the Stirling-Cadman paper is not reproduced in your Journal, but its importance will be readily understood when it is stated that the fatal explosion of Dec. 9th, 1910, is placed as occurring at a point in the mine where an assistant inspector of mines reported in writing the day before the disaster that it was clear from gas. The writer ventures to say that the fall of roof originating the first disaster did not occur where shown on the plan accompanying the paper.

The authors do not seem to have taken into account that there were quantities of explosive and detonators in the mine, and also that on the first occasion there was a missed shot in one of the pillars which was being drawn. Whether or not this shot was exploded by the crushing of the pillar cannot now be stated with certainty, but the fact remains, and the query may be extended further by asking what became of the explosives and detonators which were in the mine on the second and third occasions?

The fatuous man, who wilfully made the dangerous experiment of rolling a large piece of rock down a chute for the fun of seeing the fireworks, forgot that the Act of Parliament scarcely countenances that sort of horse play.

With respect to the Draeger apparatus, Alderson is said to have lost his life through some leak—the fact is that he was not wearing any apparatus, and therefore could not suffer from any leakage. In the paper the Draeger apparatus is credited with being instrumental in saving 14 lives, whereas only two were thus saved.

The greatest value of a paper such as the one now referred to would have been in suggestions for the

future safe working of this and similar mines, but we are not told what remedies are in force, excepting as temporary expedients, and the authors decline to discuss the subject of filling the goaf spaces from the surface. The paper, in the writer's opinion, fails entirely to throw any fresh light on the Bellevue disasters.

In conclusion, although the theory of "percussion," or, as some prefer to call it, "compression," is practically sneered at, yet the authors have carefully avoided any consideration of the force which blew out a wall of rock six feet in thickness in No. 4 cross pitch.

Your etc.,

JAMES ASHWORTH,

930 Drake St., Vancouver, B.C., Oct. 28th, 1912.

STILL MORE HISTORY.

Editor The Canadian Mining Journal.

Sir,—Dr. Barlow has avoided the issue by omitting the latter half of the statement I quoted from the article entitled "The Special Research, etc., etc." The complete sentence is, "McGill was the first of the Canadian universities to give instruction in mining and metallurgy as a regular course in 1871, and again the first to create and equip an independent department exclusively devoted to the subject in 1896." Dr. Barlow omits the part printed in black, the only part definitely called in question by my letter. The emphasis on "practical provision" is sufficiently clear. The facts are as stated in my former letter. The Kingston School of Mining was "the first to create and equip an independent department exclusively devoted to the subject." In 1893-4, it was in the hands of Colonel William Hamilton Merritt, a graduate of the Royal School of Mines, London. He was succeeded by Prof. Courtenay DeKalb, and both of these men confined themselves strictly to mining and metallurgy as subjects of instruction. The building of the Mining Laboratory in 1894 made possible for the first time in Canada, the carrying on of such large-scale investigations as the concentration of the Ontario corundum rock, a piece of work which was begun and completed in this laboratory.

That McGill had a course in mining before 1893 has not been questioned; and that some of the graduates of that early period are distinguished in mining and metallurgy is a well-known fact. How would it do for Queen's University to set up a claim to early educational work in mining and metallurgy on the ground that she graduated in 1858 Dr. James Douglas, President of the Phelps Dodge Co., and an acknowledged leader in mining and metallurgy?

If Dr. Barlow really wishes to give "honour to whom it is due" he will write in reply to this a nice letter acknowledging that it was the rather surprising progress of the School of Mining which moved the McGill authorities to improve their facilities for the study of mining and metallurgy. I am,

Yours sincerely,

W. L. GOODWIN,

School of Mining.

Kingston, Ont., Nov 6, 1912.